

# When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury: exploring LGBT lives with beginner ESOL learners

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# When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury

## Objectives:

- Explore the process and purpose of incorporating LGBT lives in ESOL classrooms
- Share an activity suitable for different levels



30 minutes

# When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury

- Incorporating personal experience into teaching practice
- What informs our choices?

## When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury: pairs discussion

- When and how do you incorporate LGBT lives into your teaching/ ESOL work? Use this space to give examples of resources or what you have done in class.
- Can you say why you do this and what level you work with?

## When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury: pairs discussion

- If you don't, or feel you can't, incorporate LGBT lives or themes into your work, can you say why? Please tick and / or comment:
  - want to but not confident
  - not sure what the issues are
  - can't find resources to help me
  - I don't think it's relevant to my class
  - other...



10 minutes discuss and write feedback

# When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury - back to the car crash ...



I elicited some language but lost some opportunities. WHY?

## When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury: families are never neutral!

'...sexual identity is already an integral part of ESL. "Husband, wife, wedding ring . . . anniversaries, in-laws, boy/girl friend: all are the currency of everyday social intercourse for the heterosexual.'"'

Harris, 1990, p. 103 in Nelson 1999: 373

## When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury: families are never neutral!

“Coming out never ends ... with any new acquaintances work around [our] uncertainty of their knowledge replaces the work of remaining invisible.”

Toynton, 2006: 189



## When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury: what's the purpose of this activity?

- Provides safe visibility
- Lets students know that LGBT people are part of our joint experience and learning context
- Gives me feedback
- Provides a platform for future work

# Are we really ordinary?

- Inclusion – beware:
  - Trying for tolerance or legitimation
  - Representation – of whom?
- Inquiry - shift the emphasis to:
  - How language and culture work to position all sexual identities / in relation to other identities
  - Open it up – tutors don't have to have 'the answer'.

(from Nelson 1999)

# When 'ordinary' feels like a luxury

## References:

- Nelson, C. (2008) *Sexual Diversity in English Language Education: Classroom Conversations*
- Nelson, C. (1999) Sexual Identities in ESL: Queer Theory and Classroom Inquiry *TESOL Quarterly* Vol 33 (3) pp 371-391
- Toynton, R. (2006) 'Invisible Other: Understanding safe spaces for queer learners and teachers in adult education' *Studies in the Education of Adults* 38 (2) pp 178-194

For further discussion, please contact:

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*Thanks*