

Addressing LGBTQ+ Diversity and Inclusion in ELT

Joshua M. Paíz, Ph.D.

The George Washington University

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Expectations

LGBTQ+ Diversity and Inclusion

Presentation Overview

- Positionality: The *who* and the *how*
- Exigency: The *so what*
- Key terms: A queer(ed) primer
- Pedagogical framework: A possible path forward
- Challenges
- Dialogue

Positionality

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Exigency

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A starting point

Educators have a social responsibility to promote human dignity and to further social justice for [LGBTQ+ students]

Nelson (2009, p. 19).

Why it matters

- LGBTQ+ issues make up a non-trivial part of our students' lives (Moore, 2016; Nelson, 2009; Nguyen & Yang, 2015).
- EL Instructors feel under-prepared to handle LGBTQ+-themed discussion (MacDonald, El Metoui, Baynham, & Gray, 2014; Saunston, 2018)
- Teacher education programs largely ignore LGBTQ+ considerations (Paíz, 2018, 2019; Saunston, 2019)
- Mainstream ELT materials are predominantly heteronormative (Grey, 2013; Paíz, 2015)
- Non-normative identity performance are often treated as linguistic failure or behavioral issues in language classroom (Liddicoat, 2009, Moita-Lopes, 2006)

What's at stake

Transgender and gender nonconforming (trans/GNC) youth are experiencing **extremely hostile climates in US schools.**

83.7% of transgender & 69.9% of gender nonconforming students were bullied/harassed at school because of gender.

Over 4 in 10

trans/GNC students face gender-related discrimination at school, including:

2017 National School Climate Survey
Learn more at glsen.org/nscs

GLSEN[®]



42.1% of trans/GNC students have been prevented from using their preferred name or pronoun.



46.5% of trans/GNC students have been required to use the incorrect bathroom.

When we
move the
needle

*LGBTQ students in schools with an
LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum
are **less likely to feel unsafe at
school** because of their sexual
orientation (41.8% vs. 63.3%)
and gender expression
(34.6% vs. 47.0%)*



2017 National School Climate Survey
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Learning how to talk critically and fluently about sex and sexuality composes a significant part of becoming literate in our society. Being able to address sexuality issues intelligently, critically, and comfortably is vital if we are to participate in some of the most important debates of our time

Alexander, 2008, p. 2

Key Terms

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During this
presentation
you'll hear
things like...

- Queer/queering (v.)
- Heteronormative/heteronormativity
- LGBTQ+
- Trans(gender) and Gender Non-conforming
- Queer-inquiry Based Pedagogies
- Frigid Contexts

A Queer-inquiry Based Pedagogical Framework

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Guiding Principles

- Restive problematizing of all identities and discourses (Nelson, 2009; Pennycook, 2001)
- Exposing & interrogating normativity in all its forms (Nelson, 2006)
- Creating space for marginalized voices and Identities (Vandrick, 2001)
- Fostering respectful engagement with disparate worldviews (Merse, 2017; Paíz, 2019).

Pedagogical Aims

- Raise awareness of LGBTQ+ lives and concerns (Krause, 2017; Paíz, 2019)
- Introduce the linguistically situated ways that we index and perform identities (Nguyen & Huang, 2015; Paíz, 2020 a,b)
- Foster critical thinking (Merse, 2017; Nelson, 2009)
- Equip students with the linguistic and rhetorical skills needed to advocate for self and others (Moore, 2016; Nelson, 2009; Paíz, 2020 a,b)

Strategies for Queering ELT

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Exploring with your students can help to

- Individualize learning;
- Decenter the classroom;
- Queer students' perception of expertise;
- Uncover locally relevant, real-world LGBTQ+ experiences and language.

Find space
throughout
the curriculum

- Avoid “Gay Day” special topics
- Create value around LGBTQ+ discussions as a part of critical literacy and acculturation
- Underscore how LGBTQ+ issues are performed and parsed through different linguistic and rhetorical functions

Engage in critical close reading and discussion

- Is where the “rubber meets the road”
- Makes explicit how language and our assumptions work together to create our perception of reality
- Draws attention to how normative discourses silence certain lives

Tie LGBTQ+ content to learning goals

- Shows that sexuality is important part of acquiring an L2 and a sense of self in it
- Contributes to desensationalizing LGBTQ+ content and discussions
- Aids in gaining student & administrative buy in

Focus on respectful engagement

- Avoid an “evangelical” hearts and minds campaign (see Krause, 2017)
- Create space for dissenting voices
- Model respectful engagement
- Showcase the linguistic and rhetorical strategies for respectful disagreement

Small Changes for Queering Classroom Practice

- Add “preferred pronouns” to opening week discussions and “Hi, my name is...” name plates.
- Have classroom decorations that are non-normative in their representation of families, possible careers, couplings, play-styles, physical abilities appearances, and ages.
- Make space for discussions about singular “they” in grammar lessons, focusing on the social realities that this pronoun choice reflects and why using someone’s preferred pronouns matters.

Small Changes for Queering Classroom Practice

- Have a policy of respectful engagement in your syllabus and model it for students.
- When discussing relationships use purposefully clunky or gender-neutral terms like “boyfriend and/or girlfriend” or “dating partner” or “significant other”
- Invite LGBTQ+ immigrants/international students to class to discuss the challenges of acculturating to a new place.

Challenges

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Common Challenges Faced in Queering the Classroom

- Stakeholder Resistance
- Dearth of Materials
- Lack of Training/Preparation

Key Take-aways

- Respect that we are all at different starting points in our engagement with LGBTQ+ issues.
- Take time to critically reflect on your queer pedagogy.
- Recall that even small changes can have profound impacts.
- Bear in mind that it is not only up to community insiders to build LGBTQ+-inclusive classroom spaces in the ELT context.

Thanks for listening!

Joshua M. Paíz, Ph.D.
The George Washington University
jpaiz [at] gwu [dot] edu

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