A framework toward inclusive practices in EFL: The example of LGBTQI+ identities

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Equality, diversity, and inclusion are at the core of all educational reforms taking place at this moment around the world. However, the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) industry has not yet followed through. This chapter focuses on the inclusion of LGBTQI+ references in EFL materials as an example of inclusive practice but aims to be adaptable to any other groups affected by exclusion. Despite recent attempts to address this issue in international and local conferences, coursebooks seem to be hesitant to include LGBTQI+ references which can challenge the visibility of such identities from the EFL classroom. In justifying the need for inclusion of LGBTQI+ references in the EFL classroom, this chapter draws on motivation, queer studies, and materials development theories. In doing so, it confirms the invisibility of LGBTQI+ references in published mainstream English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks and it explains how learners' motivation is affected by this invisibility. Once the need for inclusion of LGBTQI+ identities is established, the chapter offers a practical framework for materials design and overall equality, diversity, and inclusion practices in the 21st century classroom. These can be used by classroom practitioners in order for them to provide their learners with lessons and learning environments which are inclusive for all. Additionally, this framework focuses on raising learners' awareness of the linguistic aspect of discriminatory behaviour toward LGBTQI+ individuals and, in effect, eliminate it.

Introduction

The absence of queer references, i.e., references to any non-heterosexual identities or practices, in ELT materials has been researched and criticised by a number of scholars (Gray 2013; Thornbury, 2013). Recent attempts to provide more visibility include the introduction of journals focusing on LGBT issues in education (e.g., *Journal of LGBT Youth*; *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education*), and the inclusion of queer references to ELT syllabi (Nelson, 2009). Despite these attempts, there is a need to revisit the issue until learners are presented with materials that do not focus on a limited view of the world (Masuhara et al., 2008) or discriminate against certain identities.

Most studies on this subject focus on the ways heterosexuality and homosexuality are treated to satisfy the financial markets (D'Emilio, 1993; Giddens, 1992; Gray 2013; Thornbury, 2013). For example, homosexual references are sometimes being

perceived and treated as deviant and other times as normal in relation to whether such representation generates profit or not. This, though, is not the case in the business of ELT where market segmentation is not an option; there are "specific markets, and in particular educational markets, [which require heteronormative content]" (Gray, 2013, p. 46).

Why should queer references be present in classroom material?

According to Nelson (2010), among other reasons, queer references should be included in ELT materials to enable learners to participate in all social interactions in English-speaking settings, to promote equality in whose voice is heard in the classroom, to help learners explore their identities, and to contribute to the fight against heteronormativity. In the past (Bollas, 2016), I discussed the absence of queer references in ELT materials in relation to the *Ideal Self*, a theory of motivation proposed by Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009). I argued that the complete absence of queer references in ELT materials does not allow the Ideal Self to be anything but heterosexual and I explored the extent in which this affects learners' motivation in learning English as a foreign or second language.

In this chapter, I want to explore the topic using Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory to highlight how the absence of queer references in learning materials deprives learners of assuming – let alone performing – their gender when they are in an English-speaking setting. I will first discuss the emergence of the ideal self and its relation to heteronormativity and then, I will make connections with Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory. In doing this, I aim to add an additional reason to Nelson's (2010) list, discussed above, as to why ELT materials should include queer references, arguing that without such references, individuals are urged to keep their gender identities in the closet.

The emergence of the L2 Motivational Self System

Before Ushioda and Dörnyei's (2009) *L2 Motivational Self System* was presented, the accepted theory of motivation in foreign/second language learning was Gardner and Lambert's (1972) *Integrative Orientation Theory*. According to this theory, learners' motivation is related to their "interest in the people and culture [of] the other group" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132). By *other group* one would understand one of the BANA countries, i.e., Britain, Australasian, and North America (Holliday, 1994). The emergence of English as an international language, though, led many scholars to challenge the validity of this theory. The fact that there was no longer a group who owned the language made it difficult to define the other group Gardner and Lambert (1972) referred to. They argued that in order for one to become a successful language user, "one must be willing to identify with members of another ethnolinguistic group and take on very subtle aspects of their behavior" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 135).

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If there is no specific 'ethnolinguistic group,' whose behaviour is to be taken on? Among other critics (see Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Graddol, 2006; McDonough, 1981), Ushioda (2006) argued that this theory can no longer hold true since the language learner already belongs to the other group; the other group is now the entire global community.

Addressing this issue, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) developed the *L2 Motivational Self System*, according to which

> If proficiency in the target language is part and parcel of one's ideal [the characteristics they would like to have] or ought-to self [the characteristics they think they ought to have], this will serve as a powerful motivator to learn the language because of our psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between our current and possible future selves. (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009, p. 4)

The closest to this *ideal self*, Dörnyei (2009) argues, are users of the target language. Therefore, for a learner to be attracted to an L2 ideal self, they would have to be positive toward users of the target language. Learners' contact with users of the target language occurs in various ways: songs, TV programmes, literature, newspapers, movies, travel, etc. However, the most formal contact occurs through language learning materials used in ELT classrooms.

The three aspects of the *L2 Motivational Self System* are: the *ideal L2 self*, the *ought-to L2 self*, and the *L2 learning experience* (Dörnyei, 2009). While the ideal and ought-to selves are related to characteristics a learner would like to have or characteristics they think they should have in order for them to become successful users of the language, the *L2 learning experience* refers to "the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, [and] the experience of success" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29).

Extensive research is conducted to establish how the Ideal L2 self emerges and where it comes from. Some research (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; Dörnyei, 2009) suggests that teenagers produce several possible ideal selves, possibly influenced by their parents, peers, and other fictional or real role models. People, Zentner and Renaud (2007) argue, explore these possible ideal selves during their teenage years and until they decide on their chosen ideal self. To further investigate the origin and formation of the ideal self, researchers (Hock et al., 2006; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006) explored the relationship between coursebook characters and learners' chosen ideal selves. However, these activities,

> presuppose that the learners have been exposed to a variety of possible future variations of their ideal selves and that they are either provided with or already have the language to name and describe their own idealised variation of their future adult self. (Bollas, 2016, p. 8)

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Coursebooks present "particular constructions of reality" (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p. 3). Queer references, though, are nowhere to be found in ELT materials (Gray 2013) and coursebook "[gays] are still firmly in the coursebook closet" as "coursebook people are never gay" (Thornbury, 1999, p. 15). As a result, learners are given a heteronormative set of possible ideal selves to choose from. It is, therefore, important that we focus on representation in ELT materials and explore its impact on individuals.

In an attempt to understand the impact of the complete absence of queer references in ELT materials on language learners, I will discuss Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory and how it relates to Ushioda and Dörnyei's (2009) *L2 Motivational Self System.*

From Ushioda and Dörnyei to Butler's gender performativity

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) challenges our understanding of gender by questioning the heteronormative institutions and societal forces which define gender within the male-female binary. In doing so, Butler (1990) analyses gender as a concept and connects it with the concept of performance. She argues that

> gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. (Butler, 1990, p. 25)

This is not to say that one wakes up in the morning, chooses what gender they want to perform on that day, and perform it. This, as Butler (2011) explained later on in an interview, would mean that gender exists and has certain qualities, characteristics, and expressions which are universal, and that these are set in stone. In the second edition of her seminal *Gender Trouble,* Butler (2011), revisits gender performativity and explains that the performance is not produced by the individual but that the individual is produced by the performance. "There is no 'being' behind doing" she argues; "'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (Butler, 2006, p. 25). Butler (2006) challenges not only the norms but all those institutions which set the norms. She suggests that individuals do not choose what sort of performance they will put on on any given day; their options are pre-defined by the means that are available to them (i.e., limitations set by the heteronormative society) and their identity is being defined as they are performing their gender (i.e., as they are adhering to societal constrains).

It seems that the relationship between the individual and gender is one of a vicious circle whereby the individual has no say over their gender identity and their gender identity is being defined by the actions of the individual; actions which are determined by society to maintain the heteronormative matrix (Butler, 1998), the political entity

which "promote[s] and produce[s] heterosexuality as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged, and necessary" (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 55), and which "[makes] the world of tradition experienced as a 'natural world' and taken for granted" (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 164).

One's gender identity is, therefore, bound to be deemed deviant if their gender performance does not conform to the heteronormative performative conventions of being either male or female. It is, though, still possible for an individual to choose to deviate (sic) from the norm. When learning English as a foreign language, though, the individual does not have the choice of deviating (sic). By combining Butler's (2006) gender performativity theory with Ushioda and Dörnyei's (2009) *L2 Motivational Self System*, it becomes evident that when one is learning English as a foreign or second language, their *learning experience* is strictly heteronormative, presenting them only with heterosexual ideal and ought-to L2 selves. In an English-speaking context, therefore, a learner of English cannot but be a heterosexual male or female, not because they chose to do so, but because there was no choice at all to start with. The English-speaking culture prescribes nothing but compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) through English language learning materials.

A framework for adapting materials, making them more inclusive

So far, I have established the absence of LGBTQI+ references in EFL published materials. I have also established that such an absence can have an effect on learners' motivation by depriving them of the opportunity to identify with an ideal self which is, for lack of a better term, ideal for them. Finally, I argued that another effect of lack of LGBTQI+ references is the erasure of non-heterosexual identities.

Ignorance or, in this case, lack of exposure leads to discriminatory behaviour. In its mildest form, this can be translated in learners refusing to do pair or group work with particular learners or having an unwelcoming attitude toward other learners. In its most extreme form, though, it can result in snigger, laughter, and the use of offensive language, body language, and gestures.

Following the theoretical discussion and suggestions that were presented earlier in this chapter, I propose an adapted version of Jolly and Bolitho's framework (2011)[1]

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[1] In their seminal chapter, *A Framework for Materials Writing*, Jolly and Bolitho (2011) provide materials writers and classroom practitioners with a framework for materials design. Their framework includes the following seven steps:
1. Identification of need for materials
2. Exploration of need
3. Contextual realisation of materials
4. Pedagogical realisation of materials
5. Production of materials
6. Usage of materials by students
7. Evaluation of materials

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that can be used by language teachers who want to provide their learners with inclusive materials. In doing so, I acknowledge that not all language teachers have the time, energy, or training to design classroom materials so the framework is to be used in conjunction with coursebook or any other published material teachers use in their lessons. The framework is broken down into a logical sequence of stages. Each stage is followed by guiding questions and practical applications and/or examples that make it adaptable in different contexts and situations.

Stage 1: Identify the need for adaptation of current material in use

Guiding question
How does the unit/module/handout you are about to use promote a heteronormative view of the world?

Practical application/example
The unit in question focuses on family-related vocabulary. Both the language presented in the material and the accompanying visual aids present a heteronormative family model. When preparing for this lesson, you might feel that this is a limited view which could, potentially, make some of your learners feel mis- or under-represented, or even excluded. You identify a need to adapt the material.

Stage 2: Explore the options you have

Guiding questions
What is the most effective and efficient manner to adapt the material? Should I rewrite it? Should I provide learners with supplementary visual aids or should I address the issue orally in class?

Practical application/example
There are many ways in which the example family unit can be adapted. You can provide learners with supplementary visual aids depicting a wider range of possible families (same-sex families where both parents are males, same-sex families where both parents are females, families with no children and with a number of sex and gender combinations for the couple). Another option is to set up discussion questions which make learners critically evaluate the unit in relation to how inclusive it is. You can also turn this into a collaborative task where learners work together and redesign the unit in groups and, then, they present their work to the rest of the class.

Stage 3: Be aware of the teaching and learning context within which you work

Guiding questions
Does your institution have an Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity (EDI) policy? How is your learner's affective engagement and motivation going to be impacted by the

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adaptation of materials? Are there any legal restrictions or requirements that you need to abide with?

Practical applications/examples
There are institutions that operate under certain accreditation schemes which deem any sort of discrimination based on sexual orientation unacceptable. At the same time, there are countries where non-heteronormative identities and practices are illegal. Before proceeding with an adapted version of the materials, consult with a supervisor at your institution or with the local educational authorities. Ensure that your decisions comply with legal and institutional requirements.

Stage 4: Identify how your proposed adaptation enhances your learners' linguistic awareness

Guiding questions
How will my learners' linguistic proficiency benefit as a result of my adaptation?

Practical applications/examples
In a training seminar, El-Metoui (2018) discussed the importance of focusing on language functions in class as a way to prevent or address discriminatory behaviour in the language classroom. In particular, she invited the participants to think about ways of eliciting the differences between the following: an insult and an opinion, accepting and agreeing, normal and normative, religious teaching and personal interpretation, prejudice and bigotry, and prejudice and discrimination. Consider the scenario with the unit on family. Let us imagine that as part of your adaptation, you ask learners to discuss whether the pictures of the unit reflect a range of families or just one particular type of family. To ensure you focus on the development of your learners' linguistic proficiency, you might want to focus on functional exponents they can use to express their opinions in a non-offensive way. In doing so, the benefit is twofold. On the one hand, the activity becomes a vehicle for language work where learners focus on using the functional exponents you presented them with. On the other hand, they are given opportunities to discuss relevant issues of sexuality and gender in a non-offensive manner.

Stage 5: Put your adapted materials into use and evaluate their effectiveness

Guiding questions
What are the strengths of the adapted materials? What are their weaknesses? Do they benefit my learners? In what ways? Can I use them again? Do I need to further adapt them?

Practical applications/examples
Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) propose three categories of evaluation: pre-use, in-use, and post-use evaluation. All three stages of evaluation are very important in the

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process of materials design. However, in-use and post-use materials evaluation are easier for less experienced teachers than pre-use. Here, I suggest that you take some time to observe your learners while they are working with your materials and take some notes based on the guiding questions above. Then, after the lesson, take some time to further reflect on the usefulness of your materials. Were your aims achieved? At this stage, do not proceed with any decision-making regarding the adapted materials you created. Proceed to the next stage first and ensure you give your learners opportunities to give you some feedback.

Stage 6: Involve your learners in the evaluation process

Guiding questions
What was the purpose of this task/material? Do you think this activity/material was useful? Would you like to perform similar tasks/work with similar materials in the future?

Practical application/example
You might want to consider asking these questions in open class mode or, even better, you might choose to ask them to reflect on the effectiveness/usefulness of the tasks/materials individually in writing, by completing a questionnaire, or orally. No matter how you decide to apply this, do not forget that asking for your learners' feedback is a vital step in the evaluation process.

Stage 7: Adapt and reuse as appropriate

Guiding questions
Can I use the same materials with learners of different levels? Can I use the materials with learners of different cultural backgrounds?

Practical application/example
What applies to one class may not apply in another one. In this regard, after evaluating and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the materials you have designed and before adapting them, it is important to take into account learners' linguistic and cultural background.

Conclusion

I wish to end this chapter with El-Metoui's (2018) suggestion that equality, diversity, and inclusion practices are not about changing someone's mind in a confrontational manner; they are about developing respect among our learners and raising awareness of the impact of what they are saying when expressing themselves in another language. At the end of the day, we need to remind ourselves that we are language teachers and our job should be to focus on developing our learners' language skills.

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Therefore, we should be able to address language which is related to all sexualities, as well as address issues of appropriacy related to discriminatory behaviour.

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