**Study Questions**

**Developing LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in ELT**  
**Philippa Way, MA TESOL**

1. **Important terms**
   * 1. What do the initials in the acronym LGBTQ+ stand for?

L = Lesbian

G = Gay

B = Bisexual

T = Transgender

Q = Queer or questioning

+ = Plus (Intersex, Asexual, Non-binary etc.)

* + 1. What does ‘queer’ mean?  
       Queer describes any person identifying as anything else than 100% heterosexual and cisgender.
    2. What does ‘cisgender’ mean?  
       Cisgender describes any person identifying with the gender assigned to him or her by birth based on his or her sex.
    3. How are the concepts of ‘representation’ and ‘recognition’ defined and how are they connected to each other in regard to LGBTQ+?  
       Representation is the visual presentation of LGBTQ+ lives and recognition is the acknowledgement of LGBTQ+ identifying people as legitimate human beings and their acceptance. Representations challenge stereotypes and provide visibility for LGBTQ+ lives, which can support recognition because people perceive LGBTQ+ as more common and natural.

1. **LGBTQ+ in ELT**
   1. **LGBTQ+ in current ELT classrooms**
      1. When looking at the chart presenting approaches used by teachers to bring LGBTQ lives into their classroom, what strikes you as remarkable and what should be improved?  
         1. Remarkable is that …

the two highest columns, “Challenging derogatory behaviour” with 45,61% and “Learner prompted” with 49,12% are not intended by teachers but by the students themselves. If they hadn’t brought up the topic, the teachers wouldn’t have included it at all.

2. An improvement in teaching practices, according to Pippa Way, would be…

if teachers included regular positive representations without specifically focusing on LGBTQ+ representations. This would lead to an increase of the column “LGBT representation in materials” currently at 40,36%.

* 1. **Analysing the framing of LGBTQ+ content**
     1. Pick one of the ELT materials displayed (A: “Changing sex”, B: “Butterflys blog”, or C: “Jack’s Family”) and try to answer how this content in framed in regard to each of the three questions.

1. What context do the materials use? (What is the topic of the lesson and the specific task? How is it presented?)

- Answers may vary –

Some examples might be:

-“Changing sex”: A newspaper article about a charge of sexual discrimination against a transgender woman.

- “Butterfly’s blog”: A cat describes her happy life on a blog with a focus on language. The characters re-occur throughout the textbook, thus, students get more familiar with them.

2. What language or imagery is used? (Positive, negative, or neutral)

- Answers may vary –

Some examples might be:

-“Changing sex”: Negative. It frames LGBTQ+ as something not normal and problematic. The use of language shows a lack of knowledge of correct terms and treatments. Lisa Jones is described as transsexual not as transgender. It seems to only blame Lisa Jones without giving her a voice within the text.

- “Butterfly’s blog”: Positive. It seems to just mention LGBTQ+ but focuses on the cat’s happiness. It “normalizes” LGBTQ+.

3. What impact might this have? (What response might come up?)

- Answers may vary –

Some examples might be:

-“Changing sex”: It might make students feel very uncomfortable.

- “Butterfly’s blog”: Students might stumble about the same-sex couple, which can be a starting point for discussion. Generally, it “normalizes” LGBTQ+.

* 1. **Three approaches to teaching LGBTQ+** 
     1. Describe the main characteristics of each approach and name at least one advantage and one disadvantage for each.   
        1. Counselling = focuses on the individual representations, deals with homophobia, explores students’ feelings and attitudes, and promotes tolerance.

+ Provides neutral or positive representations for LGBTQ+ students to identify with, introduces potential for discussion, and works on the basis of respect.

- It is difficult for the teacher to achieve accurate representations, all opinions are valid even harmful ones, and its focus on feelings and attitudes personalizes the learners’ experiences and may lead to discomfort.

2. Controversies = focuses on LGBTQ+ as a group, deals with discrimination, debates civil rights issues, and only accepts respectful speech.

+ Deals explicitly with social and legal facts not with opinions, provides opportunities for linguistic and grammatical language learning, and it is very relevant to students’ daily lives.

- The teacher needs to have great knowledge of the subject in order to guide the discussion, includes the risk of insensitive speech and strong opinions, and it presents ‘queerness’ as an issue that needs to be discussed.

3. Discourse (critical) inquiry = focuses on heteronormativity, deals with changing societal realities and ideas, questions linguistic, cultural, and social norms, and teaches learners to question and explain themselves and their ideas.

+ Shifts the focus away from the individual towards the societal level, develops higher thinking in students, and promotes understanding (not necessarily acceptance)

- Learners lead the discussion, for which they need a higher level of language sufficiency, and it is rather time consuming.

* 1. **Inclusive teaching**What are your take home messages for your future teaching practices?

1. No specific focus on LGBTQ+ but regular positive representations

2. Use language in a non-harmful way including all students (gender-neutral terms)

3. Avoid ‘Us versus Them’

4. Challenge wrong behaviour and teach students to question themselves and other.

5. Avoid assumptions

6. Look for opportunities to change teaching material

7. Ensure you have the support of school policies

8. Trust your own instincts to make your students feel comfortable in your class