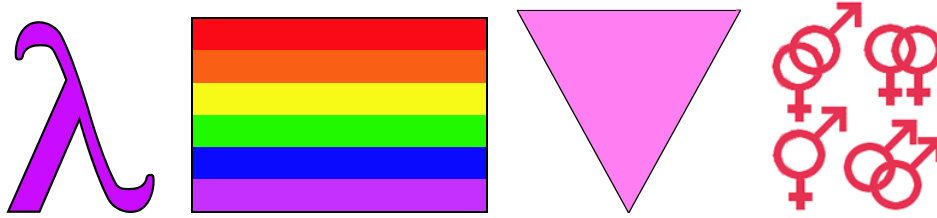


Creating 'Safe Zones' for LGBTQ ESL students

Workshop Presented by Krista Bittenbender Royal
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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. It also holds that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation, and states that sexual and marital relations are most (or only) fitting between a man and a woman. Consequently, a "heteronormative" view is one that promotes alignment of biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles... Michael Warner coined the term in 1991, in one of the first major works of queer theory... Heteronormative culture "privileges heterosexuality as normal and natural" 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 Climate

Around the World

- Same-Sex Relationships remain illegal in many nations. (<http://ilga.org>)
 - illegality of male to male relationships: 78/242 countries
 - illegality of female to female relationships: 45/242 countries
 - punishable by death penalty: 7/242 countriesNote: The UN, The Human Rights Committee, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights all state that the death penalty should only be used for the most serious crimes (lethal or otherwise egregious).
* Iran, Mauritania, the Nigerian states that apply Shar'ia law, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen – consensual sexual relations between men can incur the death penalty. In four countries – Iran, the Nigerian states that apply Shar'ia law, Qatar and Saudi Arabia – women may face the death sentence for lesbianism. (LOVE, HATE AND THE LAW: Decriminalizing Homosexuality by Amnesty International July 2008 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL30/003/2008/en>)
- In contrast, many nations legally recognize same-sex relationships.
 - 2001: The Netherlands becomes the first country to offer full civil marriage to same sex couples
 - Other countries have followed suit: Belgium, Canada, Norway, South Africa, Spain
 - Nations that recognize same-sex civil unions or domestic partnerships: Andorra, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, Uruguay (Amnesty International – Marriage Equality <http://www.amnestyusa.org/lgbt-human-rights/marriage-equality/page.do?id=1551077>)
- China - Homosexuality decriminalized in 1997. Declared to no longer be a mental illness in 2001. No gay marriage/partnership rights. Reported 90% of LGBT people in China feel pressured into hetero marriage.
- Colombia – Homosexuality decriminalized in 1983. Same-sex unions recognized since 2007. Federal anti-discrimination laws include sexual identity & gender identity. Gays can openly serve in the military (and partners can receive services).
- Japan – Legal. No marriage/union rights. Gays can serve in military. Transsexuals can legally change gender. No federal anti-discrimination laws.

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- Korea - Legal. No marriage/union rights. Transsexuals can legally change gender. No federal anti-discrimination laws.
- Saudi Arabia – Illegal. Punishable by death, whipping, fines, or prison.
- Venezuela – decriminalized. No gay marriage/union rights. Some federal anti-discrimination protection.

The United States

- Homosexuality decriminalized in 2003. Declassified as a mental disorders in 1973/75.
- Matthew Shepard Act – (2009) - expands federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.
- No federal protection against discrimination, but several states and municipalities have enacted legislature that prohibits discrimination for housing and employment based on gender identity or sexual orientation. (This includes Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and others.)
- Marriage Laws in the US: There is no recognition of same-sex couples at the federal level.
 - States that issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples: *Massachusetts, Connecticut, California**, Iowa, Vermont, New Hampshire, District of Columbia
 - States that recognize same-sex marriages from other states: *Rhode Island, New York, Maryland*
 - States that allows civil unions, providing state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples: *New Jersey (Note: In Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire, same sex marriage has replaced civil unions).*
 - States with statewide law to provide nearly all state-level spousal rights to unmarried couples (Domestic Partnerships): *California, Oregon, Nevada, Washington*
 - States with statewide law provides some state-level spousal rights to unmarried couples (Domestic Partnerships): *Hawaii, Maine, District of Columbia, Wisconsin*

*The California Supreme Court ruled on May 15, 2008 that same sex couples have the right to marry in California. Proposition 8, which limits marriage to one man and one woman, was passed on November 4, 2008. The decision was appealed. Same-sex marriages performed before Proposition 8 was passed will remain valid, but same sex marriages are no longer performed in California.
- DOMA (1996) protects states from recognizing same-sex marriages from other states.
(statistics from <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=16430>)

Youth/Schools in United States: "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

To create an inclusive, safe environment, colleges and universities must:

- **Recruit and retain** LGBT individuals;
- **Demonstrate institutional commitment** to LGBT issues/concerns;
- **Integrate** LGBT issues/concerns into **curriculum** and pedagogy;
- **Provide educational programming** on LGBT issues/concerns;
- **Create safe spaces** for dialogue and interaction.

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International Students, Language, and TESL

- **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, or as stereotypes)

TESOL & Queer Theory - Research

Nelson, C. (1993). Heterosexism in ESL: Examining our attitudes. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(1), 143-150.

Nelson examines seven attitudes that are frequently encountered when addressing heterosexism in the field ESL.

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.

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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 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).

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?
- mentioned a historical figure’s family life or status, including someone who “never married”?
- done a getting to know you interview activity ‘are you married/single/...’

What can you do? - Reducing the tendency for heteronormative trends in the ESL classroom

- 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
- use current event articles that mention events that are happening or legislature that is being developed
- include examples of same-sex partners in exercises (John and Robert _____ a house.)
- mention 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
- include LGBTQ related issues and themes in lists of research topics suggestions

Your ideas?

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USF SAFE ZONE (<http://multicultural.usf.edu/safezone.htm>)

“ The vision of the Safe Zone Ally program is to foster an atmosphere of support and celebration of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning individuals within the University of South Florida community...

Safe Zone allies are USF students, faculty, and staff who successfully complete the Safe Zone training and choose to support and advocate with those who are GLBTQ...

Safe Zones at the University of South Florida are individual allies and their work and/or personal space. Those participating in the Safe Zone Ally program display a Safe Zone symbol demonstrating their support and advocacy with GLBTQ individuals and will disseminate information regarding the existence and location of campus Safe Zones. A Safe Zone is represented by the displayed Safe Zone symbol.”



Upcoming Ally Training Sessions - Dates and Times TBA. Check website for updates.

Summer: one planned for late July

Fall: four planned

Contact for more info: Cristian Chandler, Safe Zone Coordinator, Office of Multicultural Affairs, MSC 4100, (813) 974-3001, cjchandl@admin.usf.edu, www.multicultural.usf.edu

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)

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Learn More!

Education

- GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, (glsen.org) leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. See the "For Educators" section: <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/educator/index.html>
- Pride Education Network (formerly GALE) <http://www.pridenet.ca>
- NAFSA's Rainbow Special Interest Group - <http://www.rainbowsig.org/>
 - GLB Resource List (circa 2000)
<http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/advise/eslresources.html>
 - International Students Resources:
<http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/student.htm>
- Rainbow Educators Network – GLB Teaching Resources (a bit old) – <http://www2.gol.com/users/aidsed/rainbow/links.html>

National/International Resources & Reports

- The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force (thetaskforce.org)
<http://thetaskforce.org/issues/campus>
 - Campus Climate for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People: A National Perspective, A National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Report, May 01, 2003
http://thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/campus_climate
- International Gay And Lesbian Human Rights Commission - <http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/home/index.html>
- INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX ASSOCIATION <http://ilga.org>
- National Center for Lesbian Rights > Immigration Issues for Same-Sex Couples
http://www.nclrights.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issue_immigration
- National Conference of State Legislatures – Issues & Research: Same Sex Marriage, Civil Unions and Domestic Partnerships <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=16430>
- NY Times OpEd - New Poll Reports Majority Support Lesbian & Gay 'Relations' (May 2010):
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/05/opinion/05blow.html>
- Advocate Report – New Research about Gays in China:
http://www.advocate.com/News/Daily_News/2010/06/28/Gays_In_China_Feel_Pressured_Into_Hetero_Marriages/
- New York Times – The High Price of Being a Gay Couple (10/3/2009) -
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/03/your-money/03money.html?_r=1&ref=your-money

University Life

- "International + LGBT" at the University of Michigan:
<http://internationalspectrum.umich.edu/global/worldwideorgs>
- University of Minnesota – GLBTA International
<http://glbta.umn.edu/international/welcome.html>
- Boston College Resources for LGBT Students & Alumni -
<http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/resourcesfor/lgbtstudents.html>
- University of California San Francisco – International Student and Scholar Services LGBT Resources - <http://isso.ucsf.edu/resources/lgbt-resources>