Addressing Sexual Moralities in ELT Materials: When Diverse Cultures Meet

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Abstract This chapter is concerned with the way sexual moralities and values are addressed in the design of English language teaching (ELT) materials. It discusses the shortcomings of commercial ELT materials available to address sensitive topics, and illustrates the challenges and possibilities of engaging with gender and sexuality through a case study of ELT for development aid in Timor Leste. In this example, teachers and students with vastly different cultural and moral outlooks pool their resources and expertise to design their own materials and investigate a sensitive issue of local concern. The chapter concludes that where language classrooms bring together participants with diverse backgrounds, such issues need to be recognised and negotiated with care, and teachers need to be mindful of their own cultural values and biases when using or designing teaching materials.

Keywords Cultural values • English language teaching • ELT materials • Gender and sexuality • International development

1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which sexual moralities and values may be addressed in the design and use of English language teaching (ELT) materials. It focuses specifically on ELT as a component of international development aid, a context that brings together teachers and students from vastly different cultural and economic backgrounds. The chapter aims to offer insights into the way that foreign teachers may design and activate materials to engage with students' concerns over highly sensitive questions of intercultural sexual politics. In this particular area of concern, there has been little published research literature that offers guidance and encouragement to English language teachers. More broadly, the chapter aims to contribute to our understanding of a significant aspect of regional geopolitics: that

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is, the intercultural relationships brought about by Australian English language teaching programmes in the nations of Southeast Asia.

The chapter begins by briefly discussing some of the moral and cultural problems identified in commercial ELT materials, and then outlines some specific challenges of ELT in the context of international development programmes. These challenges are brought to life in a case study of ELT in Timor Leste. The case study focuses on Australian teachers' accounts of designing teaching materials for the development context and negotiating sensitive issues to do with sexual morality and values in the cultural contact zone where teachers' and students' communities interact.

Before I begin, a word on terminology might be useful for the reader. In this chapter, I use the word 'materials' to include not only commercially produced textbooks, but also a broader range of 'texts' (in the broader post-structural sense) that might be produced or designed by the teacher, the students, or collaboratively by both. Such textual materials might include, for example, structured discussions and presentations (based on student scripts or notes), student journals produced with teacher guidance, maps and diagrams, notes and lists on flip-charts and wall posters, or worksheets comprising collaboratively designed questionnaires.

2 Values in ELT Materials

In recent decades, a body of research literature has presented critiques of commercially published ELT textbook materials, particularly in regard to the importation and imposition of problematic social, moral and cultural values. Such textbooks have been criticised for their emphasis on Anglo-centric cultural and social situations (Tomlinson 2008), and their sanitized, synthetic, "one size fits all" content which excludes any reference to sensitive topics such as politics, religion, drugs, alcohol, sex, and '–isms'(Gray 2002, p. 166). Textbooks designed to reflect an international setting are said to position non-Western cultures "superficially and insensitively" (Tomlinson 2008, p. 320), to de-privilege knowledge derived from practice at a local level, and to reduce the complexities of the world by presenting a simplified Western viewpoint that generally assumes a materialistic set of values and a concern with activities such as leisure pursuits and travel (Gray 2010a; Forman 2014). The selection and presentation of situations, tasks and values in textbooks have also been implicated in the shaping of available social roles for students. In this regard, it is important to consider not only explicit social identities which are drawn for learners but also to reflect further on what is excluded from textbooks and curricula. The absence of depictions and learning tasks that might challenge existing inequitable economic and social situations suggests that this exclusion fails to prepare students for what they might encounter in daily life, and so potentially reinforces a sense of individual alienation or helplessness.

Numerous analyses of textbook content have also found fault with the way that gender is represented in teaching materials. Early content analyses from the 1970s

and 1980s reported stereotyped gender representation of women and men in ELT materials. More recently, and reflecting the widespread influence of feminism and the 'new capitalism', Gray (2010a, p. 714) observes that images of women have been co-opted to bolster a neo-liberal message of individualism, economic achievement, and career success (see also Gray 2010b). Studies of textbook content can, however, tend to overlook how texts relating to gender could be reinterpreted and resisted by teachers and students. Some research studies on language learning and gender identity have moved away from an exclusive analysis of textual content and towards a greater concern with activity and interaction *around* the text. Empirical studies of these interactions have demonstrated the ways in which teachers adapt the overt messages and values represented in published materials in order to suit the interests and circumstances of particular situations (see, for example, Mills and Mustapha 2015; Sunderland et al. 2001).

While studies of gender representation are now quite common, there are relatively few studies that focus on the ways in which ELT materials address more challenging issues of sexuality, sexual identity, sexual behaviour, or sexual morality (though see, for example, Nelson 2009; Higgins and Norton 2010). Indeed, these issues are almost always absent from standard teaching materials. Yet in some development contexts, they may be of crucial importance to host communities.

3 ELT and Gender in the Context of International Development

English language teaching (ELT) in the context of international development poses specific challenges for both teachers and students, and has significant implications for the process of procuring or designing suitable teaching materials. International development programmes have historically been understood as a means of promoting prosperity in developing countries by funding assistance programmes in areas such as education, health care, effective governance and the promotion of gender equality. Viewed through the lens of critical theory, however, international development and the teaching of English in development programmes have been interpreted as a means of extending colonial relationships, and reproducing colonial and patriarchal discourses and hierarchies in the development context (Appleby 2010).

The hierarchies implicit in development may also be implicit in the teaching of English. Educational development programmes that provide English language courses often entail sending teachers from the relatively wealthy Anglophone 'core' to poorer 'periphery' locations where they may work with colleagues and students from vastly different economic, social, and cultural backgrounds. Negotiating these differences can be challenging for teachers and, as suggested above, most commercially available ELT textbooks and resource materials offer little assistance in addressing sensitive issues such as economic disparity and exploitation or religious and cultural beliefs and practices in relation to gender and sexuality.

In an attempt to avoid the shortcomings associated with curricula based on commercially produced textbooks, some development projects have adopted task-based and experiential learning projects that are designed to foster learners' confidence and skills in identifying and addressing important issues in their own communities by designing, with teacher guidance, their own contextually appropriate materials. Such approaches typically draw on learner interests and local contexts to shift from teacher-assigned materials and activities to tasks based on materials which participants design, initiate and complete themselves under the guidance of a teacher-facilitator. These tasks and associated materials would be based on an understanding of the contextual constraints that limit the opportunities of marginalised communities and would, ideally, be facilitated by a teacher who comes from the same community as the learners. However, these principles may be jeopardised the case where foreign, 'First World' teachers are deployed in international development projects; in such cases, the foreign teacher may arrive with little understanding of the cultural history, values and priorities of the communities in which they are to work. Thus, while task-based materials may, in theory, be designed to simulate 'real life' activities relevant to the learners' local context, they may not necessarily engage with the broader social, cultural, political, and historical particularities that shape learners' lives and opportunities (Ellis 2003).

From the perspective of foreign teachers working in a development context, the collaborative design of materials for task-based learning may also be influenced by donors and their partner institutions. Given the pressure to comply with donor and institutional expectations, collaboratively designed materials and activities may engage learners with 'real world' tasks, but these tasks may ultimately serve to assimilate learners into the neo-liberal economic and political goals of powerful institutions, rather than prompting interrogation or transformation of prevailing conditions. Thus, while task-based materials can open possibilities for activities that engage with the lived experience of learners, there may be significant difficulties with implementing this approach in a meaningful and transformative way in development contexts.

Foreign teachers drawing from the experiences and interests of local students to design or guide the development of task-based, contextualised materials therefore face particular challenges. There are significant risks associated with using teacher authority to represent, appropriate, or territorialise students' or local communities' culture, and engaging with students' lived experience requires sensitivity to cultural differences and student privacy. Ideally, in such cases, the teacher's engagement with issues of gender and sexuality can allow learners to communicate their personal views and experiences in a new language, thereby opening up possibilities for mutual learning. But there is a danger that these practices may also be read as coercive or as an act of intrusion that draws private lives into the domain of institutional power and risks colonising the learner as "fodder for pedagogic talk and … public display" (Kramsch and van Hoene 2001, p. 299). Moreover, foreign teachers aiming to incorporate an explicit focus on gender equality, the empowerment of women, or sexual rights, can also be seen as imposing outsider cultural values and reinforcing a moral hierarchy between developed and developing nations.

4 A Case Study of English Language Teaching in East Timor or Timor-Leste

To illustrate the challenges and possibilities of engaging with gender and sexuality in English language teaching (ELT) materials, I turn now to a case study of ELT as part of an international aid programme in Timor-Leste. The case study is based on the account of an Australian English language teacher, referred to by the pseudonym 'Carol,' and is drawn from a larger research project that examined the experiences of female teachers of English in development aid programmes in Southeast Asia (Appleby 2010). The larger research project aimed to explore the relationship between English language teaching and the context of international development. In the case study at the heart of this chapter, the following key research questions are pertinent:

- How are ELT materials used and/or designed in the context of international development and with what consequences?
- How are ELT materials experienced through discourses of gender, sexuality, and race?

The research project was conducted in two phases. The first phase was based on an ethnographic study of my own experience of teaching English language to university students in a development programme in Timor-Leste. I focused, in particular, on the ways in which my own taken-for-granted practices and texts of ELT would translate into a development context, and how students in a development context would respond to those practices. A theoretical framework, drawn from critical ethnography and critical classroom discourse analysis, was adopted in order to examine how the micro culture of the classroom, realised in materials, practices, and interactions, was embedded in the larger macro systems of cultural and political power (Canagarajah 1993). A range of data was collected and analysed to present a qualitative picture of the various aspects of the project and its place in a social, economic and political context.

The second phase aimed to broaden the base of the research project and provide a better balance between emic and etic perspectives by collecting data from other Australian teachers who had taught in the same or similar development programmes in South East Asia. Data selected from ten teachers formed the basis of this phase: six (including Carol) had taught on the same development programme as myself; one had taught in a follow-up programme at the same institution; three had taught in a teacher-training programme in Timor-Leste. Data were gathered in the form of interviews, email correspondence, and letters sent by the teachers to friends and family. The interviews were semi-structured, and open questions invited teachers to reflect, *inter alia*, on their use of imported and locally designed materials for ELT within the development context. Analysis of Carol's account in the following case study exemplifies the process whereby the students' own political interests and experience – deeply embedded in a specific place – are brought together with the

interests and experience of the teacher to design materials and guide activities that make English language teaching an enriching and engaging endeavour.

The research project and the case study presented here were located at a time of intense political, economic and social turmoil in Timor-Leste following the population's historic vote in favour of territorial separation from Indonesia. After the vote for independence a wave of violence swept across the territory resulting in the destruction of physical infrastructure and the cessation of all civil, government, legal and administrative functions. The university and schools were destroyed along with books and teaching materials. The ensuing emergency situation opened the way for an international military intervention to quell the violence, stabilise the country and allow the installation of a temporary UN administration. In the succeeding months and years, an influx of humanitarian aid programmes saw the arrival of a large number of foreign aid workers, particularly in the capital, Dili.

At the time of this case study, the territory was under United Nations administration. In its peacekeeping and development operations the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was intended to include, amongst its goals, the promotion of gender equality. The notion that East Timor was a patriarchal society, and that women had suffered disproportionately under waves of colonial occupation, was widespread, with some activists, practitioners, and scholars claiming that customary tribal practices and conservative Catholicism, initially imported in an earlier era of Portuguese colonialism, had contributed to women's oppression. However, despite the UNTAET rhetoric of gender equality, the influx of male-dominated military forces and development organisations provoked gender problems between foreign and local communities, prompting accusations that the UN had failed to protect civilian women from sexual violence and exploitation perpetrated by international military, police, and civilian personnel (Joshi 2007). As with any international intervention of this sort, intercultural sexual politics became a contentious issue and, within this particular educational aid programme, was expressed as a matter of concern in the classroom.

The development aid programme in which Carol and I worked was designed to teach English language and computer skills to a large cohort of university students whose education had been disrupted by the closure of the university in the emergency period. The students were politically active in the liberation struggles and determined to have a say in the structuring of the new nation. They had a rich linguistic repertoire, speaking at least one of the many regional languages as well as Tetum, an indigenous lingua franca. During the decades of Indonesian occupation, the medium of instruction in educational institutions had been Bahasa Indonesia, but following the vote for independence, there was widespread demand amongst a younger generation for English language teaching despite official plans to introduce Portuguese as the official language for the new nation. The UN responded to the students' demands by requesting an Australian organisation to provide an ELT programme for university students, but perhaps unsurprisingly, there were no appropriate published language teaching materials available for this specific situation.

In the absence of any locally produced materials, the aid programme was supplied with a textbook that had been designed for migrants learning English in

Australia, and this was supplemented by materials brought by individual teachers. Although the teachers were well aware that any materials they brought from Australia would need to be adapted to the Timorese context, the focus and form of this contextualisation varied greatly. Some processes of adaptation involved a simplification of lexis and grammar, or placing the textbook's language functions and events within the local environment. But many teachers found their own limited experience of Timor-Leste, and the disparity between the textbook content and the lived experience of their students, made working with any imported textbooks impossible. One teacher explained the problem in this way:

> [the textbook is based on] a Queensland program … it's very Australian, so you know, you catch a train, so you'd look at train timetables, but there are no trains in [Timor-Leste]. Well I could adjust that to bus timetable, but like the microlets [Timorese minibuses] do not have a timetable! So it's all that, culturally so strange and there were a lot of things I left out because at the time I couldn't think of how to change it. And it was so new.

As the Australian teachers soon discovered, the typical situations and scripts depicted in the textbook and forming the basis of lesson plans, like reading timetables, catching trains, and even eating breakfast, did not apply to Timor-Leste. The scripts and representations in textbooks, being divorced from the world outside the classroom, instead produced what one teacher described as an 'English bubble,' a disciplinary schema floating detached from the social and historical context of this particular location. For most of the Australian teachers in my study, the disconnection between those imported materials, scripts and plans for teaching, and the particular characteristics of places and people in Timor-Leste, led to intense feelings of confusion, disorientation, and doubt. Only a few of the teachers clung tenaciously to their imported teaching materials, remaining in the English bubble that hovered above the landscape.

From my own perspective, the lifestyle presented in our Australian textbooks, while unremarkable in an Australian classroom, when viewed in my East Timorese classroom suddenly appeared middle class, materialistic, immodest, and littered with irrelevant Australian slang. As the teacherly embodiment of this Western lifestyle in the classroom, I felt acutely aware that this textbook world also constructed an identity for me: supermarket shopping, car ownership, eating in restaurants, train travel and holiday air travel comprise normal routines; washing machines, freezers, mobile phones, and computers are everyday commodities. Making appointments by phone, filling bank forms, reading street signs, or EFTPOS instructions are everyday practices and form the basis of modelled texts. In contrast, in Timor-Leste at that time, there were no phones, no appointments for doctors, no trains and no bus signs, especially in English, and no libraries to join, EFTPOS machines or banks to use. As we browsed the pages of the textbook, references to Australians' weekend activities, such as 'clipping the edges' on the lawn in front of the house, seemed almost impossible to explain in a country where many families were homeless, still living amongst rubble or in makeshift shelters, and gardens were associated with food production rather than ornamental lawns.

Dealing with issues of gender and sexuality through the lens of textbook content proved equally difficult. Teachers' accounts from this programme demonstrated that even when gender was not an explicit focus of English language teaching materials, it emerged in classroom events and discussions and was influenced by the beliefs, experiences, and observations that students and teachers brought into the classroom. Gender emerged from the stories of liberation struggles, reconciliation and generational politics, from accounts of domestic routines and domestic conflicts, and from concerns over the different sexual practices of the various communities present in the contact zone of development. Female teachers varied in the ways in which they responded to gender issues. While some took an explicit stand in relation to questions of gender politics or cultural sensitivity, for most of the teachers in this development context it was not simply a matter of acting with authority to help their students towards 'enlightenment' or competence in analysing and tackling gender issues. Rather, their pedagogical practice was a matter of working in a space where divergent cultures met, and negotiating strong but contradictory demands for teachers to join in a struggle for gender equality and universal human rights while simultaneously respecting an unfamiliar local cultural politics.

5 Carol's Class

The university students in Carol's class had a higher level of English language proficiency than most of the students in the programme, and so Carol was more easily able to adapt, negotiate, and design materials that connected classroom English language practices with the students' interests and concerns that derived from their lives outside the classroom walls. Her account demonstrates the way that sensitively designed English language teaching materials facilitated "a set of activities dynamically integrated across physical, social, mental and moral worlds" (Pennycook 2010, p. 130).

Like other foreign teachers in the aid project, Carol had initially planned a specific programme of work based on textbook lessons and the few locally available newspaper resources. But as classes progressed, these lessons moved towards a more delicate and nuanced integration of student and teacher expertise and desires that required the development of very different materials. In Carol's words:

> It took me a little while, I was trying to be an English teacher, and wanting them to follow **my** course [based on the textbook], and suddenly I realised, they didn't only want English, they needed to communicate with each other about what was happening [outside the classroom]. English became the medium for it, and of course the discussions went on in breaks and lunchtime, when they were out of the classroom, it would continue in Tetum then. But in class they endeavoured to express what they felt in English.

The movement from teacher-controlled materials to a negotiation of student control was demonstrated in a particular sequence commencing with a game using teacher-designed materials comprising a set of questions for students to ask and answer in groups. Although initially compliant, Carol found these structured

materials gave way to a process whereby students insisted on selecting "*the issues they talked about*," thus signalling the flow of political and personal ideas from outside the classroom. Working together to produce an alternative resource, Carol and the students "*made a list of topics and that stayed on the wall all the time and they used that list of topics and they added to it, if they wanted to, to write in their diaries*." The organisation of teaching and learning within the classroom then became a negotiation between structured teacher-centred materials and a flow of contextual interests, ideas and student-designed materials: "*Because I thought rather than just take the topic and start talking about it in class, I wanted them to get their ideas together first*." At home, the students wrote in their journals "*to make them think about what they were going to say*," then these "*collected*" thoughts would be used as a basis for classroom talk and presentations.

Carol felt her students still expected her to play a part in structuring the classroom activities, but they wanted those critical issues to be "*part of it, and when they realised I was allowing it to be a part of their day, they were happy with that, then they were happy to do all the other things when they realised it was connected*." It was crucial that the language learning and classroom materials be constructed to reflect or address the political meanings of the local place, so that "both locality and language emerge[d] from the activities engaged in" (Pennycook 2010, p. 128). What developed was an integration of connected positions that included teachers' disciplinary knowledge and students' knowledge of history and place: "*if they were going to give a narrative of something that had happened, we did narrative, past tense, you know, we did the grammar associated with it*." This combination of emotional memories and a 'dry' grammatical structure might seem odd, but Carol suggested that the conventions of English classes allowed for 'an escape' and for moving on to a differently imagined future. She felt her students wanted neither "*for us to just be sympathising with them*' nor to "*dwell on*" all that had happened. Rather, English classes perhaps represented a way "*to get back, get back on track, get back to routine*," a way to "*get back to a structure and get things moving again*." Hence the need to incorporate within the teaching materials a combination of input from the textbook, the teacher, and the students' more immediate interests, experiences, and knowledge.

This engagement with student's concerns was not without its difficulties. Outside the classroom, students' families and communities were deeply involved in communal practices of healing and remembrance, and inside the classroom topics that arose spontaneously in the course of everyday lessons recalled into the present personal memories of trauma:

> In class there'd be something [from the textbook] about: 'There was more rain in Hong Kong than London', or something like that, and then when they made up their own sentences: 'More people were killed in Los Palos than Baucau'. And then we'd be talking about languages of East Timor, and then one student'd say: 'Oh, my brother spoke English very well', 'Oh what's he doing now?' 'Oh, he was killed at the Santa Cruz massacre'. You know that sort of thing, it was just a shock all the time. Then one of my students had to go and dig

> up bodies, and then he came back, and they had to ask to go over to CIVPOL[1] [to identify the bones], and he said 'Very sad, bones belong my family'.

Sensitivity to students' stories of personal suffering had led some teachers to draw firmer barriers to keep the outside out and to maintain a distance between themselves and their students. Maintaining this distance may have been simpler if materials had been based solely on an imported textbook, but in this case the immediacy of students' grief and trauma could not be ignored. Nevertheless in the absence of guidance from familiar teaching materials, the teachers were often confused as to how they could engage with this situation. Indeed, although these teachers had expressed solidarity with Timorese political activism, fear of the passions that could be invoked led them to avoid contact with personal accounts of trauma and grief. Yet for Carol, these classroom exchanges appeared to build more connections, becoming a part of the classroom practice, rather than something that was separate from 'the English lesson': "*there was a lot of laughter and light moments and joking, but at the same time we couldn't ignore what was happening*."

Amongst the topics the students chose to incorporate into the English language lessons as "*very important to talk about*" included "*the women of East Timor, because of what had happened to the women, you know, coming to terms with what had happened to the women*" during the struggle for independence. In these student-led presentations and in students' written materials, private experiences were brought into the public domain in a way that the teacher perceived as indications of the women's strength and solidarity:

> I had a fair few really strong women in the afternoon group and they used to often clap, spontaneously, when it came to an issue talking about women playing a strong role, there were very strong feelings about things.

Acknowledging that these issues were brought into the public space of the classroom by students' agency and ownership, the teacher appeared to initially take the role of a bystander rather than the author and centre of classroom action:

> Ros: And how did you feel when some of those really strong topics came up?
> Carol: I tried not to give an opinion actually, […] I didn't want them to think the Western way, 'cause I was still trying to understand what- how the men and women's roles were in East Timor, I didn't feel I could impose our ideas until I knew what was happening there really.

Although Carol recognised that there were serious issues relating to reconciliation and the perception and treatment of women currently being discussed within the local community at that time, she was reluctant to develop materials that would focus directly on these sensitive topics. In these circumstances, the teacher's awareness of her status as a cultural and territorial outsider acted as a restraint to pedagogical authority, and prompted her to take up a listening position that suggested a contingent reversal of the most significant neo-colonial hierarchies she perceived as inherent in the development context. Rather than directly expressing her opinion on the issues of gender and reconciliation, she chose instead to discuss her own

[1] A multinational Civilian Police force sponsored by the United Nations

memories and embodied experiences as a Western woman, and the way she felt she was perceived when working as a teacher on a previous aid project in Indonesia. In this account, the teacher's own body becomes the subject material for an investigation of gender and cultural differences:

> [The Indonesians] looked on Western women as prostitutes really, and so I talked about that, and I talked about some of my experiences in Bali, how it was supposed that I was a prostitute by some of the Muslim teachers, and I told them about, I told them of a couple of experiences I had. […] So really, I told them of my experiences, to add fuel for their own debates, to get them going, to motivate discussion, to get them all going on it really.

Similarly, in the East Timorese context, Carol felt that 'open displays' of sexual behaviour by some Western women aid workers had led Timorese men to draw negative conclusions about all Western women: "*they thought all Western women were going to do it*." She believed that these readings influenced her students' perceptions of Westerners' sexual relations and that these concerns were focused in a particular place: the UN floating hotel *Olympia*, which was moored in Dili harbour to accommodate an overflow of foreign workers, most of whom were men. That physical location then became another space for the students' and teacher's engagement in, and ethnographic exploration of, these difficult issues:

> Amongst the students, yes they did talk about that, they talked about not wanting their women to be like Western women, and that the boat, *Olympia*, was being used for prostitution. So that's when I thought, 'well we'd better go down and see for ourselves'.

For Carol, an important aspect of the students' learning of English was to equip them with "*confidence to participate in the UNTAET governing and reconstruction of their country*." She wanted her students to use English to "*know what was happening and to seek correct information*." With this purpose in mind, Carol designed materials to support an ethnographic approach to language learning (Roberts et al. 2001) and to engage in language use as a political practice. Materials designed to focus on asking and answering questions became an integral part of preparing students for excursions into institutions in which English functioned as a lingua franca, such as the UN offices. Together, Carol and her students had ventured into several UN and NGO locations at the heart of the development bureaucracy to enquire about plans for reconstruction and about potential employment opportunities for the Timorese community. These institutions were places that might not, otherwise, have been easily accessible to Timorese students, because in this time of political turmoil many were heavily guarded against unofficial entrants. The materials that Carol designed collaboratively with her students in preparation for these visits were intended to "*give them the confidence to enter institutions and make them realise that the country was now theirs*."

Carol explained the process of producing the materials for the students' ethnographic inquiry at the *Olympia*:

> We [teacher and students] prepared all the questions, I said what do you think you'll want to know? Is being used for prostitution? What is it being used for? Who lives on it? How many? Who runs it? Why is it there? So we made a whole of lot questions on the board and we formulated the questions and they had to practice asking each other, from that I put up

> what they wanted to know, how many people, OK, I said, how do you make that question, OK 'how many people live on the boat?', you want to know where do they eat, 'where do the people eat?' so they practiced all that, and then we wrote a letter to the *Olympia* [manager] and asked if we could go on board. So they each had their question sheets and they went all around the boat, on the different sections to find out what they did for entertainment, you know they had them under headings, and all the questions, and they just went around asking all the questions and they had to find the answers, and we sat on the deck and looked at what we'd collected.

With the jointly produced materials and questions practiced in the classroom, Carol and her students were prepared for their visit to the *Olympia*, where "*they were seeing for themselves, because they were hearing rumours, and they hadn't been- they didn't know they were allowed to go these places, cause under Indonesian rule, and under Portuguese rule, I guess they were not easily able to go into public places, they were intimidated by these places*." In this way, collaboratively designed materials were prepared and used as a means of leveraging engagement with context, and specifically with certain spaces that held gendered meanings. In these places, gender inequalities were not seen as a problem solely located within the Timorese community (who cooks the food in *your* family? who does the cleaning in *your* house?), but as a problem that arose *between* diverse cultures and communities brought together in the contact zone of international development. In the case of the *Olympia*, any gender problems that existed were produced and sustained not by presumed patriarchal relations in the Timorese community, but by the presence of a wealthy, masculinised, and militarised international community.

In terms of effecting substantive institutional change, the outcome of the class's ethnographic inquiry was inconclusive: we have no firm knowledge that practices of prostitution on the *Olympia*, if they existed at all, were abolished. In the years since Timorese independence, reports of sexual exploitation by military organisations that accompany development aid continue to surface on a global scale. In this sense, the deep-seated hierarchies of gender and race continue to shape the experiences of host and donor interactions. Nevertheless, at a local level the collaboratively designed materials developed in these lessons turned a spotlight on the operation of those hierarchies within the students' own communities, and promoted language learning while fostering students' confidence in accessing and interrogating institutions otherwise closed to them. These materials – and practices that they promote – point to an alternative, more exploratory way of addressing certain experiences and effects of gender, sexuality, and race in the context of development, one that begins to work collaboratively with the various interests, values, and agency of both students and teacher.

6 Conclusion

Research studies over several decades have determined that commercially produced international textbooks, sold to a mass market, have long failed to link language learning to specific local social, economic, cultural and political environments in any significant way. In such cases, teachers need to explore alternative ways in which such links can be made, either through a critical engagement with the supplied textbook content, or by collaboratively designing materials that extend meaningful language lessons from the classroom out into the world beyond the classroom walls. This chapter has discussed one such case in which English language teaching materials have been designed and used in a troubled development context to address delicate issues to do with gender and sexuality. In Carol's classes, language learning materials drew on the interests and concerns of her students, combining the teacher's and students' experience and expertise to support inquiry and action, and to address a specific site where sexual morals, values, and practices were brought into question.

As is the case in development programmes, teachers in many resource-poor teaching contexts may be supplied with imported textbook materials on which to base their teaching. In situations where resources are scarce, the possession of an English textbook may be an important priority. But such resources rarely deal explicitly with issues of power and conflict, social and economic difference, or gender and sexuality, though it is precisely these issues that may be of direct concern to students and their communities in the developing world. To amend this oversight, some of the questions that might be considered in relation to the design and use of curriculum and teaching materials for use in such contexts are:

- To what extent do the curriculum and teaching materials address issues of social, cultural, economic, and political importance to participants in this context?
- How are the various participants in (and beyond) the classroom positioned by, and represented in, the teaching texts? Who are represented as the 'experts' in the teaching and learning process?
- Whose interests are served by the positioning and representations evident in the teaching materials?
- To what extent are social and economic hierarchies between teachers and students, programme managers and local participants, reproduced or disrupted through implementation of the teaching materials?
- If the teaching materials are lacking engagement with the local social, political, and economic concerns, to what extent are students and teachers encouraged to adopt an ethnographic approach in developing their teaching practices?
- How are sensitive issues to do with gender and sexuality addressed in teaching materials, if at all? Whose interests are served by the inclusion/exclusion and representation of these issues?

Where language classrooms bring together teachers and students with vastly different cultural and moral outlooks, the representation of these issues in texts and materials needs to be recognised and negotiated with care. In such circumstances,

teachers need to be mindful of their own cultural values and biases, and sensitive to the diverse values brought into the classroom by students. Questions of sexual morality, however difficult they may be, can be addressed in the design of ELT materials in ways that are productive and respectful of the various interests represented in the classroom.

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