

Instructional Technology and Active Learning: Possibilities for Inclusive English Classrooms

(A Declaration as Poem for a More Accessible Future)

I had written a conference paper

A whole traditional conference paper

7 pages, double spaced

But, I cannot in good conscience deliver that paper

I cannot sit here and speak at you

For the 12 allotted minutes I have been given

about inclusion and access

When none of what we are in right now is accessible

None of this is inclusive

So instead, I choose to speak to you, from the heart

In verse

Since creative writing is the only thing

Our association really seems to care about right now

I teach business communication at the college level

One of the things I teach is to have audience awareness

To know what they want to hear and how they want to hear it

So this is me modelling my pedagogical practice

Being aware of the association audience

I was going to speak to you today about ALCs

Active Learning Classrooms

But instead, I am going to talk about ALCs

Accessibility Lacking Conferences

And how you can't have a conference

Where one is to speak about inclusive classrooms and pedagogy

When so many things about the process and praxis of this conference
are exclusionary

I can't sit here and talk to you about

AODA compliant class architecture

When we were given nine pages of a non-tagged inaccessible PDF

With instructions to even make it into this Zoom room

I was going to talk to you

About faulty one-to-one framing

In the transition to online and remote delivery

As a source of frustration

I was going to talk to you about the possibilities for online as accessible

How remote could be a space of comprehensive access

Could be

A space where learning takes into account

Race, class, disability, queerness, gender, family responsibilities

And all the intersections

If you have low tech ways in and choice

If you listened to learners and participants

If you modelled contextual practices

But I can't

Cause it would be hypocritical of me

When "a host of new technologies that make this event the most affordable, accessible, and environmentally friendly in our association's history" (Betts, 2021).

Is still so full of gatekeepers

When precarious instructors are forgotten and let down

When real issues that affect the members
Like ableism and lack of access
Are swept
Under the biggest of rugs
And I am left to question why
That party line sits so comfortably in some mouths
When “this is just a volunteer position” is used
As an excuse to not do anything
When I am still out here raising awareness
When so many of us are out here raising awareness
With our invisible labour
Because it is important and it matters
Because we are losing students to lack of accessibility
Because we are losing opportunities for new colleagues
Because of lack of accessibility
Because we are losing incredible scholars for lack of accessibility

And I say this from a place of privilege
As a white lesbian woman who at the moment has a full-time staff role
Who grew up lower middle class and has gained middle-class privilege through education
I say this
As a person who is not hiding behind a tenure-track position
As a person who will never get a SSHRC nor would want one
As the person who is always saying things on Twitter, in meetings, on emails
That you dismiss
Because inclusion and access is foundational to what we do in Higher Ed

I say this because everyone seems to be worried about the financial cost

A strawman by the way

And no one is thinking about the moral, ethical, and community cost

Of upholding the systems

I say this because modelling is important

And I look around and recognize the voices and faces that are not here

Who is being excluded by upholding systems and building cliques

And how those cliques reflect what research is shared

What scholarship is published

I say this as my last conference paper at ACCUTE and Congress

Cause modelling is important to me

And I am not seeing a lot of ethical modelling here

So with these last few minutes on this one panel

On this small archipelago of virtual space

Where I had to supply my own captions because there are none offered

At a conference built on a platform with no VPAT

Who even changed their company name to hide this

And instead purchased a very expensive AI overlay

That the disability community has widely identified as problematic

To hide their failures

Behind a report

That they are so proud of

A report that says we are inclusive and accessible

Look we even had a person with a strong accessibility background co-write it

But we will ignore his labour

And create this inaccessible mess instead

So with my time left

I will touch on two things

One how trauma-aware pedagogy would have helped our association stop reinforcing trauma

And two give you tips on how to be better inclusive humans

Trauma aware foundational concepts

Choice, trust, safety, community, and empowerment

They had the choice to speak up about these things and have not

Therefore, my sense of trust in this association is slim to none

And I give this poem in a space where I don't feel safe

But I am doing this because it's important to me

This has never been a community to me, even and especially when I was on the board

I can name on one hand the folk I trust to care about what I care about here

There's a lot of cliques in this space, cliques are not inclusive

Call out given, because my call in was ignored

But what this has done is given me a great sense of empowerment to leave

Because why would I voluntarily be in a space that hurts me and those I care about

I will let you sit with that for a second

So maybe now that you have heard these things you are like hmm I need to make some changes

What can I do, cause folk love checklists

Let me tell you first checklists are only the start

If you actually care about inclusion and access then listen to what folk are saying

Don't hide behind titles, institutions, and associations

Don't ask students to turn on their cameras

As Brenna says, students don't owe you admission into their life by the price of tuition

Use captions always in live events and on videos you produce

Check the transcripts and edit them for errors

English undergrads have been tasked in some places to review these as an assignment about context and narrative (just a thought)

Transcript your podcasts

Don't assume all students will engage in the same way

Silence does not mean lack of engagement

Review the deadlines for your assignments and put in equitable assessment policies

Put your pronouns on Zoom

Describe the visuals you are showing on the screen (always not just remotely)

Look at accessibility affordances of the cool new instructional tech tool you want to use

Don't pick something that will exclude learners based on price, keyboard access, visual bias

Audit your syllabi for the voices that are missing

OERs are a thing, look into them, students don't have money for textbooks

Audit your physical and virtual space for access barriers

Don't assume everyone is single or married

Don't assume your students have no children

Don't assume your students don't have important extended family care responsibilities

Stand up for what is right

Stop supporting ableist associations and organizations

Be good humans

There is so much more I could say

But my 12 minutes are almost up

So thank you for listening

I am off to enjoy my lifetime of never

Having to deal with this association again