



# ***Rethinking gender and sexuality in the classroom: A corpus-based discourse analysis of classroom interaction***

**Helen Sauntson**  
**York St John University**

This presentation explores language-based sexism and homophobia in educational settings. Schools have been identified as places where girls, gender variant and LGBT+-identifying young people report routinely experiencing discrimination through discursive practices in schools. This talk explores these issues by drawing on a recent research project which conducts a detailed and systematic examination of the diverse ways that language can play a role in constructions of gender and sexual identities in British school contexts.

Using corpus-based discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; Baker et al, 2013), I analyse data comprising spoken interactional data taken from a series of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) lessons in two British secondary schools. The corpus methods used in the first part of the analysis comprise keywords and concordance analyses which are used to broadly identify what kinds of gender and sexual identities are constructed in the lessons. Critical discourse analysis of the interaction is then used to explore how those identities are constructed interactionally. The critical discourse analysis element draws on Pakula *et al*'s (2015) and Sauntson's (2019) notions of 'gender and sexuality triggered points' in classroom discourse. Overall, the analysis focuses on how language in the data works as a form of social practice which can include and exclude certain gender and sexual identities in classroom settings. The presentation concludes by considering the implications of the analysis with a specific focus on how to make visible gender and sexual diversity issues in schools and other educational settings and how to support the needs of learners of diverse sexual identities.

## **References**

- Baker, P. 2006. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C. and McEnery, T. 2013. *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representation of Islam in the British Press*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pakula, L., Pawelczyk, J. and Sunderland, J. 2015. *Gender and Sexuality in English Language Education: Focus on Poland*. London: British Council.



Sauntson, H. 2019. Language-based discrimination in schools: Intersections of gender and sexuality. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard (ed) *Innovations and Challenges: Women, Language and Sexism*. London: Routledge.