

Inclusivity in Practice: Enhancing LGBTQ+ Representation in Language Teaching

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CARLA Social Justice Workshop Series

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Agenda

- I. Introduction and Setting the Stage
- II. Theoretical Grounding
- III. Break and Reflect
- IV. Practical Applications
- V. Reflection and Forward Planning
- VI. Closing Remarks and Evaluation

Positionality Statement

Or, who we are matters

The “Rules of Engagement”

Workshop Ground Rules

We are gathered here as professionals united by our shared goal of fostering an inclusive educational environments to facilitate student learning and success. As we delve into topics that touch the lives of marginalized communities, let's approach our discussions with:

- Patience – with ourselves and our colleagues
- Understanding – that we are all entering this conversation from different places and with different lived experiences
- Empathy – expressed through active listening and thoughtful reflection upon the different perspectives offered today in the spirit of collegiality

Reflective Entry Points

Situating myself in the conversation

Reflective Entry Points

Find a comfortable space, take a deep breath, and reflect on the following questions. You might want to jot down your thoughts on a notepad or your device.

- What motivated you to attend this workshop?
- What do you hope to gain or learn from this session?
- Assess your current knowledge and comfort level regarding the discussion of gender and sexuality in language education.
- If there are any doubts, concerns, or discomforts around this topic, can you identify any underlying causes or experiences that might contribute to these feelings?

We won't be sharing these, as I want you to feel comfortable being honest with yourself. But hang on to these and return to them after the session has had time to marinate.

Introducing Lavender Applied Linguistics

And its connections to modern language teaching

Breakout Discussion 1: Intersections of Language, Gender, Sexuality, and Teaching

Remember: Patience, Understanding, Empathy

Don't forget: "I" statements when sharing your perspective

Discussing Intersections

Back to Lavender Applied Linguistics

From Theory to Practice

What Does it Mean to “Queer” the Classroom

- To create space for students to engage with LGBTQ+ issues (Merse, 2015; Nelson, 2002).
- To highlight the way that *all* identities are performatively constructed (Nelson, 2002; Paiz, 2018).
- To create a non-judgmental space to engage with socially-relevant, potentially sensitive issues (Paiz, 2020; Rhodes & Coda, 2017).

Guiding Principals

- Restive problematizing of all identities and discourses (Nelson, 2009; Pennycook, 2001)
- Exposing & interrogating normativity in all its forms (Nelson, 2006; Prinsloo, 2015)
- Creating space for marginalized voices and Identities (Rodriguez, et al., 2023; Vandrick, 2001)
- Fostering respectful engagement with disparate worldviews (Knisely & Paiz, 2021; Merse, 2017).

Reflective Break & Group Discussion

Reflective Break - Instructions

Instructions:

Take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your current practices and the challenges you face in addressing gender and sexuality in your language teaching/learning environment. You may jot down your thoughts on a notepad or your device.

This reflection segment is designed to encourage personal reflection on your practices and the challenges you face. It's a moment to pause, take stock of your journey so far, and identify areas where you may need further support or resources. Your insights will be invaluable as we transition into the latter part of the workshop, focusing on practical applications and forward planning.

Reflective Break – Practice Questions

Guiding Questions:

1. Current Practices:

- What practices or strategies have you already employed in your classroom to address gender and sexuality?
- How have these practices been received by your students?
- Have these practices facilitated a more inclusive learning environment?
Please provide examples.

Reflective Break – Challenges Questions

2. Challenges:

- What challenges have you encountered in integrating discussions of gender and sexuality in your language teaching?
- Are there specific aspects of gender and sexuality that you find more challenging to address? Why?

Reflective Break – Support & Resources

3. Support and Resources:

- What resources or support do you feel you need to more effectively address gender and sexuality in your classroom?
- Are there particular areas in today's workshop, so far, that have resonated with you or provided new insights for overcoming these challenges?

A moment of quiet contemplation

Breakout Discussion 2: Sharing Reflections & Insights

Practical Applications

Towards an LGBTQ+-inclusive Pedagogical Practice in Language Education

Pedagogical Aims

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

Explore *with* your students

- Individualize learning;
- Decenter the classroom;
- Queer students' perception of expertise;
- Acknowledge and make space for queer student voices;
- Uncover locally relevant, real-world LGBTQ+ experiences and language.

Find space throughout the curriculum

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

Engage in critical, reflexive practice

- Is where the “rubber meets the road”;
- Makes explicit how language, disciplinarity, professional practice, and our assumptions work together to (re-)create our perception of reality
- Draws attention to how normative discourses work to maintain the silencing certain ways of knowing, living, being, and doing

Tie LGBTQ+ content to disciplinary learning goals

- Shows that sexuality is important part of acquiring disciplinary knowledge and a professional sense of self in it;
- Underscores how engaging with LGBTQ+-focused conversations is a valuable part of being a modern, informed citizen
- Contributes to desensationalizing LGBTQ+ content and discussions
- Aids in gaining student & administrative buy-in

Focus on respectful engagement

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

Case Study Investigation

Case Study Instructions

1. Case Presentation
2. Whole Group Discussion
3. Strategy Formulation
4. Individual Reflection

Case 1: Challenging Heteronormativity

A teacher at a suburban community college notices that classroom examples, textbooks, and conversations often assume heterosexual relationships. They want to challenge this heteronormativity by introducing more diverse examples and discussions but are concerned about potential pushback from students, parents, and even colleagues who may view this as a political stance rather than an educational one.

Case 2: Addressing Homophobic Language

In a city university language class, a teacher overhears students using homophobic slurs in casual conversation. They want to address this issue in a way that educates students about the harmful impacts of such language without alienating or shaming them. The teacher is looking for strategies to create a respectful and open dialogue that fosters understanding and empathy among students.

Case 3: Addressing Microaggressions

In a bustling language classroom, a teacher observes instances of microaggressions directed towards LGBTQ+ students, both in casual conversations and group activities. They are keen on addressing these incidents to create a more supportive classroom environment but are unsure how to do so without singling out or embarrassing the affected students. The teacher is looking for a way to address microaggressions while promoting a respectful and inclusive classroom culture.

Case 4: Navigating Cultural Sensitivities

A teacher working in a culturally conservative region is enthusiastic about introducing discussions around gender and sexuality in their language classroom to promote inclusivity and critical thinking. However, they are concerned about respecting cultural sensitivities and navigating potential resistance from students, parents, and the wider community. The teacher is in search of balanced strategies that honor cultural contexts while promoting inclusivity.

Case 5: Engaging with Resistant Students

In an effort to foster an inclusive learning environment, a teacher attempts to engage students in discussions around gender-neutral language and LGBTQ+ representation in media as part of the language learning process. However, some students show resistance or disinterest in these topics, hindering the inclusive learning environment the teacher is trying to create. The teacher is seeking ways to engage resistant students and ensure all students feel seen and valued in the classroom.

Strategy Formulation

- From the sample case studies and our discussion what pedagogical strategies might you employ to proactively address similar scenarios in the future?
- What policy strategies might you employ?
- What institutional support would you need to build a more inclusive instructional space for students to facilitate learning and success?
- What strategies might you use to help navigate resistance from stakeholders?

Reflection Point

- From the case study discussion, what's one meaningful change that you can/will make to your practice to help create more respectful and inclusive instructional spaces?
- From the case study discussion, what's one outstanding worry that you have about making your instructional spaces more inclusive of gender/sexual minority lives, voices, and bodies?
- What is one thing that you still feel you need to learn in your future PD?

Moving Along: Final Reflections and Next Steps

Guiding Questions

- What are the key insights from the workshop that you want to incorporate into your teaching practice?
- What specific changes do you want to see in your classroom as a result of implementing a queered educational approach?
- What supports or resources will you need to successfully implement these changes?
- How will you measure the success of your action plan?
- What potential challenges might arise, and how will you address them?