

**Equal Opportunity in Language Classroom**  
**Anna Neofytou**  
**ELT News Mar 2011**

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter to say that my colleagues and I were really happy to attend the British Council seminar on the 'Equal Opportunities in Language Classroom' by Paul Shaw which took place in the Mediterranean Hotel on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011.

Paul Shaw raised some issues which I feel strongly about. First of all, he mentioned that discrimination is a usual phenomenon not only in the society but also in classrooms. As we all agree, discrimination of gender, colour, age, education level and appearance exists everywhere around us. Taking all these into consideration, Paul Shaw emphasized the fact that especially disabled children are abused both verbally and physically. While nobody can deny that, one of our roles as teachers is to sensitize students upon taboo matters like sexism, racism, religious issues, ageism, homophobia and most all disability. As a result, he proposed several ways to do so, such as provide a secure learning environment, explain the importance of equality and diversity and finally provide positive non-stereotyping information about different groups of people.

However, Paul Shaw, apart from raising the issue of intolerance towards the disabled he also came up with a solution to it. He presented and provided us with a challenging lesson plan for Intermediate Level upon Disability-Raising Awareness. He explained thoroughly how we can implement such a lesson plan in our classrooms having English as the target language to sensitize our students at a distance without making anyone feel marginalized. In his lesson plan, he included several activities that promote the improvement of writing, speaking, listening and reading skills. I would like to make my students interested in discrimination matters using a similar lesson plan and I would also recommend it to every teacher.

On the whole, attending the seminar on 'Equal Opportunities in Language Classroom' by Paul Shaw was a beneficial and inspiring experience that will hopefully help us all face challenges like these with a different and more optimistic perspective.

Yours faithfully,  
Anna Neofytou.  
Lexicon School-K.Toumpa  
Thessaloniki