Creating Safe Zones for LGBTQ ESL Students

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Creating “Safe Zones” for LGBTQ ESL Students

Krista Bittenbender Royal, USF
Bay Area Regional TESOL
Summer Symposium
June 2, 2012, Clearwater, FL
First, some fun...

Put these hit singles in the order by year:

- “I’m the Only One” – Melissa Etheridge
- “Crazy Little Thing Called Love” – Freddie Mercury (Queen)
- “Do you Really Want to Hurt Me” - Boy George (Culture Club)
- “Your Song” - Elton John
- “Fast Car” - Tracy Chapman
Music answers

1. “Your Song” - Elton John, 1970/71
2. “Crazy Little Thing Called Love” – Freddie Mercury (Queen), 1979
3. “Do you Really Want to Hurt Me” - Boy George (Culture Club), 1982
5. “I’m the Only One” – Melissa Etheridge, 1993/4
And another...

Put these movies in the order by year:

• Milk
• The Birdcage
• The Kids are Alright
• Boys Don’t Cry
• Rocky Horror Picture Show
• Brokeback Mountain
• Philadelphia
Movie answers

Put these movies in the order by year:

Now, for one more...

Put the gay rights events in chronological order

• Univ. Mich. opens the 1st office for GLBT students
• Vermont becomes the first in the US to legalize civil unions between same sex partners
• Homosexuality is removed from the official list of psychiatric disorders by the APA
• Denmark becomes the first European country to allow gay marriage
• Supreme Court outlaws state laws making homosexual acts illegal
• 1st Pride Parade in NYC, honoring Stonewall riots
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Pride Parade NYC, honoring Stonewall</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ. Mich. - 1st office for GLBT Ss</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality is removed from the official list of psychiatric disorders by the APA</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark becomes the first European country to allow gay marriage</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont becomes the first in the US to legalize civil unions between same-sex partners</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court outlaws state laws making homosexual acts illegal</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Heteronormativity

- a term for a set of lifestyle norms that hold that people fall into distinct and complementary genders (male and female) with natural roles in life.

A" view is one that promotes alignment of biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles.

Heteronormative culture "privileges heterosexuality as normal ..." and fosters a climate where LGBTQ are discriminated against in marriage, tax codes, and employment.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heteronormativity)

Hegemony - The predominant influence, as of a state, region, or group, over another or others.
The Current International Climate
Relationship Recognition for Same-Sex Couples in the U.S.

This map was last updated on June 28, 2011


- **States with broad relationship recognition laws**

- **States with limited relationship recognition laws**

- **States that recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states**

Note: All dates shown are effective dates, not dates of passage.

- VT will honor existing civil unions but will not issue new licenses. Civil unions will not automatically convert to marriages.
- DC will continue to honor and issue domestic partner licenses and will convert domestic partnerships to marriages for those who wish.
- In 2009, MD created domestic partnerships, but it does not maintain a registry. In 2010, the attorney general determined that out-of-state marriages should be recognized.
- CA recognizes same-sex marriages legally registered in or out of CA prior to Nov. 5, 2008 as marriages, and those registered out of CA on or after Nov. 5, 2008 as domestic partnerships.
- In 1997, HI passed a limited “reciprocal beneficiary” law that will remain in effect after the civil unions law goes into effect.
Nondiscrimination Laws

State Nondiscrimination Laws in the U.S.

This map was last updated on January 20, 2012

- **States banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression:** (16 states and the District of Columbia)

- **States banning discrimination based on sexual orientation:** (6 states)

*California, Connecticut, DC, New Jersey (Massachusetts), Nevada, Rhode Island and Vermont first passed sexual orientation nondiscrimination laws, then later passed gender identity/expression laws.

Hate Crime Laws

Hate Crime Laws in the U.S.
This map was last updated on: March 12, 2012

- States with hate crime laws that include crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity—13 states & the District of Columbia: California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts effective 7/1/2021, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Washington

- States with hate crime laws that include crimes based on sexual orientation—17 states: Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin

- States with hate crime laws that do not include crimes based on sexual orientation or gender identity—15 states: Alabama, Alaska, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia

- States that do not have hate crime laws that include crimes based on any characteristics—5 states: Arkansas, Georgia, Michigan, South Carolina, Wyoming

1. Michigan's hate crime penalty laws do not include sexual orientation, but hate crime data collection laws do.

2. Indiana has no hate crime penalty laws, but does include sexual orientation in hate crime data collection.

3. In 2008, Pennsylvania's highest court overturned the 2002 amendments to the hate crimes law that added sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, gender, and mental and physical disability, based on the procedural way the legislation was passed by the legislature, not the content of the law.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
www.thetaskforce.org
Talking the Talk (GLSEN)

• Which terms were you most familiar with? Which were unfamiliar?

• What terms are you most comfortable using? Are there any you are uncomfortable with? Why?

- 1. Sexual Orientation
- 2. Lesbian
- 3. Gender Identity
- 4. Gender Expression
- 5. Transgender
- 6. Gay
- 7. Gender Non-Conforming
- 8. Androgynous
- 9. Bisexual
- 10. Transphobia
- 11. Homophobia
- 12. Heterosexism
- 13. Queer

A. The irrational fear or aversion to transgender people of those who are perceived to break or blur societal norms regarding gender identity or gender expression.
B. The inner feelings of who we are attracted to or oriented to sexually and emotionally.
C. Refers to an irrational fear of or aversion to homosexuality or lesbian, gay or bisexual people.
D. An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming.
E. An individual’s physical characteristics, behaviors and presentation that are linked, traditionally, to either masculinity or femininity, such as: appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.
F. A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is female-identified and who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some other females.
G. A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some males and some females.
H. Applies to attitudes, bias and discrimination in favor of heterosexual sexuality and relationships. It includes the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that male/female attractions and relationships are the norm and therefore superior. It is the belief that everyone is or should be straight.
I. A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some members of the same sex.
J. How we identify ourselves in terms of our gender.
K. An identity of a person who has gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal gender expectations.
L. An umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heteronormative society.
M. Having the characteristics or nature of both maleness and femaleness; neither specifically feminine nor masculine.
Why should we educators care?

“That’s so gay!”

- Over 84% of LGBTQ students reported verbal harassment at school.
- 20 - 40% of the homeless youth in America identify as GLBTQ.
- Suicide rates much higher among LGBTQ teens.
- 20% of LGBT students, faculty, and staff reported to fear for their physical safety due to their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity
...& in ESL? Language is intertwined with identity, society, culture, life.

- International LGBTQ students have many of the same issues that US students have, plus more.
- There may be issues adjusting to the more tolerant/intolerant climate in the US compared to their home countries.
- For those coming from countries with less tolerance, despite being in a place where LGBTQ people are more accepted, there still may be a deep fear of coming out to peers from the same country group.
- Language class questions and projects potentially reference students' real-world identities:
  - there is a risk of ‘sexual identity as linguistic failure’ by attributing heteronormative standards to the situation.
  - Despite having lots of “real world” context in ESL curriculum, ESL textbooks very often omit LGBTQ identities:
    - or include them in asides, as special topics, controversial debate activities, or as stereotypes.
Heterosexism in ESL textbooks?

Research Questions (2006)

• Do ESL textbooks include LGBT or queer identities and issues?
• If so, to what extent are these issues discussed and in what contexts?

The study:

• Selected texts do get representative sample of texts used at ELI
• Examined each at the chapter and page level for quantitative and qualitative data
• Compared trends, calculated percentage of representation
Findings (2006)

• Of the 35 textbooks analyzed, 5 included some content related to a LGBT theme or queer identities.

• Most inclusive texts were culture and listening/speaking texts at the intermediate levels.
  • Gold star: University of Michigan Press.

• At first glance, it seems that more than 14% of ESL texts used included LGBT or queer content.
  • Chapter and page level, however, makes it apparent that heterosexism still exists in ESL textbooks.
  • Chapters: 1%.
  • At the page level, this percentage drops to 0.12%.
The content:

- discussions of family that mentioned gay and lesbian parents or homosexual couples, and mention of groups that have been or are subject to discrimination.
- more examples of omission than inclusion.
- 18 texts contained a total of 30 chapters that explicitly discussed sexual identity, heterosexual relationships, or other issues related to identity with no mention of any LGBT or queer identities.
- Even those textbooks considered neutral used exclusively heterosexual couples in example sentences, stories, and readings.
Texts selected (2006)

### Overview of Texts Selected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Publication year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>1990-1995</td>
<td>Heinle/Thomson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>1996-2001</td>
<td>Pearson/Longman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Listening/Speaking</td>
<td>2002-2007</td>
<td>Oxford University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Glencoe/McGraw Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**
35 textbooks

### Percent of each type that included LGBT Concepts/Themes/Identities/Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Publication year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**
14.3%

### Percentage of Content by page and chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pages with LGBT content</th>
<th>total pages</th>
<th>chapters with LGBT content</th>
<th>total chapters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6830</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family

Words in Context
Children often look more like one parent than the other. Maybe you have your mother’s eyes, your father’s hair, your grandmother’s skin color, or your grandfather’s lips. Who do you look like?

Word Partnerships
- a first wife
- a second husband
- an ex-husband
- an older brother
- a younger sister

Words in Action
1. Which member of your family look alike?
   - I look like my sister.
   - My brother looks like my father.

2. Draw a family tree or bring pictures to class. Tell a partner about your family.
Family

A. Write each family member under Male or Female.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aunt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grandmother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Match the opposites.

1. father  a. aunt
2. son     b. grandmother
3. brother c. mother
4. uncle   d. wife
5. nephew  e. sister
6. grandfather f. daughter
7. husband g. niece

C. What are the relationships between the people in this family?

1. Martin is Claudia's ________________ husband.
2. Erik is Kayla's ________________.
3. Erik is Claudia's ________________.
4. Kayla is Martin's ________________.
5. Martin is Kayla's ________________.
6. Claudia is Erik's ________________.
7. Claudia is Martin's ________________.
8. Kayla is Erik's ________________.

D. Complete the sentences with the correct relationships between the people in this family.

Beck: Hi. I'm Beck. Jim is my ________________ husband. I have two children.

Mary is my ________________ and Ed is my ________________.

I have four ________________ and Sarah is my ________________.

Mary: Hi, I'm Mary. Larry is my ________________ and Ed is my ________________.

Mary is my ________________ and Sarah is my ________________.

Tony and Tommy are my ________________.

Jacob: Hi, I'm Jacob. Larry and Mary are my ________________.

Jim and Bess are my ________________ and Sarah is my ________________.

Tony and Tommy are my ________________.

E. Look at the family in Exercise D and listen to the questions. Circle the correct answers.

1. a. Beck  b. Mary  c. Tony
2. a. Larry  b. Ed  c. Beck
3. a. Emma  b. Bess  c. Sarah
5. a. Tony  b. Emma  c. Sarah
8. a. Bess  b. Sarah  c. Tony
10. a. Jacob  b. Emma  c. Bess
One big (straight, gay, multi-cultural, traditional) happy family.

modern family

COMEDY wednesday
premieres september 23rd 9/8c

Watch an extended preview at abc.com/ModernFamily
A Write the phrase for each event.

- raise a family
- become grandparents
- have a baby
- graduate
- get married
- get engaged
- buy a house
- celebrate a birthday

C Look at the pictures of the life events in your dictionary. Write the number of the correct event after each sentence.

1. She is going to college. __________
2. She is raising a family. __________
3. She is retiring. __________
4. She is immigrating. __________
5. She is getting engaged. __________
6. She is getting a job. __________
7. She is taking a vacation. __________
8. She is learning to walk. __________

D Listen to the life of John Lennon. Match the dates and the events.

1. 1940  a. He starts the Beatles with three friends.
2. 1961  b. He and his wife have a baby, Julian.
3. 1962  c. He and Cynthia Powell get divorced.
5. 1964  e. He plays with the Beatles for the last time.
7. 1969  g. He and Cynthia Powell get married.
8. 1969  h. The Beatles travel to the United States.
9. 1975  i. He and Yoko have a baby, Sean.
10. 1980  j. He marries Yoko Ono.

E Complete the sentences with some of your plans for the future.

1. I plan to __________________________
2. I want to __________________________
3. I expect to __________________________
Ask Politely

"You get more with honey than vinegar."

1. Why do you study English?
2. What's your father's name?
3. Go forward to number five.
4. Do you like Chinese food?
5. Have you ever been to Paris?
6. When does the next train arrive?
7. What did you eat for lunch yesterday?
8. Start again.
9. Let's go out for lunch.
10. Go back to number six.
11. What time is it?
12. What does your wife do?
13. I wonder if you could...
14. How old are you?
15. When does the bank close?
16. How do I get to the airport?
17. I wonder if you could...
18. May I know...?
19. Start again.
20. I wonder if you could...

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1 - “How are gay teachers any different from and heterosexual teachers? ...What’s the big deal?” All teachers possess their own cultural identities that *do not exclude* sexual identities, and in heterosexist societies, those cultural identities are stripped when entering the classroom.

2 - **The English classroom is not a place in which sexual identity should be addressed.** Straight teachers identify themselves as heterosexual whenever one mentions a spouse, with little thought. LGBTQ teachers may edit their life experiences or simply avoid using anecdotes in the classroom.

3 - **LGBT issues are too controversial, especially for students from countries with few gay rights.**
   Even w/o gay rights, gay *people* exist everywhere. Students are aware that gay people exist and often bring it up on their own.

4 - **There are already visible gay men in the field without problems.**
   LGBTQ teachers are often isolated and that there is a need to “articulate our experiences...[to make] our classrooms better places...” (p. 147).

5 - **There is already common apathy toward gay issues.**
   Even w/o outwardly showing bigotry, the relative silence in regards to heterosexism is problematic.

6 - **Not all teachers have gay students in their classes.**
   Teachers cannot know who in their classes may be gay or questioning. Teachers need to be sure to have an open and accepting class environment for all students.

7 - “**Only gay people can address gay issues**” (p. 149)
   Nearly all teachers address issues of racism and sexism, regardless of race or gender, so can all teachers address issues of heterosexism.
Queer Theory

- **Nelson, C. (1999).** Sexual identities in ESL: Queer theory and classroom inquiry. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 371-391. Nelson examines queer theory and inquiry within the context of ESL. Queer theory may serve as a tool to *move beyond* clear-cut notions of sexual identity and allow critical examination of heteronormative trends. It may be more useful in a teaching context than the previously held idea of gay and lesbian inclusion, as it shifts “the focus from learning about...lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to analyzing how language and culture work with regard to all sexual identities” (p. 377).
Malinowitz (1995) recommends that teachers consider how lesbian/gay students might be experiencing class assignments and interactions (though below she is referring to writing, her questions could be applied to speaking as well). She asks,

What factors might [lesbian and gay students] have to weigh when deciding whether or not to disclose their sexual identity in their writing, and what are the risks and costs of either choice? What tensions surround the naming of that identity, and what are the effects likely to be on writers who are asked to compose reflectively and critically?

(p. xvii)

Teachers can attempt to normalize gay/lesbian themes by integrating these throughout the curriculum and drawing on examples from one’s own life.

A few teachers noted that students need to learn not only what is said but also what is not said.

3.11 Mark: A male student … was talking about his boyfriend … So I had to explain that to this student that Well actually in this culture if you say ‘boyfriend’ that has a gay overtone to it … You would just say ‘my friend,’ you’d use other terms, a male wouldn’t use ‘boyfriend’ just to say one of their buddies. So it does become part of the instruction … A man has to know he can’t say ‘boyfriend,’ whereas a woman can say ‘girlfriend’ and it doesn’t have those connotations attached to it.
Teaching Lesbian and Gay Students

A few teachers in my study described specific tasks or approaches they used when taking into account gay and lesbian students. Like a number of other teachers (see 3.22–3.24, 5.27), Paige regarded having guest speakers to class. She described teaching strategies she used in for

2.8 Paige: [I assign] some kind of journal type writing or a summary of the guest speakers with a response of their own opinion, to give them another chance to talk about what this has meant to them. And I'm careful about, um, what kind of questions I'll ask students so as to not put somebody or put them in a position where they'll feel uncomfortable ... [Also] I don't ask students to read each other's writing when I'm doing lesbian and gay issues. It's just written either to themselves or to me ... so that if they wanted to express, um, something that they didn't want other students to read they would feel permission to do that.

Teaching Language Involves Gay-Related Vocabulary and Meanings

Several teachers gave examples of their attempts to supplement class materials that make no mention whatsoever of gay people. Most examples involved vocabulary, often as part of curricula on family, relationships, or dating, all common topics in many language learning materials. Below, one teacher recounts how she introduced additional vocabulary in a beginning-level class during an exercise on 'family.'

3.9 Alicia: [In the textbook] all they had was ... grandparents, parents ... brother ... sister ... are married, is single ... So we were just doing more words and so somebody said ... husband and wife ... Then I said Some people, you know, can't get married ... So for, you know, men and men, or women and women - and then I said gay and straight, and then wrote gay and straight on the board, and then talked about what it meant to be gay and what it meant to be straight ... That gay people were, you know, men who loved men, and women who loved women ... And people got it. And you can always know because some people ... laugh and then shift and get really uncomfortable ... [But] most of the class was ... OK ...
Questions to ask yourself:

• How often do you include examples using gay, lesbians, and bisexuals in your classes?
• Do you often assume students and staff are heterosexual?
• When social activities are planned, are people invited in a way that allows gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to feel comfortable bringing a same-gender guest or partner?
• Which issues do you discuss/support in your daily conversations?
• What comments do you confront? Which do you leave unchallenged?
• What articles or event information do you circulate?

Excerpted from http://multicultural.usf.edu/pdf/safezone/support_messages.pdf
Have you ever...

• taught a lesson about relationships, marriage, or families and only included heterosexual examples?

• used an activity that used the “dating tense”, a “personal ad”, or another similar scenario?

• given an assignment in which students were asked to write “About me”?

• asked students to present a project that had personal components?

• used a textbook or reading that perpetuated gender roles or stereotypes?

• overheard a comment that may have been degrading without stepping in?

• used a video, TV show, or other media that excluded or ignored LGBT people?
What can you do? - Reducing heteronormatism in ESL

• with modals of possibility – example: Two women are holding hands. – “They might be…”
• include literature by LGBT authors and/or that includes LGBTQ characters
• read or examine “life story narratives” that include a range of identities
• include examples of same-sex partners in exercises (John and Robert _____________ a house.)
• talk about same-sex couples when talking about families and relationships
• include historical figures, poets, writers, artists, musicians that identified as LGBTQ
• look at LGBTQ issues when talking about diversity, human rights, & equality – BUT STOP DEBATING!
• use current event articles that mention events that are happening or legislature that is being developed
• include LGBTQ related issues and themes in lists of research topics suggestions
Resources: See handout

Best Bets:

• http://GLSEN.org > For Educators
• http://pridenet.ca/
• http://www.rainbowsig.org/ (NAFSA)
• http://thetaskforce.org/
• http://ilga.org/
• http://internationalspectrum.umich.edu/home
Thank you!

• Questions, ideas? Please contact me! krista.bittenbender@gmail.com

• Get the e-handout with live links: http://tinyurl.com/BART-LGBTQ