

Introduction

With 'gender and identity' newly established as an **independent topic** in NRW's 2025 Abitur curriculum, this study explores how it was approached in an advanced EFL classroom **without the frequently chosen focus on literary fiction**. The unit thus relied on a variety of other materials to engage students in critical reflection on **gender, identity, intersectionality** and **privilege**.

Theory

Gender (Degele):

A performative, discursive construct shaped by social norms and language practices; continually enacted and negotiated.

Privilege (McIntosh):

A structural advantage linked to identity categories; often invisible to those who benefit.

Intersectionality (Crenshaw):

Identity dimensions intersect to produce specific experiences of marginalization or advantage; not simply cumulative.

Methodology

- advanced EFL course, 12 lessons
- data collection through **lesson observation, material, teacher interview**
- analysis of approach to gender, privilege, intersectionality

What's in your invisible backpack?

How 'gender and identity' may be taught as a new Abitur topic in advanced EFL classrooms.

Nell Tornow (3281012), summer term 2025

Results

Students explored privilege, gender and identity through **multimodal tasks** which grounded **theory in their lived realities**. The selection of material presented here showed to be of most extensive and effective use.

① The Privilege Backpack

"I feel like I am lacking the blank cheque of being commented on in public because I am a woman and Muslim."



From: Meg-John Barker, Julia Scheele, Queen: A Graphic History, 2023

② One Step Forward



method sheet

Conclusion

Teaching gender and identity without fiction proved **engaging** and **effective** through **personal experience-based methods**. To broaden representation, future units might benefit from incorporating **fictional texts that center marginalized voices**.

Discussion

The unit worked with a plethora of material supporting **thoughtful reflection on privilege, identity, and language** in the EFL classroom. While activities inviting personal insight and peer exchange strengthened **discourse and intercultural competence**, classroom dialogue mostly reflected dominant, more privileged perspectives, raising questions about representational balance.

Literature

