Drew University

College of Liberal Arts

The Interaction of Language and Gender As A Distinct Space for Social Construction

A Thesis in French

Women's and Gender Studies

And International Relations

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts

With Specialized Honors in French,

Women's and Gender Studies,

And International Relations

May 2025

Abstract:

Within this thesis, I characterize the interaction between gender and language as a distinct space which is unique from both individually, and which contributes to the creation and reproduction of social constructs. I establish the relationship between gender and language as one which is mutually constitutive, and suggest that the power relations underlying social constructs are affected by the interaction between language and gender. Following this, I discuss structural binarism as a means of hierarchical domination, and the resulting necessity of deconstructing binaries and affirming non-binarism within society. Finally, I make use of the postcolonial concept of hybridity to reaffirm the power of gender and language for social construction. Three languages are used as case studies to demonstrate these points: Inuktitut, Irish Sign Language, and Lakota. I conclude with a discussion of these case studies and the political context in which social constructions of both language and gender as nonbinary concepts is threatened. A French version of the case studies and discussion is also provided.

Table of Contents:

Introduction:

Gender as a linguistic element has a clear impact on society, specifically on the gender and gender roles within a society. Gender and language are both social constructs, and because of how these concepts are produced and reproduced within society, they are mutually constitutive. Spaces in which gender and language interact in particular, such as gendered linguistic structures and vocabulary to describe genders, actively contributing to the construction of both language and gender.

I use related theoretic literature to demonstrate the plausibility of my ideas. One of those which is most frequently referenced is Judith Butler's most recent book, *Who's Afraid of Gender,* which explores the reasons behind international political conceptions of and responses to varied gender constructs and the language used to express and represent them. Butler is also the author of *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, and has contributed extensively to modern poststructural feminist theory. Like much of Butler's work, this book draws from their background in Critical Theory to demonstrate the significance of hierarchies and power structures within society.

Aside from this, I also draw heavily from texts such as Julie Abbou and Fabienne H. Baider's *Language and the Periphery: Grammatical and Social Gender from the Margins* and Sherry Simon and Paul St Pierre's *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era* to support the social and linguistic ideas behind this research. The former includes a variety of examples and explanations of social gender in grammar, while the latter helps to contextualize

translation and language in the postcolonial world and provide methods for positive cultural exchange.

While the construction and/or reconstruction of gender roles within a society is in most cases not a deliberate act, embracing ideas and constructs which impact gender can affect the formation and embodiment of these roles. No two languages can construct gender the same way, and so each language used to express and construct gender and gender roles produces something unique. In many cases, hierarchical and binary modes of identity (such as the strictly prescribed male/female gender division and the patriarchal power structures this upholds, as well as the very colonized/colonizer binary which has often been used to dehumanize and justify the subjugation of colonized peoples) are structural constructs employed for the domination and oppression of certain groups and individuals.

The case studies used include Inuktitut, Female Irish Sign Language, and Lakota, which vary based on location, prevalence, and the nature of gender's presence in the language. Gender exists differently in each language, and thus in each case study gender and language are constructed differently to reflect the ideas of gender which exist in that particular language and society.

Furthermore, it is necessary to recognize that language and gender are both social constructs–they have meanings that are created and reproduced within society–and are interrelated in a myriad of ways. Language is often a tool used to express and perform gender, while gender is present in the grammar and vocabulary which make up language. In this way, the two are mutually constitutive, and the way in which one is used and constructed can likewise

affect the construction of the other. This is particularly significant with regards to interacting languages and gender systems.

To begin, the theoretical section of this paper is divided into four short sections. The first is titled *Gender and Language are Mutually Constitutive*. It begins by establishing the nature of gender as a social construct, and the effects which language has on that continuous reproduction of gender within society. I explore the use of language to create and reproduce gender, and the ways in which gender makes up the structures and vocabulary of languages.

Following this, the second section is called *Power Relations and the Periphery*, and it incorporates the concept of alterity with regards to gender and language, as well as the more complex logic of the creation of a periphery, and relates this to gender, language, and colonialism in its entirety. This reveals how the gendered power structures within language can affect power structures which exist in the real world.

At the same time as I utilize these ideas of alterity and the periphery, I recognize that they are predicated on the binary modes of thought which in many cases originate from Western colonial powers and are by no means universal across all societies. As a result, the next section, *Binarism and Power Structures,* explores this binarism as a way of organizing society into power structures and hierarchies–particularly with regards to gender and colonialism.

Then, to counteract this binarism, I continue with the next section, *Hybridity and* De*binarism.* While acknowledging the structural hierarchies of power which exist within society, I suggest that the interaction of language and gender cannot be regarded as two separate

concepts, and instead forms a distinct space which is unique from either language *or* gender alone, and which contributes to the formation and reproduction of both constructs.

This is then followed by three case studies, which I use to demonstrate this potential that the interaction between language and gender has to facilitate, enable, and affect social construction. As mentioned above, this includes Inuktitut, Irish Sign Language, and Lakota. Each of these languages embodies gender in a unique way which is reflected both in the language and the culture of each society respectively.

This then transitions into the final section, the discussion, which contextualizes these languages and the constructs which they promote in the era of globalization. It outlines the unique political dangers which are posed by the opposition to change in language and society–particularly in the case of the global anti-gender movement. This underscores the importance of allowing language and gender to evolve with society, because the interaction of language and gender has an active role in creating and reproducing constructs within society.

Gender and Language are Mutually Constitutive:

Language can have a huge impact on social constructs, because language is quite often the mechanism through which social constructs are produced and reproduced. As a result, the language used to construct ideas about gender and gender roles does, very much, have an effect on the meaning and embodiment of gender in that society. Likewise, language itself is a dynamic social construct which is influenced by culture and society–and, importantly, gender. This first section will establish the theoretical basis of gender as a social construct and the power which language has to affect and be affected by gender.

In their recent publication *Who's Afraid of Gender,* Judith Butler explores the power of language and rhetoric in relation to social constructs. Early on, Butler establishes that social norms are reproduced continuously, thus maintaining the status quo of society throughout time and irrespective of the lives of individuals (Butler 31). Both social norms and identities are constructed by society and upheld by the individuals who practice them. This is not necessarily a conscious act, rather it is taught generationally. Because of the nature of these social constructs, different societies will have different norms and identities which they reproduce. Gender is one such social construct. Many reactionary scholars and TERFs (Trans Exclusionary Radical 'Feminists') mistakenly identify gender as being synonymous with sex, but this does not account for the very real ways in which the social dimension of gender as an identity affects behaviors on a scale far beyond that of the individual, and the ways in which these behaviors connected to gender cannot be explained as 'inherent' or tied to physical sex.

In fact, gender permeates many aspects of society beyond sex and reproduction–language included. Luise Von Flotow, well known for her work in Feminist Translation Theory, states in the preface to Joan W. Scott's *Entre Braguette–Connecting the Transdisciplines*, "Language, after all, is a social convention that is deployed and often controlled in order to maintain the social structures a society builds around its management of gender/sexual difference" (Von Flotow 367). Language is a tool through which these norms and identities are socially constructed, while at the same time, language itself is socially constructed, and contains gendered elements. Von Flotow emphasises the use of language to maintain gender as a social structure, and explains some of the pushback against scholarship that criticises these gendered structures. In many ways, the variations in gendered structures across languages reinforces the idea that language and gender are interrelated social constructs.

In *Gender, Language and the Periphery: Grammatical and Social Gender from the Margins,* the very first chapter addresses the ideological dimension of grammar. According to Abbou, "When studying the semiotics of morphosyntax, it becomes obvious that grammatical words enforce, construct and perpetuate gender ideology. This section therefore… reveals the linguistic gender shifts" (Abbou 11). In this way, the presence of gender in grammatical structures enforces the larger project of a gender in society, and in many cases, a hierarchical social order of sex and gender.

Furthermore, the unique structures of each language are connected to equally unique gender roles and categories. This means that gender and gender roles are discontinuous across societies and particularly different in societies which employ different languages. This reveals

that the ongoing and continuous process of *meaning making* which occurs in all societies thus leads to the coexistence of *different* meanings and concepts which are untranslatable across culture as well as language (Abbou 4). In this way, dissimilar societies have different social constructs, because the language of each must reflect the social systems of gender which exist therein.

Because of the nature of gender as a social construct, it permeates language at several levels–most significantly both in the structure of language and in the discourse which may be produced by that language. According to Julie Abbou, the editor of *Gender, Language, and the Periphery: Grammatical and Social Gender from the Margins*, a book which analyzes social gender in understudied languages, it is therefore essential to "overstep the language/discourse dichotomy for a poststructuralist linguistics, in the sense that structure is not a departure point but a theoretical construction to questio" and to explore not only the contents of what is said, but also the structures which constitute that saying (Abbou 7). The discourse which takes place to form society and the ideas contained therein cannot be separated from the language in which that discourse takes place. As a result, language affects discourse and discourse affects language–therefore the social structures which are produced through both are affected by the nature of the language employed therein.

To return to the concept of gender as a social construct, Butler explains that "sex assignment is not simply an announcement of the sex that an infant is perceived to be; it also communicates a set of adult desires and expectations" (Butler 30). The process of socially creating gender begins with the observation of sex, after which point gendered characteristics are

assigned to correspond with what is 'appropriate' for that sex. The identification of this process goes back to early feminist thought, and Simone de Beauvior's assertion within *The Second Sex* that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." That is not to claim that the process is exclusively external or internal, rather, it begins socially but very quickly becomes internalized. The significance of this is the way that language communicates these gendered expectations. In naming a child a 'girl' or a 'boy' that child inherits the prescriptions and expectations for social behavior which correspond with the label they recieve. In this way, the gender identity which that person embodies is created through the use of language.

This process begins when sex is determined and the corresponding set of labels is assigned to the child, but it continues all throughout the individual's life. In reference to this process, Butler explains that "these practices of girling and boying [turning children into girls or boys, respectively] are repeated not just by parents but also by a range of institutions that greet the child with boxes to be checked and norms to be embodied" (Butler 30). It is therefore society as a whole and not some smaller subset of society which communicates these expectations to children. In this way, language is employed by society at large for the creation of gender within these individuals, and thus language as a social tool is instrumental in the reproduction of gender.

Because these identities are dynamic social constructs, they differ across time and space. Likewise, because these constructs are taught and transmitted through the use of language, language has a role in ways in which these social constructions are formed and adapted over time. Indeed, according to Butler, "When we are named a gender… we are entered into a class of people so named, and if we rename ourselves, we move into another category whose history no

one individually possesses" therefore the gender which is attributed to a person through language is a part of a larger social project, and as "Gender categories change through time, and feminism has always relied on the historically changing character of gender categories in order to demand changes in the way that women and men are defined and treated" the larger social construction of what genders are admissible, what constitutes each gender, and even what behaviors should be encouraged in each gender are likewise dynamic (Butler 138). Indeed, Butler underscores the ridiculousness of suggesting that gender is unchanging in their assertion that "If [woman and man] were timeless categories, they could not be redefined, which means that whatever the category of 'women' once meant is what it means forever" a phenomenon of course disproven by the evolution of both history and feminism and the progress that has occurred therein (Butler 138). This mutability of gender constructs empowers individuals to enact change by going against the status quo, which can, of course, eventually lead to wide scale social change. On the other hand, this dynamism also motivates individuals who are advantaged by the status quo social hierarchy to attempt to defend that hierarchy against any change. Thus, differences across peoples, societies, languages, and even time periods are threatening to the patriarchal world order because they demonstrate the mutability of gender and other social hierarchies.

This labelling process and the corresponding girling/boying can encounter resistance from individuals. These attempts to understand and communicate the arbitrary demands communicated by gender categories "open up a zone of provisional freedom where we claim or coin a language of Our Own in the midst of a linguistic dispossession for which there is no remedy and no exit" (Butler 240). The imposition of gendered labels therefore motivates

resistance in the form of self-definition. Because gender labels carry with them a set of norms which exist outside of the individual, the individual search for identity outside of those norms constitutes resistance against this labelling process and the wider project of creating patriarchal gender which corresponds necessarily to sex. The language of gender exists as a social construct outside of the individual, and therefore this struggle against language imposed on the individual has the potential to eventually motivate wide scale social change, in which limiting categories of gender cannot be imposed and enforced without regard for individual identity and self-determination. This phenomenon of social change can be precipitated by the change and formation of new language and meaning–a process which allows individuals to take an active role in social construction. Attempts to constrain this process, as patriarchal authorities so commonly do, restricts individual freedoms and the natural progress of linguistic and societal change.

This attribution of gender defines and lends meaning to an individual without their approval or consent. Indeed this forced labelling and identification comes from society at large, and infringes on the right of the individual (and indeed the position the individual is in, where they can far better describe their own identity than one who is exposed only to their external expression of identity) to self-determination (Butler 151). The aforementioned possibilities which accompany that self determination are extremely threatening to those who want society to remain static–nevermind the fact that society has never been, and never will be, immutable or unchanging.

Because social constructs such as language and gender are reproduced within a society and often function as a unique cultural convention, the suggestion that change to those social constructs is possible is often misconstrued as an attack against society altogether. This is even important when exploring the motivations for opposition to and erasure of ‘gender’ on an international scale. Understanding why opposition occurs particularly in regards to changes and cultural variations in gender and language can help us to combat these unfounded fears.

The popular opposition to change in language and meaning is not limited to ‘gender’--but is indeed often centered around it. One such linguistic convention which often receives opposition is syntax which represents a non-patriarchal or at the very least nonbinary worldview, including words such as ‘gender’, ‘critical race theory’, ‘nonbinary’, and, oddly enough, ‘pronouns’ (though those opposed rarely seem to understand what a pronoun is or how they work). According to the neocolonial, anti-gender right, the right of the individual to self-determination is an *infringement* on the rights of others to misgender and label that individual as they see fit. To believe that one person’s right to live their life and identify themselves as they see fit is tyrannical because it disallows others from their right to insult, belittle, and oppress marginalized peoples constitutes a mental gymnastics so impressive that Simone Biles herself would be unable to keep up. This far-right ‘logic’ continues in an even more unhinged direction from there, dictating that any system of gender which is not rooted in a binary form of biological determinism will result in the death of civilization itself (Butler 54). That ‘logic’ is rooted not only in misogyny and transphobia, but also in a white-supremacist and

colonial worldview which categorizes all societies without western gender constructs as being uncivilized.

The response to this manufactured fear is to constrain the abilities of individuals to identity as any gender other than that which corresponds to their sex, and likewise to prevent any changes to language or the use of language which might allow any non binarism or other nonwestern gender construct to be communicated and therefore reproduced within society. The attempts to do so do not start and end at eliminating gender-based vocabulary from the English language and the United States (indeed the anti-gender movement is a global phenomenon)–it is a limited and inherently colonial worldview, which, because of the incendiary and hyperbolic claims it promotes, threatens the very existence of non-Western gender constructs. As Butler observes, within the anti-gender movement, "Teaching about gender is figured as child abuse… securing the right to gender reassignment is an assault on the Church, nation, and family - all of these claims depend on excited notions of abuse, assault, and murder" (Butler 92). The exaggerations (and inventions) of the dangers which can result from 'gender' motivate opposition to an extreme degree. These incendiary ideas endanger not only individuals within western patriarchal societies, but anyone who may exist within a country, society, way of life, or even language which is deemed 'threatening to civilization' for its gender constructs by the anti-gender far-right.

It is important to recognize that the performativity of anti-gender language mirrors the social structures which allow binary gender to be constructed. The performance of one gender or another creates a social reality where gender is fluid, while the performance of anti-gender

ideology creates a reality where individual and collective freedoms are repressed (Butler 183). All of this inadvertently reaffirms the fact that gender is a dynamic social construction which is created and upheld by language.

It is important to understand that because language affects society, the process of making new meanings or revitalizing old ones affects society and the constructs therein as well. In the case of gender and gender identities, words used to describe nonbinary gender (often neologisms in the case of English, and diverse existing vocabulary in the case of Indigenous languages such as Lakota or Cree) can gain or regain meaning with increased use. Like the language that upholds them, these identities are changing and changeable, and their very existence is conditional on the individuals who participate in them. The labels used to describe gender identity in any language are lived enactments which affect society at all levels--a concept which connects back to Butler's early work in discovering the relationship between gender and performance (184). As stated before, this choice to use language in a way which does not conform to the status-quo of society therefore constitutes a form of resistance to that status-quo. The inverse is also true–that using and forcing others to use only language which upholds the patriarchal binary gender system reinforces that system and allows patriarchal domination to continue.

Unfortunately, because language and society are mutually constitutive, changes to language are often viewed as a threat to society itself. Linguistic change thus experiences significant pushback– such as the francophone world's *Academie Francaise,* an institution which exists to assure that any changes to the French language must receive approval and cannot occur

organically. This resistance to change is not grounded in any rational fear (after all, the French language and francophone societies managed to thrive for many years without the authority of the *Academie Francaise*), but nonetheless causes significant opposition to linguistic changes. An example of this would be the eventual admission by the *Academie Francaise* that the vestigial accent circumflex which denoted no change to oral pronunciation was not a necessary component of the language. Even this minor change which affected only the stylistic spelling of words received pushback through the #jesuiscircumflex movement on Twitter. Beyond this, in Russia, 'Gender' has been declared a threat to national security, while the Vatican has stated that it threatens both civilization at large and 'Man' itself (Butler 4). This fear of patriarchal destabilization constitutes a narrow worldview which assumes that no nation, state, or civilization can exist without a hierarchical and binary system of gender. This outlook erases the reality of non-Western states and nations which have functioned without patriarchal Western gender constructs since their very formation.

While society is, in truth, quite impossible to dismantle altogether, like changes to language, changes to society are often *viewed* (however irrationally) as having the capacity for destabilizing that society altogether. Butler addresses the way this attitude affects views on gender, explaining that "At stake was the idea of the human, which, it seems, 'gender ideology' has the power to destroy since the human is defined by the complimentary of the Sexes: a two in one definition of the human form" (Butler 40). Of course this belief ignores the reality of societies' complexities, and the fact that they are made up of by many interrelated norms and identities which are subject to change, but it does nonetheless explain the continued ways in

which this bigotry is rationalized by its perpetrators and why resistance to the language of gender is so necessary to oppose ‘gender’ altogether

In this way, the relationship between language and gender as social constructs which are mutually constitutive is visible in the opposition to gender in language. As interrelated social constructs, the areas where language and gender interact–particularly gendered language conventions and language used to construct and uphold the ideas of gender which exist in society, demonstrate the unique power of the interaction between language and gender to foster social construction, and in particular the construction of language and gender themselves.

Power Relations and the Periphery:

Certain languages center masculine grammatical structures and relegate the feminine to the periphery. Languages like English contain words such as 'hu*man*' and '*man*kind' which are used popularly to refer to all of society–women included. There are similar phenomena in languages like French, where the grammatical conventions dictate that when referring to a group, regardless of the ratio of males to females, if there is at least one male present, the masculine 'ils' pronoun must be the grammatically correct choice. Seemingly insignificant details such as these do matter, because they contribute to the ongoing construction and reproduction of society and the norms, identities, and structures therein.

It is important here to recognize that the alterity that women are subjected to is comparable to the alterity which feminine language receives. The domination is a structural one, which relies heavily on positioning itself as the status quo against which the other should be compared. In this way, poststructuralism lends itself here to an understanding of the power structures which underlie all social domination. The deliberate centering of one socially constructed category of identity (masculine, colonial) at the expense of another (feminin, Indigenous) is in itself necessary to the continued production of the Other.

In order to fully appreciate this peripheralization, and especially how it differs from alterity, it is necessary to go beyond merely a power-based understanding of the center/periphery relationship. According to Julie Abbou in *Gender, Language, and the Periphery*, "A peripheral epistemology does not mean defining the periphery as necessarily subordinated to a centre" (10).

The center/periphery relationship is more complex than that of alterity and can thus take into account multiple and intersecting oppressions. At the same time, Abbou cautions that "Careful attention is needed to still acknowledge the power relationships that the centre maintains toward the periphery. Methodologically, this means understanding periphery simultaneously as a space of power and as a place a part, as a new space providing new maps" (10). Thus while the relationship between center and periphery is complex, there are still power relations which can lend the center the ability to construct what constitutes the periphery. Interestingly, however, the result is that while the center continues to exercise power over the periphery, the periphery is more able to deconstruct and reconstruct meanings within both language and society. The periphery is therefore a space from which new meaning-making can occur–a process which we already explored the value of in the previous section. To reiterate, meaning-making, whether linguistically or socially, can normalize and legitimize changing constructs within society. A concept of gender which does not adhere to a binary or include strictly defined gender roles can therefore be more easily constructed within the periphery than in the center.

In this way, the periphery can act as "Theorizing periphery in gender and language studies is therefore a way to reveal our epistemological views and provides an arena for new discussions… to understand periphery as a relegated space as well as dynamic place of gender making and negotiation" (Abbou 7). In examining issues from the periphery rather than the center , there is an increased power of meaning-making and self-determination which the concretely defined center does not allow. Because the periphery is not a space that an individual

chooses for themself, it opens up possibilities for defining and redefining one's own position, thus creating changes to the identity of the periphery as a whole.

As a result, in applying poststructuralism to language, the uncontested meanings of words and morphosyntactical constructions must be viewed with a modicum of instability, and a refusal to accept the inherited functions of language as the only correct ones. The combined meaning-making power of the peripheralized practices and understandings with the peripheralized feminine under patriarchal control is therefore a space for the construction of new and changing linguistic conventions.

As Abbou states in *Gender, Language, and the Periphery: Grammatical and Social Gender from the Margins,* regarding the approach taken therein, "Working from the margin decentres the standpoint and destabilizes the notions and forms taken for granted; since as an external boundary, the periphery defines, shapes, and gives volume to the entity involved," which supports the idea that the periphery is a setting characterized by fluidity and the possibilities for change, and with regards to gender, "a positioning from the periphery then becomes, paradoxically, fundamental" (Abbou 8). The result is that the prevailing ideas which originate from the centre cannot produce the critical conjecture which is necessary to answer questions that have arisen around gender. At the same time, there is a paradoxical concern that the boundary *of* the periphery in relation to the center must be destabilized with the destructuralizaton of thought. In this way, the idea of the periphery as a *binary* approach is implausible, because of the fluidity which is inherent in the peripheral position and the

deconstruction of boundaries which can be most easily achieved from the edge of those boundaries.

Binarism and Power Structures:

In many societies, gender has frequently been posited as a binary form of identity inherently connected to sex. In reality, the 'binary' categories of Western gender are socially constructed and upheld. This is important because of the function which gender embodies within those societies. According to *Gender, Language and the Periphery*, "Gender proceeds to a categorization of the world, and is therefore a proposition to understand the world; that is to say, gender conveys an ideological stance on the human world and language" (Abbou 6). In this way, gender is a way of rationalizing society, and the power structures therein. Binary gender is therefore used to impose a false structure on society to keep the social hierarchy in place.

This hierarchical understanding of masculine/feminine gender extends to languages as well. This is the result of the fact that "Far from being understood, constructed and negotiated within a symmetrical relationship, gender–in language as well as in society–almost always allocates to the masculine and the feminine a central and a peripheral role/function/meaning, respectively" (Abbou 5). Thus, not only are these categories of identity socially constructed and upheld through language, the hierarchy which they represent and uphold also is.

Binary categories of gender are necessarily hierarchical because of the patriarchal system in which they occur. To relegate individuals into boy/girl, man/woman, or male/female categories is to determine their place in society's gender hierarchy. Furthermore, Abbou explains that "gender may hide other power relationships… This tension encapsulates the discussion of the notion of empowerment, as well as confronts the power of doing something (ability) and the power of someone (authority, codes of conduct). This tension also illustrates the multiplicity of

power and norms, at the core of theories of intersectionality" (Abbou 13). Socially created hierarchies are not exclusive to gender, there are similar power relations which center around race, sexuality, language, and more. The important thing to understand here is that these socially constructed hierarchies are in many ways interrelated, and that a destabilization of one of them–such as gender, racial, or colonial domination, may reveal the mutability of other related constructs, like language.

This socially constructed binarism is prevalent in Western societies and is falsely assumed by many individuals and groups to be inherent in the human condition and necessary for society to function. In the many non western societies to which the binary system of gender is not native, this creates a conflictual space–where to function in the modern era western concepts such as binary gender and the transactionality implied therein must, to some degree, be employed.

The idea of gender as a binary is often 'justified', unfortunately, through human 'biology,' despite the fact that in reality human biology is in no way binary. Even if that binary way of thinking was true, as Joan W. Scott explains, "Biology could not account for inequality; apparently eternal definitions of men's and women's characters, roles, and behaviors were the result of histories, cultures, and politics. If these things were variable across cultures and time, they were open to change" (Scott 356). Many societies are, in fact, evidence against this fictional binary biology, because they do not conform to the same power systems which are common elsewhere. Butler explains that "As power is contested and challenged, gender also changes, and, I would add, transformations of gender can in fact be one way to contest patriarchal power"

(139). The relationship between gender and power is thus mutually constituted, and understanding one requires an understanding of the relationship between the two.

To continue, for these purposes, structure can be defined as the result of a successful process of categorization, and therefore the structures of gender and language are remarkably similar because of the embedded gender dynamics in the syntactical rules of language, and in this way, “Such a definition of structure as a solidification of categories allows a vision of gender and language as two categorising processes related to power. These categories are always to be reiterated, negotiated, and above all, are multiple, because structure is the result of power relationships” (Abbou 7). As in society, the masculine element of grammar is made predominant over the female, thus reinforcing the patriarchal gender hierarchy. The reasons for this are manifold, but one significant explanation is that there are social metalinguistic influences which affect such attitudes (Abbou 11). The alterity which women and feminine people are subjected to is thus in some ways comparable to the alterity which feminine language receives. The domination is a structural one, which is socially constructed and which relies heavily on positioning itself as the status quo against which the other should be compared.

The conventions which reinforce this system include the unmarkedness of the masculine and the equivalence of the feminine with a specific category (Abbou 6). This imposition of false binarism in male/female sex, center/peripheral society, and feminine/masculine grammatical structures not only reinforces the gender hierarchy, but is also essential for keeping all marginalized groups subordinate to the control of the center. Imposing these structuralist binarisms on society is thus a way for certain groups to maintain control.

These hierarchical power relations are of particular importance in the postcolonial world, where there is tension between developed and developing states, colonizers and colonized nations, and the ever present false dichotomy of 'The West VS The Rest'. In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era,* "the term 'postcolonialism' remains useful in suggesting two essential ideas. The first is the *global dimension* of research in translation studies; the second is the necessary attention to the framework through which we understand *power relations* and *relations of alterity*" (Simon 13). Where the colonial system is concerned, socially constructed hierarchies and power relations cannot be ignored. Power relations exist as a continuous influence on the functioning of society, from the individual to global scale.

It is important to recognize that the power relations which fuel colonialism are still at play. Indeed, the modern processes of globalization have exacerbated the impacts of these binary power structures on cultural exchange, because the modern flow of translation promotes the power of developed western cultures and languages (Simon 16) To combat this neocolonial phenomenon, translation must become reciprocal *and* the binary division of languages in translation must be deconstructed to disrupt those uneven power structures.

The process of translation can act as a humbling experience for the speakers of hegemonic languages, especially in regions like the United States where monolingualism is the norm. As Butler explains, "We have to be prepared to translate between a language in which we live, the one that we require to live, and another language that dispossesses us from that sure sense of things that comes with monolingual conviction" (237). Translation can therefore be a humbling experience for the center, and can spread knowledge and ideas across linguistic

borders. Even so, the differences in language and the societies those languages reflect can be grounds for translational friction. It is important to emphasize that rather than being seen as an obstacle, that untranslatability should underline the social constructions which are unique to certain societies, and further emphasize the value of diverse cultural and linguistic perspectives.

The very idea of untranslatables brings me back to the concept of binarism–in this case, binarism between a source text and a translation. This binarism within translation also lends itself to the creation of alterity. According to *Postcolonial (Re)Versions: The Theory and Practice of Postcolonial Translation,* there is "clear evidence that all concepts and representations of the Other which are used in literary texts, travel books, even academic essays on literature, anthropology, literature, art and so on… are conditioned by the ideological machinery of imperialism" (Carbonell 246). The practice of translation itself, when forced on a group or individual, is a mechanism through which alterity can be created and those peoples can be relegated to the periphery. "In short, an appreciation of the Other equates to a translation of the Other, that is to say, a translation of the reality, the experience and the expectations of the Other, in terms comprehended by, let's say, the Same" (Carbonell 248). The very practice of creating alterity, though it may in many cases be how the world is rationalized–such as with respect to sex and gender, is a detrimental form of false binarism which distinguishes between self and other. These binaries which originate from the center are therefore always a form of othering, and thus lend themselves to the creation and continuation of socially constructed power relations.

According to the works of Maria Lagones, colonial arrangements and structures explain many modern issues pertaining to norms of gender and sexuality. How, then, when gender and colonialism are mutually constituted can the two be separated? The truth is that they cannot be separated in their entirety, and thus the idea of *hybridity* within postcolonial societies is not only credible but necessary to our understanding of how those societies should move forward. The idea of binarism originating from the center is both conflictual and unitarian, thus lending itself to "an important debate on the political implications of hybridity within postcolonial studies and specifically the understanding of the colonial enactment of cultural power" (Simon 20). To return again to the concept of poststructuralism, these binaries must be deconstructed to examine the forces that lie beneath. That means that even certain postcolonial logics are too unforgiving in their separation of societies. While the center/periphery and self/other dichotomies are powerful tools to demonstrate how colonialism takes place, postcolonialism should and must take an approach which does not employ the binary thinking and transactionality perpetrated by colonial systems. Hybridity, a concept which emphasises the coexistence and melding of supposedly oppositional forces, is therefore a necessary, nonbinary way of regarding the future of language, gender, and the postcolonial world.

Hybridity and *De*binarism:

One of the binaries which has been alluded to thus far is that of language/discourse. It is important to understand that language and discourse cannot be separated, and that there is no clear point of separation between the two. This is the fact which underlies my point around the influence of language on gender constructs–there is no binary between language and the thought which it produces. Indeed, according to *Gender, Language and the Periphery*, "It is difficult, though, not to hear in this controversy a parallel with the tumultuous relationship between language and discourse, between a structuralist approach to language and a semiotic approach to discourse, including in gender and language studies." (Abbou 7). The binary thinking which is applied to many constructs within society, including the relationship between language and discourse, is essential for the creation of alterity. In a way, the periphery referenced here can be thought of as the secondary perspective to which the other is regulated, while the center is the aforementioned 'status-quo' approach. This occurs with regards to both gender and colonialism–where one perspective is centralized and the other is relegated to the periphery. Even so, the center/periphery characterization once again creates a false binary like those which we observe in the male/female, language/discourse, and colonial/Indigenous relationships.

I later use examples of language revitalization as case studies to demonstrate the presence of binary logics and the necessity of deconstructing those logics. According to *Indigenous Peoples: Language Revitalization and Gender Identity*, at the time of colonization, "Patriarchy in

Native communities was essential to create a hierarchy ‘so that colonial domination would seem natural’ (Smith, 2011, 2:13). Many North American Indigenous communities were matriarchal, which is in direct opposition to patriarchy and colonialism” (Sayers 2). Thus these interrelated social constructs like patriarchal gender and language are, at least in part, the products of colonialism.

The early flow of cultural exchange was dominated by these colonial power dynamics. According to *Translation, Postcolonialism, and Cultural Studies*, “Translations during the colonial period, we know, were an expression of the cultural power of the colonizer. Missionaries, anthropologists, learned Orientalists chose to translate the texts which corresponded to the image of the subjugated world which they wished to construct” and in this way translations were the embodiment of cultural interpretations (Simon 10). This once again imposes binarism on colonized societies, but also demonstrates the ways these methods of colonial domination continue. The colonizers’ dominant place in the social hierarchy deincentivised them from learning about the ways of life which might destabilize their worldview, and leading them to dehumanize Indigenous people to ‘justify’ efforts to exterminate those populations and their cultures. Indeed, beyond simply its linguistic meaning, “‘Translation’ refers not only to the transfer of specific texts into European languages, but to all practices whose aim was to compact and reduce an alien reality into the terms produced by a triumphant Western culture” (Simon 11). These translations of Indigenous cultures were thus in themselves an act of colonialism–because they reduced all Indigenous societies to fit into the existing logic and language of the colonizers so that the colonizers could maintain their control. As a result, the

impact of colonialism cannot be separated from the Indigenous societies affected by it–a concept which once again deconstructs the colonial/Indigenous binary and demonstrates the need for hybridity.

This is particularly significant for translation, because troubling binaries in any way affects the theoretical basis behind translation, and thus troubles the concept of there being incommensurable differences between languages which render translation imperfect (Simon 14). Translation is a necessary act in the postcolonial and multilingual world, but it can be more productive when no strict differentiation between languages is observed. Indeed there will always be that which is untranslatable, and these concepts can often be better understood when they are not forcibly domesticated in the translation process. The notion of compromising incommensurable differences as a necessary aspect of translation disregards the true nature of translation as a creative act which produces something new rather than reproducing an existing idea in another language. Translation is thus an act of hybridity, because it produces something entirely new–a hybrid text of the source and target language.

This brings me to my next point, that the act of cultural exchange is, in itself, an act which blurs the boundaries of binarism. Much of feminist translation theory is centered around this belief that translation is not a reproduction of a work in another language which creates a replica of the original work, it is instead a creative process which produces something entirely new. This logic can also be applied to revitalization and much of the cultural exchange which takes place in the postcolonial world. As Sherry Simon explains, “We increasingly understand cultural interaction not merely as a form of *exchange* but as *production*. Translation then is not

simply a mode of linguistic transfer but a translingual practice, a writing across languages… The double vision of translators is continuously redefining creative practices–and changing the terms of cultural transmission" (Simon 28). This view on translation and cultural exchange aligns closely with the postcolonial theory of hybridity. Both necessitate the deconstruction of binarism and promote the idea that the interaction of languages/cultures produces something entirely new. This concept also further underlines the limitations of alterity, because "No longer an 'Other' in capital letters, restricted, closed and simplistic, the postcolonial concept of identity is quite a bit more complex and dynamic, forever caught in the process of creating new identities" (Carbonell 249). This complication of identities brought on by hybridity better reflects the constraint production and reproduction of identities and categories of identity within society, and thus takes into account the dynamic nature of social constructs.

Alterity and the periphery are useful only for those who wish to separate concepts into unnecessary binaries. A far more productive outlook is to encourage *equal* and non hierarchical production of new hybrid knowledges, translations, and modes of communication. Butler postulates that "Although it is unclear how pristine and unaffected such ways of knowing are under contemporary Global conditions, or if they ever were as free of hierarchy as is sometimes postulated, it remains important to document how colonial and decolonial regimes continue to impose dimorphism on languages and ways of world making that exceed those terms" (223). Thus in the case of colonialism, the project of colonial control is continued by the social hierarchy originally imposed by colonizers. At the same time, while one way cultural exchange is surely negative, cultural exchange is in itself not. Hybridity is a mode of thought which *does*

complicate relations of exchange, but those cultural exchanges should by no means be foregone altogether (Simon 17). While the extreme approaches of linguistic appropriation and linguicide are still very present in society, the danger of these tactics can only be combated with healthy linguistic and cultural *appreciation*–practices which necessitate cultural exchange.

The concept of hybridity is particularly significant with respect to identities and categories of identity, in this case gender. Indeed "The hybridization of diasporic culture and the mobility of all identities–including gender… [these] contestatory sites of identity have sharpened awareness of the cultural authority of language, and of the position of the speakers within dominant codes" (Simon 462). Thus within the context of hybridity, languages are more obviously fluid and socially constructed, as well as being mutually constituted with society, culture, and the identities encompassed therein. While no one denies that binarized genders may interact, to allow them to produce something new is indeed a non binarization of identities. With regards to cultural exchange, societies with specific gender constructs may interact with others whose gender constructs are different, thus creating the space for the production of new, hybrid ideas.

Essentially, "Putting forward the plurality of linguistic encodings of gender constitutes the first step for a decolonisation of linguistics" (Abbou 9). This plurality is a form of hybridity because it accepts the existence of a multiplicity which does not allow for the strict same/other dichotomy. Binarism and alterity are both constructs which are imposed on others for the creation of difference, and which disregard the complexities of identity and continued social construction which not only allow but encourage the debinarization of identities and concepts.

The result of all of this is that the deconstruction of binaries outlined here is necessary to understand the complex production and reproduction of social constructs. In particular, the importance of gender to the construction of language and language to the construction of gender suggests an unusual binary division between language and gender. Having already asserted the power of hybridity as a way to regard interaction as production, hybridity can be applied to these spaces where gender and language interact. Where gender and language interact, both language and gender are constructed and reconstructed according to the uses therein. In this way, rather than being two separate interacting constructs, where gender and language interact, there is a unique hybrid space distinct from either. The result is that the interactions of language and gender must then embody a unique space for the production and social construction of both.

Case Studies:

Languages are extremely varied, thus the gender constructs which represent/uphold them are as well. The three case studies below were chosen because they each represent a different capacity of language to inform gender and gender roles. The Inuktitut language, which is located in Northern Canada and has about 40,000 speakers (according to the 2021 Canadian Census) represents a system of grammatical gender which does not reinforce Western gender and gender roles. Irish Sign Language, and particularly Female ISL, demonstrates the capacity of language to construct the gender identity of the user. Finally, Lakota shows the power of gendered language which exists outside of the binary system. Each of these case studies is centered on how each language interacts with gender and the particular ways in which this can inform and affect social construction.

Inuktitut:

Inuktitut is one of several Indigenous languages spoken primarily in Inuit Nunangat, the area of Northern Canada where most Inuit people originate from. That being said, there are several dialects of Inuktitut, as well as two other Inuktut (Inuit languages). Inuktitut in particular is the focus of this case study, because it is the most widely spoken Inuktut, particularly in Nunavut (a Canadian territory provided to the Inuit for self-government).

To begin, the Inuktitut grammatical system differs dramatically from the colonial languages primarily spoken in this region (English and French). In Inuktitut, grammatical gender is not divided into masculine/feminine. The result of this is that the use of the Inuktitut language

does not reinforce male/female gender differences the way that languages which contain this grammatical gender do. Rather, the Inuktitut language promotes Inuit knowledge systems and the ideas of gender and gender roles encompassed therein.

Many languages, such as English, contain a dimension known as animacy. It is defined by Östen Dahl in *Animacy and the Notion of Semantic Gender* as "the distinction between animate and inanimate entities" (Dahl 99). With regards to pronouns in the English Language, in the third person singular (at least in the traditional sense, here excepting the normalization of the gender-neutral and singular 'They,' and any form of neopronoun), there are two applicable animate pronouns– 'he' and 'she.' On the other hand, in the inanimate dimension there is only one singular pronoun, 'it.' This is interesting because the animate pronouns are gendered so as to refer differently to individuals based on whether they present as masculine or feminine, whereas the inanimate pronoun is not.

This differs from more heavily gendered languages such as French, where there is no distinction at all between the animate and inanimate. The available third-person pronouns are 'il' and 'elle', and these are used to refer to both humans, whose gender presentation usually indicates whether they use masculine or feminine pronouns, and objects, whose gender cannot be determined even roughly according to any pattern, and therefore must be memorized.

Similar to the English language, the Inuit language Inuktitut possesses animacy as a dimension. According to *Language Revitalization and the Dilemma of Gender Bias*, in the Inuktitut language, "Animacy is described as a distinction between human and non-human, rational and irrational, socially active and socially passive. For example, animate nouns are

related to humans and animals most obviously, but other objects that are not considered alive, like stone, table, are considered as inanimate" (Hansal 247). Unlike English however, Inuktitut does not attribute gender to any noun regardless of animacy, and like the often confusing assignment of gender to objects in French and similar romance languages, the animacy of a noun in Inuktitut comes from a "cultural understanding as to whether a noun is known to be alive or not," and can therefore be difficult to determine without complex preexisting cultural knowledge or memorization of whether each noun is animate or inanimate (Hansal 247). This differs from English, where animacy is often reserved for humans and pet animals.

The most significant thing about animacy in the Inuktitut language is the fact that there is no aspect of gender. In many ways, the grammatical dimension of animacy mirrors the space which gender occupies in other languages, but animacy is not connected to sex or gender presentation in any way. For example, according to Laakkuluk Jessen Williamson, "A sentence such as *'takuvaatit'* is translated as 'he/she/it is looking at you,'" the gender of the noun is determinable only through the context of the conversation (Williamson 53). In this way, linguistic gender in Inuktitut is contextual rather than grammatical. Additionally, this example reveals a second interesting aspect of the Inuktitut language, the variability of word structure.

In English word composition, the variability which words are subject to is grammatical. For the most part, the structure and meaning of words are fixed and cannot be altered. In contrast, words in Inuktitut are variable in their surface form. Hansal explains further "Words can be very short, composed of three formative features such as word base, lexical suffixes, and grammatical ending suffixes. Or they can be very long, up to ten or even fifteen formative

morphemes as features depending on the regional dialect" (Hansal 247). This variability is a sign of the language's adaptability, both to suit common and existing situations, and to reflect the increased capacity of language which is necessary as society progresses. As I have discussed before, allowing for adaptability within language also allows for social progress, as language is the mechanism through which ideas such as norms are often conveyed, reproduced, and upheld within a society.

The knowledge systems which underlie Inuit society are often highly connected to language. According to *Inuit Gender Parity and why it is not Accepted in the Nunavut Legislature,* the Inuit way of knowing, "In the dialects of Inuktitut that [their] informants speak, it is called *qaujimajatuqangit…* is [also] a concept that encapsulates history, philosophy, and the observations of the world surrounding Inuit, and a way of life that is continuous between the past and the present" (Williamson 52). Differently from Western knowledge systems, this Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit* encapsulates a continuity of ways of life and knowledge which does not exclude progress, but which instead prioritizes cultural preservation.

The Inuktitut language is, in many ways, what allows this cultural preservation to take place. The unique structure of words and grammar means that if translated into Western, Colonial languages, some of this traditional knowledge would be lost. In regards to gender, "*Qaujimajatuqangit* establishes gender equality in several fundamental ways. It respects the balance between gender roles, the importance of family, and the fluidity of both gender and sexuality. *Qaujimajatuqangit* also addresses the genderless quality of both the language and naming System" (Williamson 53). These ideas of gender and gender roles are thus preserved in

the Inuit systems of knowledge and language. The continuation of the Inuktitut language is therefore vital for the continuation of the genders and gender roles which *qaujimajatuqangit* describes.

Williamson explains that "the view of the past has been subjectively altered by Western assimilation (including religion). Many Inuit and non-Inuit accept patriarchal biases or assumptions about Inuit uncritically, while… a unique balance between male and female authority existed" (54). It is impossible to separate entirely the pre-colonial culture of the Inuit peoples from the Western influences to which they were subjected, but the assumption of a patriarchal system exists in direct opposition to the structure of the Inuit language and naming systems, as well as much of the *qaujimajatuqangit*–whose oral histories tell many stories such as "a baby's father who willed himself to lactate" and thus succeeded in saving his child's life, and "an old woman who decided to live as a hunter," eventually transforming into a man and having a child with another woman (54). While these are narrative accounts, the knowledge system described here does not distinguish between language and discourse as is common in the Western academic system. These oral histories therefore indicate the significance which gender fluidity holds in Inuit culture, which is implicit in the Inuktitut linguistic system, and which cannot be reflected by society under patriarchal rule.

Indeed these concepts which transgress the gender binary are not limited to stories and histories. Williamson explains that "Many groups across the Inuit world have brought up certain children as though they were the opposite sex, because of unusual spiritual circumstances such as the divination that the child was born with the wrong sex, the need to disguise the child from evil

spirits, to communicate with a namesake, or to strengthen the child from an ailment" (54). This cultural rejection of an inherent connection between sex and gender or gender roles is thus ongoing and fundamental to Inuit culture, in part because of its basis in spirituality.

The Inuktitut language does not contain grammatical gender in the Western binary sense. The closest equivalent is animacy, though this is indeed hardly comparable. Rather, gender within the Inuktitut language system is purely contextual and is thus fluid. This fluidity is furthered by the extreme degree of word variability which exists in the Inuktitut language. According to *qaujimajatuqangit* gender within Inuit society is likewise a fluid concept, and does not necessarily correspond to sex in all cases. In this way, the presence (or, indeed, the relative absence) of gender within the Inuktitut language is an influential force on the construction of gender as a fluid and not necessarily sexed entity within Inuit society.

Irish Sign Language:

The following case study reveals the nature of gendered language as a tool for gender expression and therefore gender construction. The language which I focus on here is ISL, or Irish Sign Language. Interestingly, there are two systems of Irish Sign Language which are distinctly gendered. The creation of these Irish Sign Languages occurred with the formation of gender-segregated residential schools for the deaf. Each developed its own distinct form of sign language, and when residents from the two schools encountered one another later in life, the form of ISL which originated from the male school became the most popularly used (LeMaster

212). This has led to the Female school's ISL becoming nearly obsolete, because unlike male ISL, it was not passed on to younger generations of deaf people.

In *Language Contraction, Revitalization, and Irish Women,* it is revealed that "The majority of women born before or during 1930 still know the female signs. There are women in this age group who do not interact frequently with men, who only use the female form of sign. Bi-dialectical women use female signs with mono dialectical women. The norm is to not use female signs with men or with women who do not know them. And this norm is so well adhered to that those who are not supposed to see these signs often do not" (LeMaster 220). Because women did not use the female signs with individuals who were not already familiar with them, the female system of sign is and was greatly endangered.

At the same time that this was occurring, the male signs became more well-used–being adopted for use by many female signers. This occurred swiftly and without any form of collective action, the patriarchal pressures alone were strong enough to dissuade against the use of female signs, "When male and female signs came into contact outside of the residential school, some female signs came under attack by men. Women have reported being made fun of by men for their signs looking sexual" (LeMaster 216). The existing social norms and systems which allowed women to be sexualized and demeaned by men led to a preference for male signs in the Irish Deaf community.

The result of this is that most women of this generation learned male signs, while men were largely unaware of the extent to which the women accommodated them (LeMaster 214). While this may seem to be the influence of existing social biases on language, the inverse is also

true. In abandoning female signs in favor of male ones, the norm which dictates that women's femininity should be shamed and labelled a threat by men who wish to appear masculine was reinforced. Despite this, female signs did persist as a mode of communication between women (LeMaster 215). In this way, the use of the female signs can be regarded as a form of gender expression unique to these women who know and use Female ISL.

Indeed, the connections between perceived femaleness and the use of female signs has affected many individuals' decisions to use one or the other signing systems. One woman who refused to assimilate to the male signing system, even to the extent of following code-switching norms, became heavily associated with Female ISL in her community (LeMaster 221). This is in spite of the fact that this woman rejected the prescribed behavior for female signers to code-switch and instead used any signs she preferred–male signs included. In this way, her decision to continue using the female signs was far more ungendered than the women who used them exclusively in female-only circles. However, because such a strong connection between femaleness and the female signs had developed, the motivation behind using one form of sign or another was reduced to gender.

Something similar reportedly occurred with an elder man in the deaf community who liked certain female signs and used them regularly–he was ridiculed for this by other men who claimed that he chose the female signs for their aesthetic value (LeMaster 219). In this way, the use of female signs came to be associated with femininity to the extent that when a nonfemale person used them, it was perceived as emasculate. The female form of signing thus came to embody a form of gender expression. In recent years as questions of male domination and gender

expression have become more common, a call to revitalize female signs has occurred (223). At the same time, the gendered signs which are used now are distinctly different from the original male and female signs (222). This does not, however, make those revitalization efforts any less significant–particularly because of what female signs have come to represent. Rather than revitalizing those specific female signs, it is the concept of femaleness within ISL that is being 'unerased'. Deaf gay men in particular have taken to using Female ISL among themselves (LeMaster 223). In this way, female signs have become a way of expressing both femaleness *and* queerness.

Female ISL revitalization therefore is a way of pushing back against the patriarchal influences which would center Male ISL, and preserving a system of communication which was created by Deaf Irish women and which came to be an expression of female-ness. Beyond this, because of the fact that Female ISL is so closely associated with female-ness, the use of Female ISL is a way for the user to express their own identity as either a queer or female person. In this way, the use of female ISL constructs gender and sexual identity because of the heavy association between the language and the fact that for a long time it was used exclusively by women.

Lakota:

Lakota is interesting because it once again contains a form of linguistic gender which is uncommon in Colonial languages. Similarly to Irish Sign Language, Lakota allows for a

linguistic mode of gender expression, and like Inuktitut, Lakota does not contain gendered pronouns. However, there are still significant gendered aspects of the Lakota language.

Interestingly, when using Lakota, men and women speak differently from one another–and gender can thus be determined through how a Lakota person speaks and what words they use (Kulkarni 6). Like ISL, this allows language to become a form of gendered expression. That is not to say that different ways of communicating in languages that do not have this aspect cannot be a form of gendered expression–indeed many women adopt a different tone and register for speaking English than male English speakers do (think of when gay english male speakers talk in a particular way associated with femininity, and are thus perceptibly queer)–simply that this fundamental structural form of gender in Lakota necessitates that linguistic use constitutes some form of gender expression.

In the case of ISL, I focused on how this linguistic gender expression could be used to communicate either femaleness or queerness, but in Lakota that is distinctly different. Because the very concept of queerness as we understand it necessitates a binary system of gender from which to diverge, Lakota does not necessarily communicate queerness at all. At the same time, the system of speech in Lakota certainly does create two opposing categories for male and female people. In reality most Lakota people do conform to this way of identifying sex through linguistic gender (Nelson 6). Cases of Lakota individuals who diverge from the gender binary are infrequent, and their refusal to conform to linguistic conventions can be mistaken for linguistic error rather than deliberate self expression.

That being said, cases of Lakota individuals expressing their place outside the gender binary through language are not uncommon. In a speech during Pride Month, Rev. Isaiah Brokenleg of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe explained "Suppose a male-bodied individual speaks with the words of a woman or a female-bodied person speaks with the words of a man. In that case, they are winkte–their gender being neither female nor male" (Kulkarni 7). *Winkte* is a Lakota identity which originates from the word *winyanktehca,* which refers to a person who deviates from traditional gender expectations. In this way, Lakota individuals who transcend traditional male/female ways of speaking are not necessarily outside of Lakota society's systems of gender. Rather, they embody an identity which exists for the Lakota but not for the colonial settler state–and is thus difficult or impossible to translate into colonial languages.

The concept of *winkte* people is most often translated as two-spirited, but that is in no way exact. Two spirited or two-spirit is used by many Native American communities to describe individuals outside of the gender binary, who have "the spirit of the masculine and the spirit of the feminine" (Kulkarni 17) While some individuals are certainly satisfied with this label, it does not always communicate the aspects of a *winkte* person's gender identity which are related to the Lakota language and gender system. Of course in any instance in which linguistic or cultural translation is used some of the meaning will be lost, but that only exemplifies the importance of preserving the Lakota language.

As a language, Lakota provides for *winkte* individuals a category of identity which accounts for the unique social, cultural, and spiritual position they hold. Indeed *winkte* individuals are also seen as *wakan*–meaning sacred or divine to the Lakota people (Zimny 2).

Furthermore, the system of gender within the Lakota language is significant to how both *winkte* and male or female individuals express their gender identity.

The result of all this is that Lakota revitalization can create a linguistic space for *winkte* individuals which does not otherwise exist. As a tool to express identity, the Lakota language empowers these individuals both with regards to interpersonal communication and with the vocabulary to connect their Lakota identity to their gender identity–both of which are not present in the English language, the colonial language imposed on the Lakota peoples.

Thus within the Lakota language, in addition to the interaction between gender and language creating a mechanism for gender expression through the use of the language, the specific vocabulary used to refer to the *winkte* gender is what constructs that gender into social existence. *Winkte* is unique and has nuances which cannot be succinctly expressed in other languages. The existence of this word which is the linguistic expression of a Lakota gender is therefore necessary to the continued construction and reproduction of the Lakota *winkte.*

Discussion:

There are certain similarities between them and some ideas which overlap, such as the unique forms of gender expression enabled by female ISL and Lakota, but as a whole the differences between these case studies are why I chose them. One of the most important takeaways here is that in each case study, gender resides in a different part of the language. In each of these cases, the nature of gender and language as mutually constitutive constructs leads to a unique incorporation of gender into the communication system of each of these peoples. For example, in cultures where gendered divisions are significant, such as Irish Sign Language, the same divisions occur linguistically. In contrast, cultures which emphasize gender fluidity such as Inuit, have a language which reflects this, Inuktitut. Finally, Lakota, which does have a male/female gender division, but also allows for nonbinary genders, is a language which empowers the expression of *all* of these genders.

The concepts of gender and gender roles which are at odds with the patriarchal system of the Western gender are threatening to those who would like to maintain the privilege which they are afforded by the patriarchy. In the aforementioned book, *Who's Afraid of Gender*, Judith Butler outlines how the term 'gender' itself has come under attack in many of these states. Thus political actions which attempt to reaffirm binary gender and gender roles are dangerous to languages which construct gender differently than the patriarchy.

Under the Trump Administration, the fantasy of restoring patriarchal power which has been propagated by the 'Make America Great Again' movement necessitates the reinforcement

of the gender binary (33). Though of course the gender binary is in no way inherent or connected to sex as Trump's ill-advised executive orders might suggest, the very concept of binary gender is often at odds with US-based Indigenous languages and ways of life (think of the Lakotan third gender *winkte,* or the at least six Cree terms which exist to describe individuals who exist outside of the gender binary) (Apihtawikosisan 21). These terms cannot exist under a binary gender system.

Similarly, nonbinary language in English, such as neopronouns, the gender neutral singular 'they' and even words to describe nonbinary gender(s) has received significant pushback. That being said, the pushback has been largely nonsensical, including demonizing *all* pronouns and defining gender as sex at conception (which would imply that all individuals have the same gender because sex difference has not yet developed at this point). Because of the fact that the interaction of language and gender contributes to social construction, these threats to the language of gender are also threatening to the construction of gender. As gender evolves away from the patriarchal binary, the language reflects this, but if language is forced to remain static, it will continue to reflect and construct gender as it did under the patriarchal control of the recent past.

Conclusion:

The theoretical and situational support provided above demonstrates the nature of the interaction between language and gender as a unique space for the creation and reproduction of social constructs. The implicit influence of linguistic conventions and the nature of colonialism means that in many cases language revitalization acts in opposition to the prevailing system of patriarchal gender which exists in postcolonial societies and the settler state. From a theoretical standpoint, this conclusion suggests that the continued use of languages which structure gender in a certain way reinforces those ideas of gender socially as well.

This breakdown of the divide between language and discourse corresponds well with feminist translation theory (and particularly the belief that translation is an act of production rather than reproduction, because of the creative process inherent in that transformative act), and I do indeed cite one of the most influential feminist translation theorists, Luise Von Flotow, to ground the theoretical conclusions drawn here.

Additionally, this work reveals some of the ways in which feminist theory and postcolonial theory can interact, and how this can be productive for both disciplines. This stands in contrast with postcolonial feminist theory, which is frequently a postcolonial approach to feminist theory and less often an actual intersection of feminist theory and postcolonial theory. Rethinking the relationship between these disciplines is necessary for a genuine understanding of gender as it exists in the postcolonial world.

Ultimately, while this thesis may have implications for future academic work, equally important is what it reveals with regards to contemporary politics. The global anti-gender movement is uniquely poised to impact languages and cultures because of the Western (often judeo-christian) gender constructs which this movement seeks to uphold. Societies which exist in direct defiance of patriarchal structures are at best threatening to anti-gender ideology and at worst the potential targets of vocally anti-gender world leaders and policy-makers (*cough* Donald Trump *cough*). This relationship therefore underlines the dangers of anti-gender policies, both for the continuation of non western and non patriarchal gender constructs and related cultural elements such as language. As a result, anti-gender policies *must* be opposed with all the magnitude which is thus warranted.

En Français:

Les Études de Cas:

Les langues sont extrêmement variées donc la construction de genres qui les représentent ou les renforcent le sont aussi. J'ai choisi ces trois études de cas parce qu'elles représentent, pour ces langues, une façon différente de façonner le genre et les rôles des genres. La Langue Inuktitut représente un système de genre grammatical qui ne renforce pas le genre et les rôles de genre occidentaux. La deuxième langue choisie pour cette étude, la langue des signes irlandaise, et particulièrement la langue des signes irlandaise féminine, est presque complètement morte. De plus, elle représente un mode d'expression de genre unique. Le troisième cas étudié ici est le Lakota pour montrer que les langues peuvent avoir du vocabulaire qui n'existe pas dans le système des genres binaire et occidental. Tous ces cas peuvent promouvoir les constructions de genre qui existent dans ces langues, et renforcer ces constructions de genre qui ne sont pas occidentales.

Inuktitut:

L'Inuktitut vient de Inuit Nunangat, une région du Canada du Nord. La plupart des Inuit sont originaires de Inuit Nunangat, et il y a quelques dialectes Inuktitut, et deux autres Inuktut (langues des Inuit).

Pour commencer, le système grammatical d'Inuktitut est vraiment différent des systèmes des langues occidentales utilisés dans cette région (le français et l'anglais). Le genre grammatical

en Inuktitut n'est pas divisé entre masculin et féminin. Le résultat est que l'utilisation de la langue Inuktitut ne renforce pas la différence de genres masculin/féminin comme les langues qui ont ce genre grammatical. Par contre, la langue Inuktitut promeut les systèmes de connaissances Inuit, et par là même une conception du genre non occidentale et non binaire.

Beaucoup de langues, comme l'Anglais, ont une dimension appelée animéité. Dans son travail, *Animacy and the Notion of Semantic Gender,* Östen Dahl parle de la distinction à faire entre l'être animé et l'entité inanimée (Dahl 99). Pour les pronoms dans la langue anglaise, à la troisième personne du singulier (en tout cas au sens traditionnel de cette troisième personne, pas dans l'utilisation du néo pronom et 'they' comme singulier), il y a deux pronoms animés, 'he' et 'she.' Pour l'inanimé, il y a seulement le pronom singulier 'it.' Il est intéressant de noter que les pronoms animés ont des genres différents suivant qu'ils sont utilisés pour parler du genre masculin ou féminin, ce qui n'est pas le cas pour l'inanimé.

Ce système est très différent des langues qui ont plus de genres grammaticaux, comme le français, ou il n'y a pas de distinction entre l'animé et l'inanimé. Les pronoms à la troisième personne sont 'il' et 'elle,' et les deux sont utilisés pour les personnes (avec leur genre déterminé par leur préférence ou leur apparence) *et* les objets et animaux (leur genre ne peut pas être identifié, seulement mémorisé). C'est-à-dire que tous les noms, même un objet inanimé, comme *une* fenêtre ou *un* chapeau, appartiennent à un genre masculin ou feminin.

Comme l'anglais, la langue Inuktitut a cette dimension d l'animéité. Selon *Language Revitalization and the Dilemma of Gender Bias*, dans Inuktitut, "L'animéité est décrite comme un différence entre l'humain et le non humain, raisonnable et non raisonnable, active en société

et passive en société. Par exemple, les noms animés sont évidemment les humains et les animaux, mais les autres objets qui ne vivent pas comme la pierre, la table, sont considérés comme inanimés" (Hansal 247, ma traduction). Aussi, à la différence de l'anglais, l'Inuktitut n'a pas le genre masculin/féminin. De plus, comme le système de genre en français où on doit mémoriser le genre de chaque nom, l'animéité d'un nom Inuktitut vient d'un "Connaissance culturel de si un nom est considéré comme vivant ou pas," et alors c'est souvent difficile de déterminer sans la connaissance culturelle ou mémorisation si un nom est animé ou inanimé (Hansal 247, ma traduction). Ce n'est pas comme l'anglais, où l'animéité est souvent réservée aux gens et peut-être aux animaux de compagnie aussi.

Ce qui est important à propos de l'animéité dans l'Inuktitut est le fait qu'il n'y a pas de dimension de genre. La dimension grammaticale d'animéité remplace, en quelques sortes, la dimension de genre dans les autres langues, mais l'animéité n'est pas liée au sexe ou au genre du tout. Par exemple, selon Laakkuluk Jessen Williamson, ""Une phrase comme '*takuvaatit'* est traduit comme 'il/elle te regarde,'" le genre du nom est déterminable seulement par le contexte de la conversation (Williamson 53, ma traduction). Alors, le genre dans la langue Inuktitut est contextuel. En plus, cet exemple montre un autre aspect intéressant de l'Inuktitut, la variabilité de structure des mots.

Pour la composition des mots en Anglais et Français, la variabilité des mots est grammaticale. Pour la plupart, la structure et le sens des mots est fixe et ne peut pas être changé. Ce n'est pas vrai pour l'Inuktitut, où les mots sont extrêmement variables. Hansal explique que "Les mots peuvent être très courts, constitués de trois parties formateurs… ou ils peuvent être

très longs, même avec dix ou quinze morphèmes" (Hansal 247, ma traduction). En anglais ou français, les mots ont souvent moins de cinq morphèmes, mais comme Hansal a dit, les mots Inuktitut peuvent être plus variables, avec jusqu'à quinze morphèmes. Cette variabilité montre la faculté d'adaptation de l'Inuktitut, pour les situations, et en général pour refléter sa capacité à changer et évoluer avec la société. Comme j'ai établi dans les chapitres théoriques, cette adaptabilité des langues est nécessaire pour le progrès social, parce que la langue est le mécanisme par lequel on peut communiquer, reproduire, et confirmer les constructions sociales comme les normes et les identités.

Le système de connaissances Inuit est fortement lié à la langue. Selon le texte *Inuit Gender Parity and why it is not Accepted in the Nunavut Législature,* ce système de connaissances, "Est appelé *qaujimajatuqangit*… une idée qui inclut l'histoire, la philosophie, et les observations du monde des Inuit, et un mode de vie ininterrompu entre le passé et le présent" (Williamson 52, ma traduction). Cet *qaujimajatuqangit* Inuit est différent des systèmes de connaissances occidentaux, et représente une continuité de mode de vie qui n'exclut pas le progrès, mais qui privilégie la préservation culturelle.

À de nombreux égards, la langue Inuktitut facilite cette préservation culturelle. Le système unique des mots et de la grammaire ne peut pas être transféré ou traduit dans les langues occidentales sans perdre la connaissance traditionnelle de *qaujimajatuqangit*. Pour le genre, "*Qaujimajatuqangit* établit l'égalité de genre en quelques façons importantes. Il respecte l' équilibre entre les rôles de genre, l'importance de la famille, et la fluidité du genre et la sexualité. *Qaujimajatuqangit* adresse aussi le manque de genre dans la langue et le système des noms"

(Williamson 53, ma traduction). Ces idées de genre et de rôles de genre sont alors préservées dans les systèmes de connaissance et de langue.

Il y a des structures Inuktitut comme ce système sémantique pour donner les noms, et le plus important, le *qaujimajatuqangit*–les histoires orales doivent décrire une fluidité de genre, et même du sexe, comme "Un pere qui a sécréter du lait pour son enfant," et "une femme vielle qui a decidé de vivre comme un chasseur," et qui s'est transformé en homme (Williamson 54, ma traduction). Dans chaque cas, un Inuk a changé leur genre ou a transcendé les rôles du genre qui correspondent à leur sexe.. Ces histoires orales montrent donc l'importance de la fluidité de genre pour la culture Inuit, qui est implicite dans la langue Inuktitut, et ne peut pas être reflétée par une société patriarcale.

Ces concepts qui transcendent la binarité de genre ne sont pas limités aux histoires Inuit. Selon Laakkuluk Jessen Williamson, "Beaucoup des Inuit ont élevé certains enfants comme le sex opposée, à cause des conditions spirituelles comme la divination que l'enfant est née avec le mauvais, pour cacher l'enfant… pour communiquer avec un homonyme, ou le protéger d'une maladie" (Williamson 54, ma traduction). Ce rejet culturel d'une relation intrinsèque entre le sexe et le genre ou les rôles de genre est alors ininterrompue et fondamental pour la culture Inuit, en partie à cause de sa nature spirituelle.

La culture et la langue Inuit (et aussi la *qaujimajatuqangit*) sont alors liées inextricablement à ce système de genre et de rôles de genre fluide. Alors, ces idées sont préservées et partagées avec la préservation et la prolifération de la langue Inuktitut, qui reflète la culture des Inuit–en particulier, l'absence de genre à l'occidentale et la variabilité des mots.

La Langue des Signes Irlandaise:

Cette étude de cas montre la capacité de cette langue à affecter l'expression de genre. ISL est différente des autres études de cas, parce que la formation de cette langue était situationnelle, pas culturelle. La formation des systèmes de ISL unique et genré a eu lieu à cause de la ségrégation-genrée des étudiants dans les écoles pour les sourds. Chaque école, l'école des filles, et l'école des garçons ont développé leur propre langue de signes, et quand les étudiants de ces écoles se rencontraient, le ISL de l'école masculin devenait la plus utilisée (LeMaster 212). Le résultat est que le ISL féminin est maintenant presque obsolète, parce que contrairement à l'ISL masculin, il n'était pas partagé avec les jeunes sourds.

Dans son étude *Language Contraction, Revitalization, and Irish Women,* LeMaster révèle que "Il y a des femmes de cet âge qui n'interagissent pas souvent avec les hommes, qui utilisent seulement le ISL feminin. Les femmes qui utilisent les deux utilisent le ISL feminin avec les autres femmes. Le norme est de n'utilise pas les signes féminins avec les hommes ou les femmes qui ne les connaissent pas" (LeMaster 220, ma traduction). Parce que les femmes n'utilisaient pas les signes féminins avec les personnes qui ne connaissaient pas encore leur sens, le système de signes féminin est maintenant gravement menacé.

En même temps, les signes masculins sont devenus plus utilisés–parce que beaucoup de femmes et jeunes les ont appris. Cette transition a eu lieu rapidement et sans effort, l'influence patriarcale était assez forte pour dissuader l'utilisation des signes féminins. Quand les signes ont

interagi sous les ecoles résidentielles, les signes féminins étaient attaqués par les hommes (LeMaster 216). Les normes et conventions qui permettent la sexualisation et l'humiliation des femmes par les hommes ont aussi créé une préférence pour les signes masculins.

Le résultat est que beaucoup de femmes ont appris les signes masculins, et les hommes n'ont pas su le fait que les femmes les ont obligées (LeMaster 214). Ce phénomène est causé par les préférences sociales sur la langue, mais l'inverse est aussi vrai. Dans le choix d'utiliser les signes masculins et pas les signes féminins, la norme qui décrit les femmes et la féminité comme quelque chose que les hommes doivent éviter était renforcée. En même temps, les signes féminins ont duré comme une méthode de communication entre les femmes (LeMaster 215). Alors, l'utilisation des signes féminins est devenue une forme d'expression de genre unique à ces femmes qui connaissent et utilisent le ISL féminin.

Les connexions entre la féminité et l'utilisation des signes féminins a affecté la décision d'utiliser un système des signes ou l'autre. Une femme qui a refusé de s'assimiler au système des signes masculins, même à faire alternance codique, est devenue un symbole du ISL féminin dans sa communauté (LeMaster 221). C'est malgré le fait que cette femme a rejeté la norme d'alternance codique qui existe pour les femmes qui utilise le ISL féminin–elle a seulement utilisé chaque signe qu'elle préfère, masculin ou féminin. Alors, sa décision de continuer à utiliser les signes féminins était vraiment moins genrée que les femmes qui ont fait l'alternance codique et ont alors utilisé les signes féminins seulement avec les autres femmes. Ça montre comment l'utilisation des signes féminins était une forme d'expression de genre féminin.

Quelque chose de similaire a eu lieu avec un homme âgé qui aimait les signes féminins et les utilisait–il était ridiculisé par les autres hommes qui prétendaient que cet homme avait choisi les signes féminins pour leur valeur esthétique (LeMaster 219). De cette façon l'utilisation des signes féminins est devenue associée avec les femmes, et quand un homme les ont utilisés, il était vu comme émasculé. Les signes féminins sont donc devenus une forme d'expression de genre. Récemment avec l'opposition contre le patriarcat, quelques personnes ont commencé à s'intéresser à la revitalisation (223). Les hommes homosexuels et sourds en particulier ont commencé à utiliser les signes féminins (LeMaster 223). Alors, les signes féminins sont une forme d'expression du genre et de queerness dans la communauté sourde irlandaise.

Le Lakota:

Le Lakota est intéressant parce qu'il contient une forme de genre linguistique qui n'existe pas dans beaucoup des autres langues. Comme l'ISL, le Lakota a un forme linguistique d'expression de genre. Comme l'Inuktitut, le Lakota n'a pas de pronoms de genre. Pourtant, il y a toujours des différences de genre dans la langue Lakota. En utilisant le Lakota, les hommes et les femmes parlent différemment–et alors, le genre peut être identifié par le discours d'une personne Lakota et les mots qu'elle utilise (Kulkarni 6). De cette façon, comme ISL, le Lakota peut avoir une forme d'expression de genre. Ce n'est pas à dire que les méthodes de communication dans les langues qui n'ont pas cet aspect ne peuvent pas être une forme d'expression de genre. En anglais, par exemple, l'inflexion des mots est souvent différente pour

les hommes et pour les femmes. Par contraste, la forme fondamentale et structurelle de genre en Lakota rend l'expression de genre nécessaire en parlant.

Pour l'ISL, j'ai principalement analysé comment cette expression de genre linguistique peut communiquer la féminínité ou l'identité queer, mais le Lakota est vraiment différent. Le concept de 'queer' lui-même necessite un système de genre binaire et hétéronormatif qui permet de se différencier. Alors, le Lakota ne communique pas l'idée de 'queerness' du tout. En même temps, le système du Lakota crée deux catégories différentes pour les utilisateurs masculins ou féminins. En réalité, la plupart des gens qui utilisent le Lakota ont la cisidentité (Nelson 6). Les cas des personnes Lakota qui n'ont pas le genre binaire existe, mais ils sont peu communs, et de temps en temps leurs refus de se conformer au système linguistique binaire peut être perçu comme une erreur.

Dans un discours pendant le Mois de Fiertés LGBTQ Rev. Isaiah Brokenleg de la tribu Sioux Rosebud a expliqué "Si une personne de sex masculin parle avec les mots d'une femme ou une personne de sex feminin parle avec les mots d'un homme, ils sont *winkte*–leur genre n'est pas masculin ni feminin" (Kulkarni 7, ma traduction). *Winkte* est une identité Lakota qui vient du mot *winyanktehca*, où quelqu'un qui ne se conforme pas aux attentes de genre traditionnel. Ainsi, les personnes Lakota qui transcendent les façons traditionnelles de parler masculin/feminin ne sont pas en dehors du système de genre Lakota. Elles ont plutôt une identité qui existe pour le Lakota mais pas pour les sociétés occidentales–et il est alors difficile de traduire dans les langues occidentales.

Le mot *winkte* est souvent traduit comme “bispiritualité,” mais ne n’est pas vraiment précis. La bispiritualité est utilisée par quelques communautés autochtones nord-américaines pour décrire quelqu’un en dehors du système de genre binaire, qui ont “l'esprit du masculin et de la feminin” (Kulkarni 17). Il y a des individus qui sont satisfaits de ce mot, mais la bispiritualité ne communique pas toujours les aspects d'identité d’une personne *winkte* qui sont liée à la langue et la culture Lakota.

La langue Lakota a le mot *winkte* pour exprimer l’exacte identité des individus *winkte*, et leur identité sociale, culturelle, et spirituelle. Les personnes *winkte* sont aussi considérées comme *wakan*–sacré ou divin par les Lakota (Zimmy 2). En plus, le système de genre dans la langue Lakota est important pour que les personnes *winkte* puissent exprimer leur identité de genre. La revitalisation de Lakota est alors nécessaire pour préserver l'identité culturelle des gens Lakota–en particulier avec le genre.

Le résultat de tout ça est que la Lakota crée un espace pour les personnes *winkte* qui n’existe pas sinon. Comme un outil pour l’expression d'identité, le Lakota a les structures grammaticales et les mots pour associer l'identité Lakota avec l'identité de genre–les deux qui ne sont pas possibles dans la langue Anglais, la langue d'état-colon.

Discussion:

Ce qui est vraiment important ici est le fait que le genre existe sous une forme différente dans chaque langue que j'utilise pour les études de cas. Alors, les systèmes sociaux de chaque langue ne peuvent pas continuer si facilement dans une autre langue. Comme le genre et la langue sont mutuellement constitutifs, chaque élément influence l'autre. Par exemple, dans les cultures où la séparation de genre est grande, comme l'ISL, la même séparation est créée dans la langue. Par contraste, les cultures qui ont la fluidité de genre, comme l'Inuktitut, ont une langue avec la même fluidité. Finalement, le Lakota, qui différencie bien entre le masculin et le feminin, comporte aussi les identités non binaires, et est une langue qui permet l'expression de tous ces genres.

Dans le livre susmentionné, *Who's Afraid of Gender,* Judith Butler décrit comment le mot Anglais 'gender' lui-même a été attaqué dans certains pays. Ce phénomène est important, parce que les idées de genre et de rôles de genre binaire peuvent être sapés par les autres constructions de genre–comme ce qui existe dans ces langues autochtones. Alors, les politiques qui réaffirment le système de genre binaire peuvent faire mal à ces langues.

Similairement, aux Etats-Unis, les autochtones sont déjà les victimes de ces défenseurs 'anti-gender.' Sous l'administration de Trump, la fantaisie de restaurer le contrôle patriarcal et 'Make America Great Again' nécessite le renforcement du genre binaire (Butler 33). Le genre n'est pas nécessairement binaire ou lié au sexe, comme les décrets de Donald Trump suggèrent. En fait, cette idée de genre comme intrinsèquement binaire est réfutée par quelques langues et

modes de vie autochtone (par exemple, le genre Lakota *winkte*, ou les plus de six mots qui existent dans la langue Crée pour décrire les individus qui existent à l'exception de genre binaire) (Apihtawikosisan 21). Ces identités ne peuvent pas exister dans un système de genre binaire, et alors ce binarisme de genre est antithétique à l'utilisation de cette langue.

La même chose est vrai pour les changements de l'anglais et le français, particulièrement l'addition du vocabulaire non binaire, comme les néo pronoms comme iel. La langue et la langue de genre effet le construction de genre en la société, alors, ces mots non binaire construit un réalité ou le système de genre n'est pas nécessairement binaire, et alors cette langue est un menace pour la patriarcat.

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