

Opening the Coursebook Closet: LGBTQ+ Representation in an ELT Textbook

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Abstract.

It is estimated that up to 30% of the world's population belongs to the LGBTQ+ community. With millions of people learning the English language worldwide, this represents a significant portion of English language learners. Yet, representation in English language programs and classroom materials appears to be limited to non-existent. This study conducted a content analysis of LGBTQ+ representation in one American set of ELT textbooks. The set consisted of five levels of reading and writing. The reason for the choice of this particular set – the Q Series – was its use as a common textbook choice in a foundation program at a university in Canada. The study investigated the presence of LGBTQ+ references and topics in the five books, totalling 40 units. Findings revealed that there was zero LGBTQ+ representation in all. Unit topics ranged from family, work and vacation in the lower levels to global cooperation, advertising, and science in the higher levels. Wherever possible, suggestions for inclusion of content were made to make the texts more inclusive. Fifteen suggestions were made in total to enhance the various units. These included such things as images and textual content changes with a vision to normalize the presence of LGBTQ+ to better represent the true nature of the social world.

Keywords: LGBTQ+ representation, ELT textbooks, content analysis, reading and writing