



## Beyond Language Proficiency: Raising Awareness of Women's Empowerment Through English Language Teaching

Zaitun Qamariah

IAIN Palangka Raya

Alamat: Kompleks Islamic Centre, Jl. G. Obos, Menteng, Kec. Jekan Raya,  
Kota Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah 73112

Korespondensi penulis: [zaitun.qamariah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id](mailto:zaitun.qamariah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id)

### Abstract.

*This article underlines the significance of teaching the English language to raise awareness of women's empowerment. It explores beyond the basic understanding of language proficiency to educate on gender issues and encourage progressive action. By reviewing the literature, the article identifies effective teaching strategies for discussing women's empowerment issues in the context of English language learning. This article aims to contribute to raising social awareness and inspire concrete actions towards achieving gender equality. In an increasingly complex and globalized society, understanding the importance of women's role in development is critical to achieving sustainable and inclusive development.*

**Keywords:** English language teaching, women's empowerment, inclusive approach, education policy

### Abstrak.

Artikel ini menekankan pentingnya pengajaran bahasa Inggris untuk meningkatkan kesadaran tentang isu pemberdayaan perempuan serta mengeksplorasi pemahaman tentang kemahiran berbahasa untuk meningkatkan kesadaran terkait isu-isu gender dan mendorong tindakan progresif. Melalui kajian pustaka, artikel ini mengidentifikasi strategi pengajaran yang efektif untuk membahas isu-isu pemberdayaan perempuan dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan kesadaran sosial dan menginspirasi tindakan nyata menuju pencapaian kesetaraan gender. Dalam masyarakat yang semakin kompleks dan terglobalisasi, memahami pentingnya peran perempuan dalam pembangunan sangat penting untuk mencapai pembangunan berkelanjutan dan inklusif.

**Kata kunci:** Pengajaran bahasa Inggris, pemberdayaan perempuan, pendekatan inklusif, kebijakan pendidikan

## INTRODUCTION

The significance of women's empowerment has gained global attention. Despite the progress in the fight for women's rights, we still need to address numerous challenges. Raising gender awareness through English teaching is a critical aspect of pedagogy, as evidenced by various studies. Implementing feminist perspectives in English courses can lead to transformative practices (Claudia, 2021; Liesel, 2022), challenging traditional understandings, and promoting explicit gender awareness in the ELT field (Arun, 2022).

Awareness of the importance of women's empowerment is not only critical for gender justice but also for the betterment of society. In this context, the role of English language teaching is highly relevant. The English language is not only a medium of communication but also a tool for conveying values, understanding culture, and building social awareness.

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\*Zaitun Qamariah, [zaitun.qamariah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id](mailto:zaitun.qamariah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id)

Therefore, English language teaching can serve as an effective platform for promoting awareness of women's empowerment issues.

This article aims to identify and highlight effective English language teaching strategies to achieve the goal of women's empowerment awareness. As a result, this article is expected to provide valuable insights and contribute to the fight for gender equality through education.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This article used library research, examining relevant scholarly literature from a variety of library collections, such as books, scholarly journals, conference papers, and other materials, to gain a thorough understanding of the research subject. The phases of library research include identifying relevant sources, gathering data from these sources, assessing the credibility and applicability of the discovered information, and analyzing and interpreting the gathered data. For this study, the library research method provides widespread access to the necessary information to bolster arguments and enhance understanding of the role of English language teaching in promoting women's empowerment. By examining a variety of previously published sources of literature, this study aims to provide a thorough understanding of the issue. This study aims to stimulate critical thought and conduct an extensive examination of the impact of English language instruction on the promotion of women's empowerment awareness across diverse social and cultural settings.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The dominant form of heterosexuality, which institutionalizes male sexual dominance and female sexual submission, divides women and men into the sexes we know today. If this is true, sexuality is the linchpin of gender inequality (MacKinnon, 1989: 113). Gender conventions and societal values shape the disparities in men's and women's social standing, reflecting the power dynamics that shape the execution of development initiatives. These disparities have an impact on the results of the programs (Reddock, 2000).

Caroline Sweetman (2015) provides a critical analysis of gender mainstreaming in development that explores several tensions that arise in the implementation of gender mainstreaming, both in terms of its conceptual framework and its practical application. She argues that the misapplication, misuse, and misunderstanding of gender mainstreaming often

lead to the inclusion of women as an afterthought in many circumstances. Instead of incorporating women into harmful and unsustainable development practices that exploit impoverished women in the Global South, it is important to avoid portraying these women solely as virtuous victims.

Regarding gender mainstreaming, there is a closely related idea known as women's empowerment. The idea of women's empowerment was first introduced in the 1970s. A succession of initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of excluded groups and empowering them to play a significant role in various spheres of life closely intertwined the emergence of this notion with the underlying concept of empowerment. During the 1970s in Brazil, Paulo Freire pioneered a critical education methodology, which multiple stakeholders in social movements employed in their endeavors. The concept of empowerment emerged as a means to motivate and enhance the participation of women in different endeavors aimed at enhancing their quality of life. The Beijing Conference in 1995 marked a significant turning point in the advancement of the notion of women's empowerment (Siscawati et al., 2019).

To adequately encourage their activism and demands for justice, development organizations must commit to implementing revolutionary gender mainstreaming. Teaching English is not only about achieving proficiency in the language but also about providing a platform for raising social awareness. This includes creating awareness about women's empowerment. This section will discuss the significant role of English language teaching in promoting awareness about women's empowerment, the relationship between language, awareness, and women's empowerment, and some case studies of teaching strategies for this purpose.

### **Conceptual Review: The Relationship between Language, Awareness, and Women's Empowerment**

Kabeer (1999) characterized women's empowerment as a paradigm shift in power dynamics between genders, resulting in women gaining more control over their own lives. She recognized the importance of analyzing and breaking down his concepts of authority to explore the concept of enabling individuals and communities. She also clarified that empowerment efforts for women should focus on enhancing their capacity to govern resources, establish priorities, and make decisions, thus augmenting their overall strength. Women must develop such power for themselves through a variety of events rather than receiving it from others.

By incorporating gender equality values into the curriculum and classroom practices, English teaching can enhance women's empowerment (Brittany, 2015; Aprilian, 2022). Language is the primary tool for conveying thoughts, values, and identity. In this context, English, as a global language, has a very important role in shaping people's perceptions and understanding of social issues, including women's empowerment. Language not only reflects social reality, but also shapes it, establishing a close relationship between language, awareness, and women's empowerment. From a social theory perspective, language is considered a tool of power that can either strengthen or dismantle existing social structures. Therefore, teaching English is not just about teaching grammar and vocabulary but also about providing students with a profound understanding of social issues, including those related to women's empowerment. Consequently, the approach to teaching English must be comprehensive and all-encompassing.

### **Case Study: Successful Implementation of English Language Teaching Strategies in Raising Awareness of women's empowerment issues**

Integrating gender-related language and issues in translation and language modules can enhance students' awareness of their power and responsibility in conveying messages accurately (Gora, 2020). Furthermore, studies have shown that incorporating awareness-raising activities into short story teaching improves reading comprehension, with female students generally outperforming male students (Qanbarnejad, 2021). These findings emphasize the importance of integrating gender perspectives into English teaching to foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Implementing multiliteracy pedagogy in ESL classrooms can empower female students by making education more meaningful and responsive to local needs (Amani, 2016). Researchers have conducted several case studies to assess the effectiveness of English teaching strategies that promote gender awareness, particularly women's empowerment. An interesting case study is the implementation of a teaching approach that focuses on gender issues in secondary schools' English curriculum.

The research demonstrates that incorporating learning materials that reflect gender issues into the English curriculum can make students more sensitive to gender inequality and limited opportunities for women in society. Furthermore, this approach encourages students to actively participate in the fight for gender equality and create a more inclusive environment for all individuals. The studies highlight the crucial role that teachers play in creating supportive learning environments. Teachers who are sensitive to gender issues and encourage open discussion on such topics can positively influence students' thinking and attitudes. They can

also be good examples of promoting gender equality in everyday life. This case study shows that English language teaching can be an effective means of raising awareness of women's empowerment if it is well-implemented and supported by a relevant curriculum and well-trained teachers. Therefore, the development of teaching strategies that focus on gender issues and women's empowerment should be a priority in the context of English language education.

### **Effective Strategies in English Language Teaching to Increase Women's Empowerment Awareness**

A gender-equality post-method approach to teaching English as a Foreign Language can encourage critical thinking about sexism and language use, further promoting empowerment (Elizabeth, 2011). If we use the right strategies, English language teaching can raise awareness of women's empowerment issues. In this section, we will discuss some effective strategies for teaching English that can raise awareness of women's empowerment. These strategies include inclusive approaches, using learning materials that are relevant to the local context, and recognizing teachers as agents of change who can facilitate discussions and reflections on gender issues.

#### **Inclusive Approach: Women's Empowerment Issues in the English Curriculum**

The discussions on the concepts and theories of development originated within the United Nations in the 1960s, during which the United Nations and key countries involved in shaping the notion of international development concentrated their efforts on poverty reduction via the expansion of the economy and the implementation of the "trickle-down" strategy. One aspect of the debate revolved around women's issues and demands. Then, in the 1970s, the development agenda began to incorporate the interests and needs of women (Connely et al., 2000; Parpart et al., 2000). By integrating gender issues, the English curriculum can create a more inclusive and gender-sensitive learning environment. Learning materials reflecting the lives of both men and women, along with exploring the contributions of women in various fields, can accomplish this.

This approach not only helps students understand gender diversity but also strengthens women's identity and confidence. Students can find motivation to pursue their dreams and ambitions, free from rigid gender stereotypes, by examining successful women in a variety of fields. The integration of gender issues into the English curriculum also helps students develop critical and analytical thinking skills about complex social issues. The curriculum encourages

students to question existing social norms and comprehend the consequences of gender inequality in society.

In "Women Power: Technical Education and Development," Pinto identified the following educational objectives for women:

1. Decision-making capability: the ability to weigh and arrive at a valid and honest personal judgment;
2. Truth-seeking: respect for and reliance upon observable evidence vouched for by reliable groups;
3. Living Skills: the ability to use tools and machines that have wide applications in one's society;
4. Communication: the ability to convey to others, orally, in writing, graphically, or otherwise, information, opinions, and conclusions;
5. Adaptation to change: an awareness that knowledge, society, and social values are all changing, as well as the ability to change oneself in order to maintain harmony with the environment;
6. Aesthetic awareness: a recognition of beauty in the natural world, the arts, and human relationships;
7. Commitment to society: a knowledge of the different elements of social relationships and the ability to practice social skills, enabling individuals to interact maturely with one another and the environment.

Depending on societal, national, and cultural circumstances, different people understand empowerment differently. At the individual woman and family level, empowerment entails active involvement in significant decision-making processes with the following indicators:

1. Experiencing a sense of pride and appreciation for her job.
2. Confidence in oneself and a positive sense of self-worth.
3. Presence of women's organizations.
4. Allocation of cash to programs specifically focused on women and their needs.
5. Augmented representation of female leaders at village, district, provincial, and national levels.
6. Women's participation in unconventional roles
7. Expanded training initiatives to enhance women's empowerment
8. Recognition of her social and political entitlements.

### **Use of Learning Materials Relevant to the Local Context**

Teachers emphasize empowerment through teaching as a co-intentional process, emphasizing the importance of caring, commitment, creativity, and interaction between teachers and students for empowerment to occur (Pamela, 1992). Using learning materials relevant to the local context is an effective strategy to raise awareness of women's empowerment in English language learning. When students relate the learning materials to their daily life experiences, their relevance becomes more apparent.

For instance, incorporating stories of local women who overcame challenges and achieved success in English language learning can inspire and motivate students. When students see successful women from their community, they realize that they too can achieve their dreams despite similar challenges. Using learning materials that are relevant to the local context also helps connect classroom learning with life outside the classroom. Students can associate English learning with their daily experiences, increasing their interest and motivation to learn.

### **The Role of Teachers as Agents of Change: Facilitating Discussion and Reflection on Women's Empowerment Issues**

Teachers play a critical role in promoting awareness of women's empowerment as agents of change. They have a unique opportunity to shape students' views and attitudes towards gender issues through their teaching methodology. By encouraging open discussion and reflection on gender issues in English language learning, teachers can create a safe and inclusive space for students. This can help students understand different perspectives and appreciate the contributions of all individuals, regardless of gender.

Teachers can also set a positive example by promoting gender equality in everyday life. By adopting a fair and egalitarian attitude in their interactions with students, both inside and outside the classroom, teachers can help shape positive attitudes toward gender equality. Teachers also have a responsibility to ensure that the learning environment they create is safe and inclusive for all students, regardless of gender, in the context of education. They can achieve this by establishing policies and procedures that protect students from gender discrimination and harassment, as well as providing support and guidance to those in need.

### **Future Challenges and Opportunities**

There are numerous advantages to applying English language teaching methods that emphasize women's empowerment. However, several challenges must be overcome.

Furthermore, there exists a significant opportunity for cooperation between educational institutions and communities in raising awareness of women's empowerment. This section will examine the challenges of implementing an inclusive approach to English language teaching as well as potential opportunities for collaboration that can be leveraged in the future.

### **Challenges in Implementing an Inclusive Approach in English Language Teaching**

One of the primary challenges in adopting an inclusive approach to English language teaching is resistance and discomfort with changes in existing curricula and teaching methods. Some individuals may perceive the inclusion of gender issues in the English curriculum as "bringing politics into the classroom" or even as going against their traditional values.

Teachers' lack of resources and training may also impede the implementation of an inclusive approach. English language teaching that focuses on women's empowerment requires specific knowledge and skills to integrate gender issues into the curriculum and manage sensitive discussions on those topics.

Another challenge is the ongoing prevalence of gender stereotypes in society. These stereotypes can affect students' perceptions and attitudes towards gender issues, even after relevant learning material has been delivered. Therefore, it is necessary to make continuous efforts to overcome stereotypes and promote an inclusive understanding of women's roles and contributions in society.

### **Opportunities for Collaboration between Educational Institutions and Communities in Raising Awareness of Women's Empowerment**

Despite the challenges that need attention, collaboration between educational institutions and communities can play a crucial role in raising awareness of women's empowerment and creating a more inclusive learning environment for all students. One way to achieve this is to involve the community in the development of gender-sensitive curricula and learning materials. By seeking input and support from various stakeholders, educational institutions can design an English curriculum that better meets the needs and aspirations of women in society.

Collaboration between educational institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other institutions can also help expand the reach and impact of women's empowerment programs. For example, educational institutions can partner with organizations that have experience and expertise in women's advocacy and mentoring to organize activities that support women's empowerment. Collaboration between educational institutions and the private sector can also be a valuable opportunity to expand access to education and training for



women. Many companies have corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that focus on women's empowerment, and educational institutions can leverage these programs to reach a wider audience.

Also, collaboration with mass media can be an effective means to increase awareness of women's empowerment in society. We can convey messages about gender equality and the significance of women's empowerment to a broader audience by utilizing public campaigns, media coverage, and educational programs. By taking advantage of existing collaboration opportunities and addressing the challenges faced, collaboration between educational institutions and communities can help build a more inclusive and gender-equitable society. This will create a supportive environment for women to achieve their full potential and contribute positively to community development.

## **CONCLUSION**

The article discusses effective strategies for teaching English that can raise awareness of women's empowerment. From a conceptual review and case studies, an inclusive approach, the use of local learning materials, and teachers acting as change agents are highly effective strategies for achieving these goals.

An inclusive approach means integrating gender issues into the English curriculum, which helps students understand gender diversity and strengthens women's identity and confidence. Using learning materials relevant to the local context helps create connections between classroom learning and everyday life, while the teacher's role as a change agent helps shape students' views and attitudes toward gender issues.

This article is particularly relevant in the context of education and community development. By identifying effective English language teaching strategies for raising awareness of women's empowerment, this article can guide education practitioners, teachers, and policymakers to design inclusive, gender equality-oriented learning programs.

Besides, this article has far-reaching implications for society's development. By raising awareness of women's empowerment through education, we can create a more just, inclusive, and sustainable society. Empowered women who feel supported will become powerful agents of change, creating positive changes in society.

### **Directions for Further Research:**

Future research should investigate effective English teaching strategies to increase awareness of women's empowerment in various cultural and social contexts. Each society has its unique norms, values, and challenges in the fight for gender equality, hence requiring more in-depth research to understand these contexts better.

Furthermore, future research can include a more comprehensive analysis of the long-term impact of English teaching strategies on students' attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. We can design more effective and sustainable educational programs by better understanding how English language teaching can shape students' thinking and attitudes toward gender issues.

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