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## **Reflections on the co-development of ESOL teaching material exploring LGBT lives**

### **Abstract**

In recent years, the place of sexuality and gender identity in the ESOL classroom has been the subject of much debate among UK-based ESOL practitioners. This has partly been prompted by changes in the UK legal context: the 2010 Equality Act identifies a variety of settings, including education, where discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the basis of nine protected characteristics is explicitly forbidden; these protected characteristics include sexual orientation, gender identity and marriage status. This chapter reflects on the co-development of the resource 'Engaging with LGBT and Migrant Equalities: Activities for the ESOL Classroom', which aimed to address the dearth of LGBT representations in commercial ELT material. Its development was informed by conversations with Scotland-based ESOL practitioners about their practice and about how the resource might build on and fit into current delivery. The chapter reflects on the resonance and limitations of the resource, and the potential questions these raise for critical LGBT-friendly pedagogies.

### **Keywords:**

Sexuality and gender; ESOL material writing; multiculturalism; critical pedagogies; queer pedagogies

### **Introduction**

LGBT individuals continue to be largely invisible in commercial UK-produced ELT materials, despite a general trend to make such resources more inclusive and diverse with regards to, for example, gender, multiculturalism and able-bodiedness (Gray 2013). This absence is mostly driven by commercial concerns, as UK publishers seek to produce materials designed to appeal to a global market, including countries where LGBT issues are considered culturally taboo or where state-sponsored homophobia is institutionalised through law (*ibid.*). However, it also reflects a widespread perception that LGBT issues are a highly sensitive and contentious topic in the multicultural context of the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classroom, and thus one that is best avoided alongside other potentially controversial issues. The acronym 'PARSNIP'<sup>1</sup> encompasses a range of topics that global coursebooks purposefully avoid, and that practitioners are generally discouraged from addressing while training to become ESOL or EFL teachers, in order to keep class interaction 'safe' (Sunderland, this volume). Erasing sexual orientation and gender identity as a topic or area for discussion from the ESOL classroom, however, perpetuates exclusionary social norms and prejudices, negatively affecting the experiences of LGBT students and teachers (Nelson 2009; Gray 2013). Deliberate avoidance of these topics by teachers also offers no guarantee that these will not

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<sup>1</sup> Politics, Alcohol, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, Isms (such as communism, atheism), Porn (Aldridge-Morris 2016).

arise spontaneously in classroom interaction, potentially leaving teachers unprepared to handle interactions that may indeed be challenging or confrontational (Macdonald et al 2014).

In recent years, the place of sexuality and gender identity in the ESOL classroom has been the subject of a much needed debate among UK-based ESOL practitioners. This debate has partly been prompted by changes in the UK legal context: the 2010 Equality Act identifies a variety of settings, including education, where discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the basis of nine protected characteristics is explicitly forbidden; these protected characteristics include sexual orientation, gender identity and marriage status. The Queering ESOL seminar series (2013-15) brought together practitioners and academics from a range of disciplines and areas of professional activity, and facilitated focussed discussion on LGBT issues in ESOL environments, building on long-standing debates among practitioners about the importance of person-centred learning, critical enquiry and principles of social justice in the ESOL classroom<sup>2</sup>.

This chapter charts the development of a freely available resource we co-authored, which aimed to address the absence of LGBT issues in commercial ELT material (Stella, Macdougall et al. 2018)<sup>3</sup>. The resource, entitled 'Engaging with LGBT and migrant equalities: Activities for the ESOL classroom', was designed for adult ESOL contexts and includes real stories of LGBT migrants in Scotland collected for a previous research project, 'Intimate Migrations' (IM)<sup>4</sup>. The original idea for the booklet was inspired by the abovementioned Queering ESOL initiative and by engagement with a range of practitioners from the voluntary, public and educational sector undertaken for the IM project. The resource is also informed by formal and informal conversations with Scotland-based ESOL practitioners and managers about their practice and about how the resource itself might build on and fit into current delivery.

The chapter briefly contextualises work on the resource within the Scottish/UK context (section 1) and the relevant literature (section 2). It then provides a reflexive account of how the resource was developed, focussing on issues of co-production, on input from ESOL practitioners and how this shaped the resource; it also draws on discussion and feedback during an event held in April 2018 to launch the resource. The chapter focuses on the development of course material, rather than on its evaluation, adaptation and exploitation (Tomlinson 2012), although work is underway to evaluate the resource through feedback from ESOL practitioners and students. The chapter concludes with some reflections about the possible resonance and limitations of the resource, and the potential questions these raise for critical LGBT-friendly pedagogies.

### **Equality legislation, LGBT issues and ESOL provision in Scotland**

Significant changes in the legal framework concerning equality and diversity, and the ensuing obligations these place on the education sector to translate them into practice, have occurred in the UK (and in Scotland) over the past several years. These changes are the backdrop against which

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<sup>2</sup> <https://queeringesol.wordpress.com/>, last accessed 4/3/2019.

<sup>3</sup> The project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (grant no. 77380/1).

<sup>4</sup> [www.intimatemigrations.net](http://www.intimatemigrations.net), last accessed 4/3/2019.

recent debates on inclusion of LGBT issues in the ESOL classroom have unfolded, and are outlined here as part of the broader socio-political context that we, and the ESOL practitioners we spoke to, are working within.

Of particular relevance to our discussion is the 2010 Equality Act, which consolidated previous legislation to create a unified piece of equality legislation encompassing nine protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; and sexual orientation. The Equality Act also placed an active duty on public sector organisations, including educational settings, to:

- 'a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.'<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of the Equality Act 2010 was to bring together and harmonise the complicated range of acts and regulations that form the basis of anti-discrimination law in the UK; the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics reflects a much changed socio-political landscape with regards to LGBT rights in the UK. Since the early 2000s there has been a marked shift away from discriminatory towards LGBT-affirmative legislation and policy. Laws found to be openly discriminating against LGBT citizens were amended or repealed, including: legislation establishing a higher age of consent for sex between men; a clause forbidding schools from teaching 'the acceptability of homosexuality' (Local Government Act 1988:27, quoted in Gray 2013: 41); and a ban preventing gay men and lesbians from serving in the military (Harding 2011:1). Positive legal recognition of LGBT citizens includes provision to change one's legal gender, and the protection of family rights (such as recognition of same-sex couples through civil partnership and later marriage; and equal access to adoption and assisted reproductive technology for opposite and same-sex couples, as well as single persons).

It is important to note that there are significant variations in legislation and policy across the four 'home nations' of the United Kingdom<sup>6</sup>: the central Westminster government retains power over so-called reserved matters, while other matters that have been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales. Scotland has had a devolved government since 1999, with the power to legislate over a range of devolved matters, including education. In the last few years, Scotland has also been ranked as one of the most progressive countries for LGBTI equality in the Rainbow Europe Index, meeting a higher number of criteria and therefore coming ahead of other UK 'home nations' (Cuthbertson 2015; Harrison 2016). In 2018, the Scottish Government pledged to embed LGBTI inclusive education in the school curriculum, claiming to be the first country in the world to do so; although ESOL provision is not part of the school

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/corporate-reporting/equality-and-diversity/public-sector-equality-duty>, last accessed 21/12/2018.

<sup>6</sup> England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

curriculum, and therefore will remain unaffected by this initiative, this is indicative of support for LGBT rights from the Scottish government and across the political spectrum (Brooks 2018). Scotland's latest official Strategy for adult ESOL learners references the 2010 Equality Act; it succinctly states that one of the Strategy's objectives is to 'support equality and diversity', and mentions that 'ESOL learners cut across all the protected characteristics', although it does not spell out what the protected characteristics are, or offer any guidance on how ESOL providers are supposed to implement the objective of supporting equality and diversity (Education Scotland 2015: 22). It acknowledges that ESOL providers make an important contribution to 'promoting equality and diversity with ESOL learners coming from a wide variety of backgrounds', and mentions three areas in which ESOL providers can make a contribution: through a generic awareness that ESOL learners 'cut across all the protected characteristics'; through advancing equality of opportunity by helping ESOL learners to overcome language barriers, therefore enabling their 'participation and integration in Scottish life through work, study, family and local community' (*ibid.*: 2); and through fostering positive relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The legal and policy context outlined above is important to keep in mind, because it definitely informed ESOL providers' willingness to engage with us. Over the course of the IM research project, Francesca and another researcher visited a number of Further Education colleges to advertise the project to their ESOL students. The head of ESOL in one of the colleges commented that having us deliver a short talk to their students about the project was good for the college because it 'ticked a lot of boxes', including equality and diversity. At another College, we were invited to attend a regular meeting focussing on issues of inclusion, equality and diversity, where we learned that the College was working towards the LGBT Charter Award, a certificate awarded to organisations upon the successful completion of a programme designed by the organisation LGBT Youth Scotland. The programme supports organisations to 'undertake training and review policies, practice and resources' aimed at making them more inclusive for LGBT employees, customers and service users and at making sure they meet the legal obligations set out by the Equality Act 2010<sup>7</sup>. When we approached Mandy Watts, the ESOL Development Officer at Education Scotland, about a tentative idea to produce a toolkit on LGBT equalities for the ESOL classroom, she responded very positively, and mentioned that, in response to the ESOL Strategy's objective to support equality and diversity, Education Scotland was looking to develop specific work in this area and was interested in addressing potential barriers LGBT ESOL learners may face. She also mentioned that ESOL learners come across language related to sexual orientation and gender identity upon enrolment, when they are asked to complete equality monitoring forms (again, monitoring is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010); ESOL learners, especially those with lower levels of English proficiency, often struggle to understand the vocabulary and find such forms confusing. Partly as a result of the equality monitoring forms, issues around sexual orientation and gender identity can become a talking point in class from the beginning, yet many ESOL teachers are unsure about how to deal with them.

Although our engagement with ESOL providers was admittedly limited in scope, we had the distinct impression that the legal and policy context resulted in a heightened awareness of equality and

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1511/lgbt-charter-brochure.pdf>, last accessed 20.12.2018.

diversity issues, including LGBT equality, and made many ESOL providers we approached responsive to our work. At the same time, LGBT equality was perceived as a potentially sensitive issue calling for caution. Conversations with ESOL managers and practitioners confirmed that, in keeping with the general wisdom of avoiding controversial 'PARSNIP' topics to keep class interaction 'safe', ways of approaching delivery related to LGBT issues were generally not covered in specific ESOL teacher training, while institutional training about LGBT issues equality for ESOL teachers, when offered, was limited to a reference within more generic training on equality and diversity. Moreover, there were different views among ESOL professionals about how they understood their responsibilities in this area of work, a topic that will be explored in more detail in the conclusions.

Equality legislation does not provide a clear roadmap of where teachers' responsibilities lie in eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between those who share a characteristic and those who do not. Indeed, research has highlighted the issue of 'potentially competing equality claims, instances where the "equalities" claimed by one group or individual threaten, or are perceived to threaten, the equality of others' (Equality and Diversity Forum 2010: 5; Clucas 2012), such as disputes arising around the rights of same sex couples to adopt children from Catholic adoption agencies, as the official teachings of the Catholic Church condemn homosexuality as immoral and unnatural. Issues of faith and belief, cultural identity and ethnicity are seen as especially sensitive in the adult ESOL context, as adults learning English as a second or other language are typically migrants (including economic migrants as well as asylum seekers and refugees), or learners from a migrant background (typically from settled minority ethnic communities) (Education Scotland 2015:2-3). Discussing sexual and gender diversity in the adult ESOL classroom presents specific challenges for teachers, as adult learners often come to class with strong, fully-formed views on these issues. It is perhaps no wonder that, in the multicultural environment of the adult ESOL classroom, topics that may clash with the cultural and religious sensibilities of learners are approached with caution, apprehension or reluctance, when they are not left well alone. Indeed, Kubota argues that ESOL and EFL teachers are usually regarded in educational institutions as 'natural' advocates for multiculturalism and cultural diversity, and required to display qualities such as 'open-mindedness and non-prejudiced attitudes in interacting with people with diverse racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds' (Kubota 2004: 30). However, Kubota argues that the liberal multiculturalism often promoted and espoused in ESOL contexts, while well-meaning, is built upon a superficial and uncritical form of political correctness and premised on essentialising and decontextualized understandings of 'other' cultures; liberal multiculturalism, Kubota argues, 'is often unable to elaborate on an actual vision of multicultural education' (ibid.:3 2). A problem with this brand of multiculturalism in language education is that it is premised on the ideas that 'student cohorts [...] are multilingual and transnational, but rarely acknowledges that these cohorts are also multisexual' Nelson (2006:4). We start from the position that, in articulating a vision for a multicultural education, we must acknowledge that ESOL classrooms are diverse not just in terms of ethnicity and culture, but also with regards to sexuality and gender identity, even if this diversity may not be immediately apparent, as queer-identified students (and staff) may not always be visibly different or choose to come out. Paraphrasing Nelson (2006:4), we need to ask, 'what might it look like to think queerly *and* transnationally about the ESOL classroom?'

It has been argued that multiculturalism is at odds with gender and LGBT equality agendas, because through the protection of minority group rights multicultural policies turn a blind eye to patriarchal

and homophobic cultural traditions that are oppressive and controlling. This argument is premised upon the notion that, while 'western' cultures are not entirely exempt from sexism or homophobic prejudice, they have made substantial advances in gender and LGBTQI+ equalities that are potentially diluted or undermined by policies accommodating 'minority' customs and traditions (Okin 1999: 17-19; Tatchell 2009). Across Europe, these arguments have featured prominently in the recent political backlash against multiculturalism, put on trial for allegedly undermining social cohesion and condoning reprehensible practices through cultural relativism (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). Gender and LGBTQI+ equalities have sometimes been mobilised as distinctive national values that people from migrant backgrounds are expected to embrace, and coopted into discourses that demonise racialized migrant and ethnic communities, assumed to hail from deeply homophobic and sexist cultures (Puar 2007; Farris 2011).

We do not see multicultural education as inherently at odds with gender and LGBT equality agendas, even if we acknowledge the challenges of integrating LGBT issues into the ESOL curriculum. We would caution against the essentialist understandings of both 'minority' and 'majority' cultures underpinning both 'liberal multicultural' and 'anti-multicultural' arguments, as both display a 'tendency to represent cultures as more distinct from one another, less marked by internal contestation, and more determining of individual behaviour, than is ever the case' (Dustin and Phillips 2008: 408; May 1999). Indeed, we approach with scepticism claims that LGBT-positive legislation in Scotland can be straightforwardly taken as a measure of equality or a universally shared 'national value', as formal equality can mask and perpetuate persisting inequalities. The resource we produced was guided by the principle that we should be mindful of the power dynamics affecting the ESOL classroom as a migratory context, and avoid unhelpful polarisations between 'us' and 'them'. This is especially important in the current UK context, where debates on migration has become increasingly politicised and creating an environment hostile to migrants has become government policy.

## **2. The project**

Work on the resource 'Engaging with LGBT and migrant equalities: Activities for the ESOL classroom' has its roots in a previous ESRC-funded research project, called 'Intimate Migrations'. IM was a qualitative project exploring the experiences of LGBT migrants from Central Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union living in Scotland. The UK as a whole has experienced very substantial immigration from this region, particularly since 2004, where many countries in the region became members of the EU; while this migration is widely understood to be primarily economic in nature, the project aimed to explore the role that sexual orientation and gender identity played in motivations to migrate, experiences of migration and resettlement and plans for the future. Wary of according 'excessive explanatory power to sexuality' (Stella 2015: 58), we aimed to capture a diverse group of migrants in terms of ethnicity, nationality, migrant status, class and gender, and to examine how these factors shaped their experiences, sense of belonging and social networks, alongside sexuality and gender identity.

The IM project also had a more applied dimension: mindful of the gap in our knowledge about the experiences of LGBT people from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK identified in both academic and grey literature (Stonewall and Runnymede Trust 2007; Equality Network and BEMIS 2009; Kuntsman and Miyake 2008), we engaged with a range of Scotland-based stakeholders

from the voluntary and public sectors. The aim of this engagement was to share our findings and provide a platform for dialogue, for identifying gaps in service provisions and for pinpointing areas for future collaborative work, both research-based and applied. This engagement was facilitated by a Project Advisory Group (PAG) that Jennifer was invited to join as an experienced ESOL and TESOL practitioner; the PAG also included academics and representatives of three voluntary sector organisations, LGBT Youth Scotland<sup>8</sup>, West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC)<sup>9</sup> and BEMIS<sup>10</sup>. In addition, we engaged on an ad hoc basis with different organisations, and organised two dissemination and discussion events (April and December 2016), attended by a wide range of Scottish public and voluntary sector organisations<sup>11</sup>. The idea of an educational resource partly emerged from these discussions, which pointed us to work already being done as well as to the need for further work, including developing more inclusive resources and training on the protected characteristics for staff and service users, raising awareness of hate crime legislation, rights and service provision among LGBT and migrant populations, and making greater use of authentic stories and scenario-based discussions in resources and training (Stella, Flynn and Gawlewicz 2017).

Building on the insights and recommendations emerging from the consultation events, the project 'Developing Engagement on LGBT and migrant equalities' (2017-18) aimed to co-produce educational materials and was based on a collaboration between Francesca, Jennifer and practitioners from WSREC (Monique Campbell and, in the final stages, Ben Wilson). It was additionally supported by Education Scotland and by LGBT Youth Scotland, and Mel Cooke and Sheila Macdonald from the Queering ESOL project acted as a sounding board in the initial stages of the project. We initially planned a more generic resource to be used by staff from voluntary, educational and public sector organisations for both staff training and engagement with service users. However, as the project developed, we decided that this was too broad and narrowed our focus to the ESOL classroom and to youth and community groups. We produced two twin resources, with roughly the same content but tailored to different audiences, which are freely available to download from the IM project website (Stella, Macdougall et al. 2018; Stella, Campbell et al. 2018). Underpinning the resource was the idea of using some of the stories and the photographic material collected for the IM project. Beyond this, the content of the resources was largely shaped by four focus groups held in May-June 2017 with ESOL teachers (2 focus groups, 6 participants) and with practitioners from

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<sup>8</sup> A Scotland-wide organisation whose mission is to provide 'quality youth work to LGBTI young people that promotes their health and wellbeing, and to be a valued and influential partner in LGBTI equality and human rights' (<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/about-us/>).

<sup>9</sup> Originally founded in 1971 as a race equality organisation, WSREC currently works on all the protected characteristics named in the 2010 Equality Act (<https://www.wsrec.co.uk/about-us/>).

<sup>10</sup> A Scotland-wide 'Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland' (<https://bemis.org.uk/>).

<sup>11</sup> These included: LGBT organisations; migrant and race equality/Minority Ethnic organisations; equality and diversity officers, including representatives of the Scottish Government Equality Unit and Glasgow and Edinburgh City Councils; representatives from ESOL colleges; Police Scotland; sexual health charities; women's and violence against women organisations.



public and voluntary sector organisations (2 focus groups, 9 participants), and by conversations with other supporting organisations (in particular WSREC and Education Scotland's ESOL Strategy Group).

### **3. Developing the ESOL resource**

The ESOL resource was the product of team work<sup>12</sup>, but it crucially revolved around the collaboration we (Francesca and Jennifer) established through the IM project, and builds on our different professional backgrounds and perspectives: Francesca is a qualitative sociologist with research and teaching experience in the areas of sexuality, gender and migration, while Jennifer is an ESOL and TESOL practitioner with extensive experience of working with both students and teachers in the UK and internationally. We drew on insights from existing research on how LGBT themes are brought to, and experienced in the ESOL classroom, in particular the Queering ESOL seminar series and related research (Madonald et al 2014; Macdonald 2014). This research explored how UK-based ESOL practitioners understand their responsibilities in relation to LGBT and other equalities, and explored their motivations for exploring LGBT lives or not, as well as their experiences and concerns in this regard; finally, it offered recommendations about how ESOL teachers can be 'best supported to carry out their duties under the 2010 Equality Act' (Madonald et al 2014:8). The study revealed that, while willing to engage with other equalities issues such as racism, ESOL practitioners perceived LGBT themes as particularly risky because of potential cultural and faith sensitivities and fear of conflict. Many felt inhibited to introduce LGBT themes due to lack of knowledge, specific training and easily accessible published material. One of the project's key recommendations was the development of easily available new materials that include LGBT lives to meet the needs of students with a range of language proficiency levels, and our resource was designed to address this recommendation.

Creating LGBT-inclusive material can be a starting point for queering the ESOL classroom, because of the dearth of readily available material in commercial textbooks (Paiz 2017; Gray 2013). The invisibility of LGBT lives in teaching material reinforces the problematic assumption that all students and staff are heterosexual and cisgender, implicitly passing judgement about which identities are legitimised and valued in the target language community and thus reproducing prejudice and discrimination. This can make the ESOL classroom awkward or uncomfortable to navigate for LGBT learners, making it more difficult to talk openly about their identity and relationships (if they so wish), and affecting their motivation and learning experience (Nelson 2009; Liddicoat 2009; Moore 2016). The inclusion of LGBT themes in the ESOL curriculum, however, is important not only in creating a safe environment for queer-identified students; arguably, it is also relevant to the learning experience of non-queer identified students, as it gives them the opportunity to engage with real-life issues rather than sanitised material, and helps them to develop language to negotiate their belief system and socialise in a new country, where LGBT lives may be more visible than in their country of origin and social attitudes may be different (Macdonald et al 2014). For some recent migrants to the UK coming from societies where LGBT issues are taboo, this encounter with sexual and gender diversity may well start in ESOL contexts, for example through equality monitoring forms or through the visible presence of LGBT societies in Further Education Colleges (see also chapters by Sunderland and Sauntson, this volume).

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<sup>12</sup> The team also included Minna Liinpää and Jenny Speirs. Minna worked as a part-time researcher on the project, while Jenny created several images for the resources.

Arguably, the need for LGBT-inclusive material represents a curriculum design issue that programme leaders and individual teachers should be able to address regardless of the availability of ready-made material. Indeed, many of the ESOL practitioners from our focus groups (4 out of 6) had developed their own lessons and activities to include LGBT lives into the curriculum. However, in the face of time constraint and competing pressures, lack of ready-made material that can be used or adapted can be a barrier to integration of LGBT lives into the ESOL curriculum, discouraging in particular less experienced and confident teachers from doing so (Paiz 2017). We concur with Macdonald et al. (2014:23) that good practice on sexual diversity does not depend on the availability of ready-made material, but hinges more crucially on effective teaching strategies and opportunities for training and discussion. Consequently, the resource we developed was intended to be open-ended, and to offer activities that can be adapted, and ideas that can be developed by ESOL teachers to create their own material. The launch event, held in Glasgow in April 2018, included a workshop for ESOL practitioners to discuss the potential uses and adaptation of the resource, as well their own practice and ideas for material creation and integration into the curriculum.

The thoughtful input of the ESOL practitioners who took part in the focus groups, and of the ESOL Strategy Group, shaped the content and structure of the resource in important ways, as well as the teaching approach underpinning it.

### Content

An important point that emerged from our discussions was the importance of framing the LGBT content within a broader understanding of equality and diversity. Although focus group participants were committed to the idea of making the ESOL classroom safe for LGBT students, many talked about sexism and racism as more recurring and pressing issues in their teaching practice. ESOL practitioners talked about difficulties in bridging cultural norms and expectations arising not only with regards to sexuality and gender identity, but also to gender more broadly, noting for example that issues of sexual morality may be difficult to disentangle from gender norms (e.g. gender segregation as a way to protect women's 'honour'). In one focus group, participants mentioned episodes when male students were disrespectful or condescending towards female students or teachers, and there was some discussion of whether provision for women-only classes was culturally appropriate and helpful in getting more women from societies where gender segregation was the norm into ESOL classes, or whether this simply responded to a demand from husbands, and thus perpetuated women's segregation while failing to prepare them for the mixed-gender environments they would commonly encounter in the UK. A teacher from the same focus group talked at length about divisions along ethnic and racial lines among her diverse group of students, some of whom expressed racist and Islamophobic views, and struggling to respond to these situations. She went on to say that although the College where she worked expected equality and diversity to be included in the lessons, they offered very little guidance on how this could be done. The question of why LGBT issues had been singled out over other equality strands as the focus of the resource, and whether this implied a hierarchy of inequalities, was raised both during one of the focus group and at an ESOL Strategy Group meeting. On the back of these discussions, we decided to present LGBT issues as part of a broader dialogue on equality and diversity; this also made sense in terms of the legal policy context reflected in the Scotland ESOL Strategy's aim to 'support equality and diversity' and 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who don't'. One of the first activities included in the booklet, 'Equality and Diversity', explores

issues of human rights and the nine characteristics protected under the 2010 Equality Act, thus opening up a conversation about grounds on which individuals may be discriminated against or marginalised that can tap into students' meaningful experiences. Equalities and related themes of discrimination, marginalisation and rights feature as a recurring theme across most of the resource's activities, thus providing a thread and an overarching framework for the resource.

A key question discussed by practitioners was when and how to bring LGBT topics into the classroom. It was noted that this was much more difficult to do with low level classes, as limited English language skills constrained possibilities to engage with complex and potentially sensitive issues; language limitations may also make students' views sound more blunt, uncompromising or offensive when not always meant to be, potentially thwarting dialogue and adding to the risk of conflictual exchanges. Establishing rapport with the students and getting a sense of group dynamics was also considered important to gauge whether it would be safe or useful to explore LGBT issues. Three out of our six focus groups participants had introduced LGBT-related material and activities in class; this material ranged from Billy Bragg's song 'Sexuality', to Auden's poem 'Stop all the clocks', to including same-sex couples in lessons on the topic of family relations. One participant had had a particularly difficult experience in class after showing a video that included, among other characters, a gay couple; this had prompted a particularly negative reaction from a Cameroonian student, who had called the film an abomination, triggering a heated discussion she did not quite know how to handle. She had since followed the advice received at an ESOL workshop of integrating LGBT themes into broader activities, and noted that this may be more useful than discussing them in a standalone lesson. The other two practitioners similarly did not make LGBT issues the specific focus of their activity: for example, Auden's poem was introduced to the class as a prompt to discuss different kinds of love (e.g. romantic, motherly, friendship bonds), and the teacher only revealed at the end that the poem had been written by a man for another man. Macdonald's et al. (2014:23) similarly highlight ESOL practitioners' demand for material that includes LGBT people without making them the main topic, as a way to normalise LGBT lives and address their invisibility in the ESOL curriculum. In response to this, we split the resource into two parts: the first section comprises more general activities where sexual and gender diversity were made visible but were not the main topic; the second section focuses on the personal stories of LGBT migrants. The introductory activities focus on a range of topics ranging from families and social networks, to equality and diversity, adapting to life in a new country and ideas of home and belonging. All of these activities are likely to speak to most ESOL learners and to tap into their own experiences, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity; all of them, however, also make visible sexual and gender diversity. The 'Families and Diversity' activity encourages students to unpack the meaning of 'family', presenting them with a range of different family units, including single parent, same-sex, multi-ethnic and transnational families, and can be used in conjunction with the 'Equality and Diversity' activities described above to deepen discussions around diversity, equality and human rights. The other three activities ('Adapting to life in Scotland', 'Home is where the heart is' and 'Vita's nearest and dearest') are intended to prompt a discussion about the migrant experience, something we thought may resonate with many ESOL learners. In each activity, the starting point are texts or images adapted from the IM project on LGBT migration, where participants talk about their experiences of migration; LGBT themes are present, but again not obvious or central to these activities. These introductory activities are followed by five personal stories, most of which are adapted from interviews with LGBT migrants collected for the IM project. These story-based activities, more specifically focussed on LGBT lives,

can be used as a follow-up to the introductory ones, and thematic links between the introductory and story-based activities are highlighted (for example the 'Families and Diversity' activity can be used in conjunction with Nadya and Marta's story, on same-sex families). We thought that using real life stories of ordinary LGBT migrants would be particularly valuable in encouraging students to engage with LGBT perspectives and experiences, while avoiding the sensationalistic undertones sometimes found in material focussing on LGBT celebrities (Cashman and Trujillo 2017 quoted in Paiz 2017). We also thought that stories of LGBT *migrants* may facilitate an exploration of LGBT *and* migrant equalities, and be more relatable for ESOL learners. A clear limitation of these stories is that they reflect the experiences of white European migrants, and do not speak to the diversity of ESOL learners in terms of their racial, ethnic and faith backgrounds and migrant status. Our resource, however, was not intended to provide all the answers but rather to offer ideas and starting points for ESOL practitioners, who may want to use different stories that better reflect the realities of the learners they work with. With this in mind, we provided an example of how a newspaper article about two lesbian asylum seekers from Uganda can be adapted for classroom discussion.

A point raised by practitioners from focus groups and the ESOL Strategy Group is that any teaching material would have to have a clear language learning dimension, and ideally be designed to address the needs of learners with different English language proficiency levels. Some ESOL Strategy Group members wondered if an activity could be specifically developed to assist teachers and admin staff in explaining LGBT-related vocabulary included in equality monitoring forms, particularly to lower level students who struggled with them the most. To address the first point, we developed detailed lesson plans for some of the activities, which included 'Potential language work' boxes, with suggestions on how the material can be used to introduce students to new vocabulary and grammar structures, and to improve their language skills in core areas such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. For example, the 'Families and Diversity' activity includes a text about family and household composition in the UK that uses official statistics, with related language work on numbers. These statistics also feed into group discussion on the diversity of families. Although we tried to produce material for learners with a range of language proficiency levels, most of the activities from the resource are more suited to learners at intermediate levels and above. However, some of the introductory activities can be used or adapted for lower level students (for example 'Family and Diversity'). We decided against attempting to design an activity aimed at explaining LGBT-related vocabulary from equality monitoring forms to students. During a meeting of the ESOL Strategy group, it was suggested that we could produce a glossary coupled with visual representations of LGBTQI+ individuals for this purpose. Any representation of sexual and gender identity in ESOL material inevitably raises complex issues of inclusion and exclusion; to quote Nelson,

How is "a lesbian" to be represented in curricula or materials? Which characters or characteristics will be included, which excluded? If these representations come only from the target culture, are they sufficiently inclusive? (Nelson 1993: 376).

Throughout our work on the resource we had to grapple with these issues; however, we considered choosing visual images defining what a lesbian, or a transgender person is, especially problematic because they fix meaning and are less open to interpretation than stories. This would go against the material's aim of facilitating an exploration and critical discussion of sexual and gender identity. Some practitioners also pointed out that students' limited engagement with monitoring forms depended on a number of factors, including limited resources to support students in filling them in

(particularly on busy enrolment days), and students' uncertainty about the purpose of the form and related unwillingness to disclose personal information, particularly around sensitive issues like sexuality and disability that may carry stigma in their country of origin. We decided, however, to include a glossary mainly for the benefit of ESOL teachers, who raised the idea in focus groups, as they were sometimes unsure about the complex and evolving terminology related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

### Teacher's role and strategies

In line with findings from Nelson (2009) and Macdonald et al. (2014), a key concern voiced by ESOL teachers was around the feelings and reactions that LGBT-themed activities may engender in class, especially in relation to cultural and faith sensitivities and their own fear of being unprepared to handle conflict or difficult conversations in class. All focus group participants had had LGBT topics raised in class, either prompted by teaching material or spontaneously brought up by learners. Class responses had ranged from extremely negative or twitchy reactions by individual students, sometimes challenged by their peers, to lack of interest, to silence, to matter-of-fact reactions. Three ESOL teachers who took part in the launch event of the ESOL resource also reported mixed reactions: two of them had consistently used LGBT-themed material, and reported very engaged and thoughtful class discussions and a high level of interest in the topic; the third teacher had used the 'Family and Diversity' activity from the ESOL resource but was more ambivalent about the outcome and found the experience tough for her as a teacher. She reported that most students in her class embraced the idea that there are different types of families, but two female students insisted that for them the idea of same-sex family was wrong. This was challenged by other students, but she was not sure that this was a positive outcome, as she felt that these two women were attacked by the rest of the class although they should be entitled to their opinions.

In focus group discussions, most teachers reported situations where individual students had expressed very negative views, and found them challenging because they felt a sense of responsibility for how people behave in class, and make others feel. Important questions also emerged about the role and responsibilities of ESOL teachers in these situations: were they supposed to challenge or attempt to change prejudiced views, or was their role giving learners the language to express their views, whatever they may be? While wary of imposing their views or patronise these students, some teachers wondered to what extent allowances should be made because of learners' cultural background. Many teachers also felt a responsibility towards students expressing prejudiced views, who may express opinions that are seen as common and acceptable in their country of origin, but that may get them into trouble in the UK, including in the ESOL environment, where hate speech is explicitly forbidden by law. There was a sense that it was important to develop awareness of equality legislation and of social norms that ESOL learners encounter in the UK, but also some hesitancy about confronting students, or censoring their views. A related question was, what strategies and pedagogical approaches can ESOL teachers deploy to engage sensitively and constructively with issues of sexual and gender diversity? These are matters for individual teachers to decide, and indeed our focus group participants related and reflected on their own strategies to bring LGBT lives into the ESOL classroom. In their research Macdonald et al. (2014) identified different approaches to sexual and gender diversity among ESOL teachers, which fall into three categories broadly similar to the typology created by Nelson on the basis of previous research (2009:209-11). Counselling strategies focus on the individual and interpersonal relations,

and aim at promoting tolerance and respect in the classroom; anti-discriminatory approaches emphasise social dimensions of inequality and are grounded in a commitment to principles of social justice and in a strong ethical stance about teachers' role as advocates of equality; and discourse enquiry emphasises the importance of discussion and of the ESOL classroom as a space for exploration and critical enquiry into language.

The approach underpinning the resource does not fit neatly into any of these categories, and indeed encompasses elements of all of them, although it is perhaps closer to the anti-discriminatory and the critical enquiry ones. The strategies suggested in different activities draw on our own teaching practice, as well as on discussions from focus group participants and with Monique Campbell, who was instrumental in developing the youth and community toolkit, the twin resource to the ESOL resource. In her work with WSREC, Monique was involved in designing participatory workshops with young people on prejudice reduction through transformative learning, and drew on key principles of critical and participatory pedagogy articulated in the work of Freire (1970) and Boal (1992). These participatory approaches have also been adopted by ESOL teachers (Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke 2014a). An in-depth account of the complex field of critical pedagogy is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, since it is usually traced back to the work of Paulo Freire, we offer here a succinct overview of his approach. Freire moves away from a 'banking' model of education, where a clear hierarchy between teacher and students is established and where students are seen as empty vessels into which educators put knowledge. He embraces instead a problem-posing model of education, based on the 'use of dialogic methods that draw out and build upon the experiences of students to develop a shared critical understanding of language and the world' (Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke 2014a: 11). His pedagogy is underpinned by a number of principles, including the need for education to be relevant to learners; the premise that education can never be neutral and is inherently political in nature; and that education should provide a space to critically engage with and ultimately transform the world. A problem-posing approach does not always involve the teacher introducing pre-set themes or material, as these may emerge from learners' input; themes are then elaborated, discussed and critically scrutinized in class, in a process of co-production of knowledge. Thus, the dialogical model does not shy away from potentially sensitive issues, and sees students not as 'docile listeners' but as 'critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher' (Freire 1970:68), while the teacher is both a facilitator and a participant in the learning process, rather than an all-knowing figure of authority. Although not expected to impose their own views, the teacher may contribute their knowledge and perspective, or express an opinion, and this can be a challenging balancing act.

In line with the anti-discriminatory approach outlined by Macdonald et al (2014), in the resource sexual and gender diversity are presented as an issue of equality and social justice, explicitly so in one of the introductory activities, 'Equality and Diversity'; this activity, however, can be a useful starting point for negotiating with the class ground rules around respectful communication and openness to diversity, which fits with what Macdonald et al (2014) call the 'counselling strategy'. In line with the anti-discriminatory approach, many of the story-based activities are designed to invite an engagement with the experiences of LGBT-identified migrants, including a discursive exploration of the stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination they may encounter, although these stories do not exclusively focus on experiences related to sexual orientation and gender identity and are open to different interpretations. The resource is underpinned by an anti-discriminatory approach because it explicitly aims to make the ESOL classroom safer and more relevant for LGBTQI+ learners. Exploring

LGBT lives and making them a legitimate theme for discussion in the ESOL classroom can be very meaningful and empowering for LGBT learners, as we know from the literature (Nelson 2009; Moore 2016). The importance of actively making ESOL spaces LGBT-friendly also emerged from the launch event for the resource, where a speaker remarked that around 6% of all asylum cases in the UK are based on sexual orientation (Home Office 2017). As it turned out, among the attendees were a gay asylum seeker, who came accompanied by a female friend and seemed to be primarily looking for support about his accommodation situation; a member of a Glasgow-based support group for LGBT asylum seekers; and a youth worker who facilitated a peer support group for asylum seekers, many of whom happened to be LGBT. There was some discussion in the concluding session of the importance of signalling to LGBT students that teachers are approachable and ‘tuned in’ to sexuality and gender diversity, something that can be conveyed through visual clues (e.g. a rainbow lanyard) as well as by introducing LGBT themes into lessons; and of teachers being able to signpost to LGBT learners relevant organisations and supportive spaces, including LGBT-friendly religious spaces.

In our view, an anti-discriminatory approach is not tantamount to imposing ‘British values’ on learners, although there are power dynamics in the migratory context of the ESOL classroom that cannot be simply wished away, and need to be carefully considered and negotiated. An anti-discriminatory approach can be combined with dialogical methods, creating opportunities for genuine dialogue and spaces for critical enquiry where shared meaning can be negotiated. Indeed, the resource includes ideas for fairly open-ended ‘problem-posing’ activities, sometimes based on drama techniques, or the individual or collaborative creation of visual tools (e.g. posters, photo diaries). Other activities are structured around stimulus material as a ‘starting point for generating context for language work’ (Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke 2014a: 16), with suggestions of sample questions for class discussion. It is widely acknowledged that discussion can be a very effective way of developing language skills, and as a result discussion-based activities are common in the ESOL classroom, with textbooks including a wealth of ideas of how to initiate and conduct class discussion. However, as Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke (2014b:38) note, not all these ideas are ‘particularly motivating for students, as they do not speak directly to their interests and concerns and often serve merely as a vehicle to practice “target language”’. Although in our resource themes are set in advance by the teacher, rather than decided on the basis of input from the students as advocated by Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke (2014b, a), the more generic introductory activities are designed to tap into students’ experiences, which can lead the discussion in unanticipated directions and suggest additional themes to explore in class. The introductory activities were also intended to allow the teacher to gauge class dynamics and interest in LGBT themes, and to decide on whether and how further explorations of sexual and gender diversity would be constructive; proficiency levels may be a consideration here, as discussion-based activities may be more suited to intermediate level classes and above. Discussion-based activities can, of course, be challenging for students and teachers alike, and for teachers they raise issues of what their role should be in class discussions, and how to make sure all students participate. However, class discussion can also be rewarding and motivating, and offer opportunities for students to practice strategies that are highly relevant to the world outside the classroom, since ‘highly political topics do not always lend themselves to easy consensus, so students need to be able to express opinions, listen to those of others, possibly modify their views and live with disagreement and compromise’ (Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke 2014b: 39).

Problem-posing, participatory and critical enquiry approaches fit in well, in our view, with what Nelson calls ‘gay-friendly pedagogies’, aimed at making the classroom more relevant to more

learners, including queer-identified students as well as learners who interact with queer-identified people in or outside of the classroom, or encounter representations of sexual and gender diversity in the media (Nelson 1999:372). In an attempt to move beyond 'gay-friendly pedagogies' Nelson has also argued that queer theory can offer valuable insights for teachers willing to engage with sexual and gender diversity in the ESOL classroom. A diverse body of work that draws heavily on poststructuralist theories of identity, queer theory 'shifts the focus from gaining civil rights to analysing discursive and cultural practices, from affirming minority sexual identities to problematizing all sexual identities' (Nelson 1999: 373). Thus, a pedagogy informed by queer-theory seeks to examine and deconstruct 'the sexual order that underpins taken-for-granted assumptions about sexuality (and gender)' (Curran 2006: 91); such assumptions include the 'naturalness' and 'normalcy' of heterosexuality; the fixity and universality of sexual identities; and the naturalness and universality of binary notions of sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual) and gender (male/female). While not disputing the relevance of queer theory, which does inform at some level the resource, we do not believe that a crash course in queer theory or an explicit engagement with queer pedagogy are necessary prerequisites for ESOL teachers who wish to introduce LGBT themes in their practice. The complexity and abstract nature of queer theory may be confusing and off-putting for some teachers; indeed, it became apparent from the focus groups that many teachers were unfamiliar with the ever-expanding list of acronyms associated with the LGBTQI+ community, and unsure about the meanings of 'queer', a stigmatising term reclaimed by the LGBTQI+ community that for many still retains negative connotations. For this reason, we decided to stick to the LGBT acronym that would be most familiar to teachers and to eschew from an explicit engagement with queer theory. Our aim in this respect was very realistic and pragmatic: we wanted to offer ideas that could easily be integrated into teachers' practice, to stimulate discussion about their experiences in relation to LGBT themes, and about how their practice had evolved.

## Conclusions

This chapter has charted the evolution of the resource 'Engaging with LGBT and migrant equalities: Activities for the ESOL classroom', showing how its content and suggested pedagogical approaches were informed by our engagement with ESOL practitioners and insights from existing literature, as well as by the broader socio-legal context of ESOL in Scotland. We believe that the hesitancy about addressing sexual and gender diversity in ESOL teaching is related to the perception that the principles of multicultural education sit uneasily with an exploration of LGBT themes, seen as especially sensitive in the transnational context of the ESOL classroom. While not intending to minimise the very real challenges that this exploration may involve, we have argued that assuming a polarisation between 'progressive', LGBT-friendly British values and conservative, homophobic views among migrant ESOL learners is simplistic and problematic. We have also argued that a vision for a multicultural education must include a consideration of sexual and gender diversity, encourage dialogue and critical enquiry, and 'remain open to competing conceptualisations, diverse identities and a rich public discourse about controversial issues' (May 1999: 34). We would like to conclude the chapter with some questions about the possible resonance and limitations of our resource, and the questions this raises for queer-inclusive pedagogical practice.

As Sunderland (this volume) points out, it is important to go beyond the written and visual texts of teaching material in order to explore how it is interpreted and received by teachers and learners. We are planning further work to explore how ESOL teachers may adapt the material according to their



pedagogical approaches and their learners' needs, and how learners engage with the material. We were encouraged by the feedback received from ESOL teachers who attended the resource's launch event: most of them were planning to use it again in future, and felt it included ideas that could be integrated into their practice, and that their students would find interesting. Their feedback revealed that they were motivated to attend by a commitment to social justice, and by a willingness to develop their practice and make it more inclusive. However, we did wonder at times whether ESOL practitioners who were already open to engaging with 'PARSNIP' issues, committed to sexual and gender equality and invested in dialogical enquiry were more likely to engage with our project: were we 'preaching to the converted'? Indeed, in their UK-based research on ESOL teachers' experiences of exploring sexual diversity, Macdonald et al. (2014:14) found that three of them had made no attempt to include LGBT themes into their teaching because they felt that these clashed with their personal beliefs, or because they did not believe that LGBT people should 'be permitted full civil, social or legal rights'. This takes us back to Macdonald et al. (2014)'s question of how ESOL professionals, as a 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998), understand their responsibilities in relation to LGBT equalities, and whether there is a need for a coherent set of policies and guidance to integrate an engagement with issues of sexuality and gender into the ESOL curriculum.

We also wondered to what extent the content and approaches of our resource could be used or adapted beyond the Scottish/UK ESOL context, and particularly whether it could have any relevance for ELT contexts in countries with a very different legislative framework pertaining to LGBT rights and equality and diversity more generally. The context set by the UK Equality Act 2010 directly informed the content of the resource, responding to Tomlinson's call for teaching material that has local resonance and 'offers teachers and students opportunities for localisation, personalisation and choice' (Tomlinson 2012:158). As shown earlier in the chapter, by setting up new obligations for the education sector, the Equality Act 2010 also acted as a catalyst for initiatives such as Queering ESOL, and legitimised engagement with LGBT themes in relation to teaching practice and professional development; despite the hesitations described in the chapter, ESOL practitioners wishing to engage with LGBT issues could do in a context that protected them and even encouraged the practice as a form of professional development. As Pakuła, Pawelczyk and Sunderland (2015:21) note, however, 'some geographies and contexts allow more freedom in addressing sexual diversity than others'. Keeping in mind the broader socio-political and legal context is important because the freedom to explore sexual and gender diversity may be severely constrained, or carry additional professional and emotional costs in some contexts.

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