Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions Towards LGBTQ Issues: A Case Study in Northern Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses a significant gap in English Language Teaching (ELT) literature by examining the incorporation of queer pedagogy in northern Cyprus. It investigates the perspectives of English language teachers in University Preparatory departments regarding discussions on queer issues within their classrooms. The aim is to bridge the theory-practice gap in ELT by exploring the impact of queer perspectives on instructional materials and the dynamics between educators and learners. In an effort to uncover the challenges faced by teachers in integrating queer pedagogy into their classrooms, this study revealed generational differences among teachers in their approach to LGBTQ issues. It also highlighted the pressing need for institutional support and resources to facilitate inclusive education practices. Data for this study was collected through a combination of questionnaires and interviews with in-service English language teachers. The study's findings are expected to raise awareness of the importance of incorporating queer pedagogy in EFL classrooms to create inclusive and supportive learning environments. Traditional EFL teaching methods have often neglected discussions on sexuality and gender identity, potentially marginalising queer students. By integrating queer pedagogy, this research aims to foster critical discussions about sexual and gender identities, challenge societal norms, and promote social justice. Ultimately, it seeks to equip educators to navigate and address these crucial aspects, contributing to a more comprehensive and supportive educational framework.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT), Queer Pedagogy, LGBTQ Issues, Sexuality and Gender Identities, Heteronormative Discourse

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki Üniversite Hazırlık bölümlerinde İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sınıflarındaki queer tartışmalarına ilişkin bakış açılarını araştırmaktadır. Daha açık söylemek gerekirse, çalışmanın amacı queer bakış açılarının, öğretim materyalleri, eğitimciler ve öğrenciler arasındaki dinamikler üzerindeki etkisini araştırarak İngilizcenin öğretimine ilişkin teori-uygulama boşluğunu doldurmaktır. Öğretmenlerin queer pedagojiyi sınıflarına entegre ederken karşılaştıkları zorlukları ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlayan bu çalışma, LGBTQ konularına yaklaşımlarında öğretmenler arasındaki kuşak farklılıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca elde edilen bulgular, kapsayıcı eğitim uygulamalarını kolaylaştırmak için kurumsal destek ve kaynaklara duyulan acil ihtiyacı da vurgulamıştır. Bu çalışma için veriler, hizmet içi İngilizce öğretmenleriyle gerçekleştirilen anket ve mülakatlar yoluyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmada elde edilen bulguların, kapsayıcı ve destekleyici öğrenme ortamları yaratmak için İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği dil sınıflarına queer pedagojiyi dahil etmenin önemi konusunda farkındalık yaratması beklenmektedir. Geleneksel İngilizce öğretim yöntemleri, cinsellik ve cinsiyet kimliği tartışmalarını genellikle ihmal etmiş ve queer öğrencileri potansiyel olarak marjinalleştirmiştir. Bu araştırma, queer pedagojiyi entegre ederek cinsel ve toplumsal cinsiyet kimlikleri hakkında eleştirel tartışmaları teşvik etmeyi, toplumsal normlara meydan okumayı ve sosyal adaleti teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, daha kapsamlı ve destekleyici bir eğitim çerçevesine katkıda bulunarak, eğitimcileri bu önemli hususları yönlendirmek ve ele almak için donatmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngiliz Dili Eğitimi, Queer Pedagoji, LGBTQ Sorunları, Cinsellik ve Cinsiyet Kimlikleri, Heteronormatif Söylem

DEDICATIONS

To the brave individuals who continue to inspire change and fight for equality

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELL	English Language Learning
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMU	Eastern Mediterranean University
ESL	English as a Second Language
EUL	European University of Lefke
FES	Foundation English School
FIU	Final International University
GAU	Girne American University
GFL	Gender Fair Language
ICC	Intercultural Communication Competence
LGBTQIA	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual
QCA	Queer Cyprus Association
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UK	United Kingdom
YÖDAK	Yükseköğretim Planlama, Akreditasyon, Değerlendirme ve Koordinasyon Konseyi (Higher Education Planning, Accreditation, Evaluation and Coordination Council)
YÖK	Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı (Council of Higher Education)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter provides a brief overview of the background of the study, followed by the problem statement and the aim of the study. For the purpose of enhancing comprehension, a glossary of key terms has also been included in this chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

English language classrooms are characterised by students and teachers from different cultures, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds, each with their own set of attitudes, beliefs, and values towards sex and gender roles. This diversity can create challenges for English language educators who must be aware of and sensitive to these differences to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. This difficulty is compounded by the reality that discourse is typically formed from a heteronormative perspective which is defined as the privileging of heterosexuality (Pollitt et al., 2019).

Developing sociosexual literacy and understanding the diverse sociosexual backgrounds of students is essential for promoting language proficiency (Nelson, 2006) and requires a queer pedagogy that challenges both the heteronormative assumptions of most language textbooks, and classroom practices that erase Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA) visibility. (Neto, 2018).

Sexual identities are constructed discursively through social interactions, societal conventions and the use of language. Discourse refers to how language is used to influence and construct social reality, including sexuality-related attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. In this way, sexual identities are not set or predestined, but rather influenced by the social situations in which they are produced. For sexual minority young adults, navigating heteronormative expectations in the classroom can be difficult as they are frequently challenged by the dominance of heteronormative discourse that undermines their sexual identities; instead, they must interact with societal heteronormative messages while reconciling these messages with their sexual identities (Pollitt et al., 2019).

As Watson (2005) predicted, Queer theory is a 'key player' in the academic field and will continue to be so in years to come. However, whilst Queer theory has been important for English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, it has been non-existent in the Turkish Cypriot context, indicating that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) hasn't received as much attention in this particular population. The difficulty faced in north Cyprus for students and teachers alike to feel comfortable with their identity and expression stems from a relatively new era of legal acceptance. After a human rights court decision in 1993, southern Cyprus legalised gay sex between consenting adults. However, due to the island's division into Greek and Turkish administrations, many criminal laws that were left over from the time the British colonial era, including the ban on homosexuality, were still in effect in the north. This status changed on 7 February 2014 when northern Cyprus, the last jurisdiction in Europe where homosexuality was illegal, voted to remove the offence from its statute books (HDT Report, 2019).

Although LGBTQ members have been able to live without the threat of imprisonment, the pressure of heteronormativity remains as a pervasive influence – particularly in educational environments. The discussion of identities is integral to language learning in the classroom, especially for students at beginner levels (Liddicoat, 2009). Nelson (2010) pointed out that it is problematic if classroom discourse only discusses straight social norms and implicitly assumes that all students have or aspire to have heterosexual relationships. To address and challenge dominant attitudes in schools, Nelson (1993) offered the astute advice to assume there was an LGBTQ member in every classroom. This may promote awareness of sexual identities that are usually hidden out of fear of ridicule and can have a positive impact on the learner.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Examining the landscape of queer-informed studies within the English Language Teaching (ELT) literature reveals a comprehensive analysis of diverse issues. These studies cover the examination of curricula and materials from a queer perspective, assessing the representation or exclusion of LGBTQ+ identities and discourse (Gray, 2013; Neto, 2018). Additionally, they investigate the viewpoints of English language teachers on the integration of queer identities and discourse in educational settings (Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015; Paiz, 2017, 2019). Furthermore, the studies delve into English language learners' perspectives regarding queer identities and discourse within the classroom environment (Aguirre et al., 2020; Curran, 2006; Dumas, 2008).

In their seminal work, Littlejohn and Windeat (1989) placed significant emphasis on second language texts, shedding light on various aspects, including the prevalence of heterosexism in English language learning materials and its potential implications on learners' perspectives and overall understanding of the world. Many studies (Gray,

2013; Neto, 2018; Paiz, 2015, 2017, 2019) since then have continued to examine the impact of heteronormative materials on learners and how heterosexually based societies (Liddicoat, 2009) are still ever present in materials that learners study.

The prevalence of heteronormative dominance significantly shapes the perspectives of learners. The pervasive message of heteronormativity is internalised by individuals within such a societal framework, with young people, in particular, being highly susceptible (Pollitt et al., 2019). Negotiating their paths within the confines of a heteronormative world becomes arduous when individuals face the added difficulties of harassment and bullying due to their LGBTQ identity.

Insufficient focus in research has been directed towards understanding the adverse outcomes resulting from an unwelcoming environment for LGBT students, impacting their access to education and learning capabilities. Experiences of victimisation are closely tied to heightened absenteeism due to feelings of discomfort or insecurity at school, elevated disciplinary issues, and diminished levels of school engagement and academic achievement among LGBT youths (Kosciw, 2012; Swanson & Gettinger, 2016).

The school environment is perhaps the most critical for LGBT+ youth because of the large amount of time they spend there (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016) suggesting that schools need to provide a safe and supportive environment for these students. However, studies frequently indicate how prevalent bullying and harassment is in schools. For example, Aguirre et al.'s (2020) study conveyed that teachers hold a strong perception that insults, ridicule, or rejection are prevalent in their teaching environment. Specifically, over half of the respondents believe that students engage in

such behaviours as a reaction to the personal characteristics of their classmates. More than half of the respondents affirm the existence of insults, ridicule or rejection regarding the issues directly related to gender and sexual diversity (65.4% gay, lesbian and bisexual, 68.5% boy who looks or behaves like a girl, 57.9% girl who looks or behaves like a boy).

Research in southern Cyprus that attempts to address the marginalisation and bullying faced by LGBTQ learners tends to focus on primary and high school students and their educators (Apostolidou, 2019; Evripidou, 2018), most likely given the learners perceived vulnerability due to age. Notably, these studies are concentrated in south Cyprus, with limited exploration and research available in the north.

However, in language education, considerations of sexuality and sexual identities have emerged relatively recently in the northern Cyprus context. The absence of explicit discussions about sexuality does not imply its absence or neutralisation; instead, it signifies the establishment of certain sexual identities, particularly heterosexual identities, as an unquestioned and unexamined norm guiding all conversations about sexuality (Liddicoat, 2009). This suggests that educators should strive to comprehend their own perceptions and biases towards the LGBTQ population and consistently make efforts to identify and confront these biases (Swanson, 2015). Unfortunately, ELT has not sufficiently tackled the preparation of educators to integrate queer perspectives into their teaching practices — to establish environments where all identities are critically examined (Evripidou, 2021; Paiz, 2017, 2019).

A reflective study by Curran (2006) examined concerns held by ESL teachers, suggesting that discussing queer sexuality-related issues would be inappropriate and

problematic in the ESL classroom. These concerns often cited the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the learners, implying that they lacked the appropriate tools to critically discuss LGBTQ topics. However, Curran (2006) encountered encouraging responses from the students who showed genuine interest in discussing the topics. The study concluded that by incorporating fundamental principles of queer theory, educators could potentially reshape conventional inquiries about queer lives and involving students in reconsidering their questions and dismantling established sexual norms. It might also be prudent to note that Curran's study was reflective and had not drawn on data such as student interviews owing to concerns about job security.

1.3 Aim of the Study and Research Questions

Educators often find themselves in a difficult position as to whether they should be including LGBTQ issues or deconstructing heteronormativity in their teaching practices (Szalacha, 2004). Recognising the importance of teacher education and awareness concerning queer issues, this study aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice in ELT literature by exploring the perspectives of teachers in university preparatory departments regarding the incorporation of discussions on queer issues within English language classrooms in northern Cyprus. This holistic approach aims to thoroughly investigate the incorporation and impact of queer perspectives on instructional materials and the interpersonal dynamics between educators and learners in the ELT context.

With this aim in mind, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

1) What are the perceptions of English language teachers towards the inclusion of queer issues in English language classrooms?

2) How do English Language teachers describe their knowledge and use of queer pedagogy in class?

3) How do EFL teachers perceive the impact of LGBTQ invisibility in educational materials on both the learning environment and student engagement?

4) What are the suggestions of English language teachers as regards instructional modifications for an inclusive pedagogy?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to raise an awareness of how inclusion of queer pedagogy in English Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms is necessary to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. While traditional EFL teaching methods have focused primarily on teaching language skills and cultural knowledge, they have often neglected to address issues of sexuality and gender identity. This exclusion can be particularly harmful to queer students, who may feel marginalised or silenced in the classroom. The incorporation of queer pedagogy in EFL classrooms can address this gap by creating a space for critical discussions about sexual and gender identities, as well as fostering a more supportive and inclusive learning environment. Moreover, teaching English through a queer pedagogical lens can help to challenge societal norms and promote social justice by encouraging students to critically reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs towards sexuality and gender. Consequently, the inclusion of queer pedagogy in EFL classrooms is not only necessary for the well-being of queer students, but also for equipping EFL teachers to confront issues of sexual identity more confidently, thus disrupting harmful heteronormative practices.

This study is positioned to offer a contribution by addressing a significant gap in the literature, particularly in northern Cyprus where a study of this kind has not been conducted before. Current EFL teaching methods have often neglected to integrate discussions on sexuality and gender identity, leaving a void in the educational landscape.. Through an exploration of queer pedagogy in EFL classrooms, this research seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice and provide valuable insights and strategies for fostering inclusive learning environments. By emphasising the importance of critical discussions around sexual and gender identities, the study aims to equip educators with the tools needed to navigate and address these crucial aspects, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and supportive educational framework.

1.5 Definition of Terms

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to individuals of multiple genders.

Cisgender: A person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gay: A term used to describe a person who is attracted to individuals of the same gender.

Gender fluid: A gender identity where one's gender can change or shift over time or depending on circumstances.

Intersex: A term used to describe a person who is born with physical or biological sex characteristics that don't fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

Lesbian: A term used to describe a woman who is attracted to other women.

LGBTQIA: Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual.

Non-binary: An individual who does not identify as exclusively male or female, and may identify as a combination of both, neither, or something else entirely.

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to individuals regardless of their gender or gender identity, focusing on the person's personality and characteristics rather than their gender.

Queer: An umbrella term used to refer to individuals who are not heterosexual or cisgender.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

The term '**homosexual'** has negative connotations as it has invariably been used to describe *deviance*, *criminal* and *mental illness* and provides problematic and vague language as a designation for lesbian, gay and bisexual identities. To avoid heterosexual bias, I have chosen to use the umbrella term 'queer' when discussing sexual identities and appropriate terms for specific identities.

1.6 Summary

This chapter offered an overview of the underlying motivation behind this study, which is driven by the need for language classrooms to move beyond heteronormative discourse and foster inclusivity for all sexual identities. It also outlined the problem statement, aim, and research questions. Finally, the significance of the study was emphasised, and some key terms were defined.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter aims to introduce the concept of queer theory and review the related literature and highlight the importance of incorporating queer theory into English language teaching, as it has the potential to broaden students' perspectives and promote inclusivity and social justice in the classroom.

2.1 Queer Theory: Tracing its Roots

Queer theory has roots in a variety of intellectual and political movements, including feminist theories, but it is not solely derived from feminist theories; it does, however, draw from several theories from feminism, critical race theory, postmodernism and other areas of critical inquiry.

Queer theory is a critical lens that offers a fresh and alternative perspective on the traditional norms of gender and sexuality; it emerged as a response to the limitations of mainstream gay and lesbian studies, which often reduced sexuality and gender to individual experiences. By examining the intersection of language, sexuality, and power, queer theory provides a new framework for understanding and analysing language practices. Furthermore, it offers a critical tool for exploring and challenging the dominant heteronormative discourse that often informs language education.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing interest in poststructuralist theories of identity and its implications for teaching and learning in English language education.

According to Poststructuralism, power relations and language create identities and suggests these identities are not fixed or permanent but are constantly being negotiated and redefined based on our interactions with the world around us. Drawing on Poststructuralism, Queer theory critiques and challenges traditional heteronormative structures of sexuality and gender; instead, it proposes more fluid and diverse sexual and gender identities as identities are social and cultural creations that are constantly negotiated and changed.

The concept of queerness fundamentally involves the inclusion of identities that were rendered less visible during the mid-20th century gay rights movement. This movement, in its pursuit of public acceptance, often adopted heteronormative practices, such as advocating for marriage equality and child adoption rights, primarily focusing on gay and lesbian issues. While gay, lesbian, and transgender histories may intersect, they are not equivalent. The perception that 'transsexuality' and transgenderism have been both 'cannibalised' and marginalised within Lesbian Gay Bisexual (LGB) studies, as noted by Halberstam (2003), has sparked intense debates. These discussions highlight the complexities and challenges in achieving visibility for diverse sexual identities, problematising how they are represented and understood.

Queerness and the adjective 'queer' aim to recover those who have been erased by this normalisation, including transgender people, and non-binary or gender non-conforming people. Regarding language education, Nelson (2006) proposes queer inquiry, moving the emphasis from inclusion to inquiry and actively contesting how sexual identities and behaviours are understood across different languages and cultures. Since it shifts the focus from inclusion to inquiry—that is, from including minority sexual identities to examining how language and society function in relation

to all sexual identities—queer theoretical frameworks may be more effective than lesbian and gay ones (Nelson, 1999), suggesting pedagogies need to engage with Poststructuralism.

Poststructuralism is a reactionary response that seeks to deconstruct and dismantle the ideas established by structuralism. In his theory of language, during the early 20th century, renowned structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure proposed a binary conception of the sign in which signifiers denote a concept (the signified) and emphasised that meaning is arbitrary and linguistic signs act relationally rather than referentially: language is a self-contained relational structure whose constituents receive their existence and significance from how they are applied and contrasted in texts or discourse. In other words, it aims to simplify the intricacy of human experiences by identifying certain fundamental structures that are considered universal. (Mambrol, 2016).

Poststructuralism challenges the emphasis on stable, universal structures in favour of recognising the cultural variability in interpreting signs, thus rejecting the notion of universal meaning. Frequently cited is the example of the colour white in Western cultures as it is often seen as a representation of purity and innocence and its binary opposition of black representing dark and foreboding (Hall, 2013). In Eastern cultures, white is also a symbol of purity and cleanliness, but it also carries cultural significance as the traditional colour of mourning: for Chinese culture, white is often associated with death and is believed to ward off evil spirits. Similarly, in Japan, white is a symbol of purity, but also of death and sadness. Consequently, what is regarded as significant in one culture may not be recognised as such in another. Ultimately, there is no room

for universal truth or meaning in Poststructuralist discourse, since language is a result of the culture that gives signs their meaning.

The concept of opposition is fundamental in structuralism, as it relies on the differentiation between pairs of notions, such as male/female and self/other. This polarisation of elements serves as a straightforward method for delineating distinctions and constructing significance. Therefore, a sign's meaning is derived from its distinction from other signs and does not lie in the sign itself. An example of how difference is exploited can be seen how the concept of black is comprehended. It is not due to some essence of 'blackness', but because it can be contrasted with its antonym, white. The meaning is considered relational; and by exploiting the 'difference' between white and black, it denotes and conveys significance (Hall, 2013). Therefore, what indicates, or what gives a sign its meaning, is not its substance, but rather its distinction from other signs.

Powerful binaries, such as male/female, become categorisations and provide a fundamental framework for organising our perceptions and experiences. By dividing the universe into mutually exclusive categories, they establish a sense of order and stability and make it simpler for us to comprehend and classify the objects we meet (Merse, 2017). It enables individuals to locate their identities by giving them a fundamental starting point from which to encounter, comprehend and organise the world.

According to Foucault (1980), our understanding of our own identities and the identities of others is not fixed or stable but is instead shaped and constructed by the ways in which we talk and think about ourselves and others. Since we are assigned a

sex at birth with the announcement 'It's a girl!' or 'It's a boy!' our recognition of ourselves as individuals is through our sex. The powerful proclamation can have profound implications as it continues into our adolescence and how we relate to our peers (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Rodmeyer, 2018). Adding to how discourse plays a key role in shaping our understanding of the world, the language and concepts used to describe and categorise things are not natural or neutral but are shaped by power relations and the interests of dominant groups.

Power and knowledge are interconnected and are deeply interwoven and mutually reinforcing (Foucault, 1980). The state, the church, the medical community, and the penal system are just a few examples of the powerful dominant groups that Foucault believed have a strong influence on language. His historical studies highlighted how our sexuality is regulated by societies that are shaped by cultural and political factors and the organisations that implemented these using the power to influence our knowledge and to decide what constitutes normal, aberrant, and acceptable behaviour. These powerful groups are able to exert their control over people and society at large through the creation and application of various power and knowledge systems.

Invariably, because we group our bodies with the world of objects, we link our thoughts to the words and language to bring our bodies into being (Butler, 1990). Prior to any element of choice for or against gender identity, people are always already gendered. Thus, all of our experiences, and particularly those that are through, from, or about our bodies, only manifest when they are regarded significant enough to be called, i.e., when they are associated with some form of knowledge-power investment. The way in which some members of society deal with transitioning family members is frequently illustrative of the power of these ties. While welcoming a transitioning

individual, family members may grieve the loss of their daughter as the individual transitions to a male, indicating how deeply many of us link sex and identity (Rodmeyer, 2018).

Other identities that are deemed problematic for binaries are illustrated by Namaste (1996) in her discussion of bisexual identity. Bisexuality challenges the binary framework by encompassing attraction to both genders, which can cause difficulties in classification. As well as not conforming to the binary oppositions, it also poses semantic problems. The term 'bisexual' can be used without defining a specific referent, and points to a theoretical issue and a lack of inclusive language available to accurately describe and reflect the experiences of bisexual individuals. This reflects the reasons why Poststructuralism is useful by suggesting that the individual is created by and creates social structures, with one not existing prior to the other (Namaste, 1996). In addition, Queer theory is complex as it is influenced by semiotics and deconstruction; yet it combines the perspectives to produce an account of how 'homosexuality' is being erased but how heterosexuality requires same-gender attraction for its internal coherence. Therefore, the extensively debated concept of Poststructuralism has problematised and complicated our knowledge of the world.

2.1.1 Queer Theory and its Intersection with Feminism

Queer theory, influenced by Poststructuralism, rejects the essentialist nature of theories based on binary oppositions and resists labels or categorisations; instead, it focuses on the construction of socially established norms and dualistic categories with a particular emphasis on challenging sexual (heterosexual/homosexual), gender (male/female), class (rich/poor), and racial (white/non-white) classifications. It argues there is another space outside of these binaries and places prominence on the fluid and

humanly performed nature of sexuality (Callis, 2009). While acknowledging that subjective knowledge(s) about sexuality, gender, and other social elements are manufactured rather than pre-existent, fluid rather than stable, and not necessarily in accordance with societal standards, queer theory does not presume that everyone has an equal access to reality; rather, it seeks to problematise gender and sexual identities (Shlasko, 2006). Thus, queer theory's focus has expanded beyond the experience of sexuality and gender alone.

In the examination and critique of power and oppression, the multidisciplinary approach of queer theory highlights the experiences and viewpoints of oppressed communities, including but not limited to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual+ (LGBTQIA+) individuals. It is also recognised for engaging in activism and political activity in order to question and reject oppressive systems and to advocate for social and political change. Queer theory and feminist ideas have a common objective of critiquing and challenging prevailing norms and power systems. However, contradictions have emerged between these two philosophical frameworks. The main point of contention revolves around their differing viewpoints on the intersection between gender and sexuality (Halberstam, 2003; Liljeström, 2020).

Historically, feminist ideas have mostly centred on the analysis of patriarchal power structures and their role in the perpetuation of women's subordination. These theories have placed significant emphasis on understanding women's experiences and advocating for their freedom (Bennett, 1989). In contrast, queer theory prioritises the interrogation of dualistic conceptions of sexuality and gender, while not specifically centring on the experiences or emancipation of women.

The contrast between queer and feminist theories has led to a notable divergence between the two disciplines. This division frequently arises from the tendency to position them in opposition to each other, assigning them distinct 'proper objects' of study, consequently resulting in disparate viewpoints on matters such as identities and the interpretation of sexuality (Liljeström, 2020). Feminist scholars argue that queer theory can neglect to consider how patriarchal power structures reinforce heteronormative norms that erasure women's experiences (Horowitz, 2012). Conversely, queer theorists assert that feminist theories may unintentionally perpetuate binary gender categories they seek to challenge (Liljeström, 2020). These distinctions have given rise to ongoing dialogues within both fields, centred on finding the most effective approaches for addressing the intricate interplay of gender, sexuality, and power.

Numerous prominent scholars (Halberstam, 2003; Horowitz, 2012; Sedgewick, 1990) have engaged in extensive discourse concerning the interplay between lesbian studies and gay studies, specifically addressing the crucial inquiry of whether lesbians align with a unified agenda alongside gay men and transgender individuals. Halberstam (2003), for instance, posits that transgender histories and lesbian histories may intersect, but they are not identical. Meanwhile, Horowitz (2012) perceptively observes that lesbians and gay males often pursue radically different agendas, suggesting that queer theory is really "gay male theory cloaked in more inclusive language" (p. 11). This phenomenon, driven by an emphasis on sexuality, may inadvertently marginalise gender differences and reinforce gay male dominance. In light of these complexities, it remains prudent to exercise caution when attempting to generalise the experiences and perspectives of one segment of the queer population to

represent the multifaceted spectrum of queer identities in discussions of queer issues (Horowitz, 2012).

Nonetheless, even with these distinctions, a significant contingent of scholars and activists persist in integrating both queer theory and feminist theories into their endeavours, acknowledging the pivotal roles each plays in fostering a more just and all-encompassing society (Butler, 1990; Halberstam, 2003). Meanwhile, Liljestrom (2020) contends that queer theories have become increasingly intertwined with identity critique emphasising their growing proximity and theoretical entanglement over time.

2.1.2 Developing Gender Fair Language for Inclusive Communication: Breaking the Binary

Language is a potent instrument that impacts how we communicate and think about the world around us. It can be used to promote inclusiveness and equality or to perpetuate damaging stereotypes and prejudices. Often language is utilised to 'other' or exclude individuals and groups because of their gender identities. Gender fair language (GFL) presents an avenue to question or challenge heteronormative ideas and exclusionary practices (Tarrayo, 2022).

Linguistic challenges for non-gender conforming have encouraged many studies in recent years with the intentions of challenging binary pairs (Lindqvist et al., 2019; Senden, 2021; Vergoossen, 2021) and proposing reforms (McCabe, 2021; Zimman, 2017). Studies have also considered the perspectives of language teachers and raised awareness of how to incorporate GFL in education (Tarrayo, 2022).

Traditional language often reinforces gender stereotypes with concerns that conventional use of masculine forms as generics causes a male bias in mental representations (McCabe, 2021). The introduction of a gender-neutral third person pronoun *hen* in Swedish, had been the subject of interest and study since its introduction in 2015 with encouraging results demonstrating how binary notion and sexism could be tackled (Senden, 2021). Further studies relating to the gender-inclusive pronoun *hen* also suggested the elimination of a male bias (Lindqvist et al., 2019) and provided evidence of reducing biases in social cognition (Vergoossen, 2021).

Although the studies focus on the effects of GFL, their findings provide insight on how using gender-fair language may be beneficial. McCabe (2021) observed:

> "One tedious but influential change is to evaluate and revise society's heteronormative language. Since language informs thoughts, and thoughts inform perceptions, which in turn create action, removing such language, and consequently its underlying bias, will enable courts, judges, lawyers, and legislators to shift their biases and perceptions and achieve a more just and fair system (p. 31)."

For Tarrayo (2021), if gender inequalities are also to be addressed and gender biases eradicated in educational institutes, incorporating gender perspectives in teaching frameworks, curricular content, and teachers' professional development will be imperative.

Disrupting conventional gendered language norms, non-binary pronouns like *they/them* are increasingly recognised and utilised in contemporary English discourse. (Following the repeal of 'Section 28' in 2003, which prohibited the "promotion of homosexuality" in publications and educational institutions, numerous British

institutions, including universities and councils, now provide directives on comprehending LGBTQ issues and employing appropriate gender-inclusive language). In the realm of language and gender studies, the adoption of non-binary pronouns is emblematic of a broader societal shift towards acknowledging diverse gender identities. The usage of non-binary pronouns aims to provide linguistic inclusivity, affirming the validity of gender identities beyond the binary framework. While their acceptance has grown, challenges persist, reflecting broader socio-linguistic attitudes and resistance to linguistic change. It becomes crucial to invest 'in negotiating an adequate language of self-expression and identity' (Neto, 2018, p. 592). Thus, investigating the adoption and acceptance of non-binary pronouns is critical for understanding the evolving landscape of gender-inclusive language and its implications for communication and identity expression.

The following table (Table 2.1) illustrates non-binary pronouns, contributing to ongoing academic dialogues on linguistics and gender studies, emphasising linguistic inclusivity and understanding language, identity, and inclusivity.

Table 2.1: Table of gender pronouns (https://www.diversitycenterneo.org/about-us/pronouns/)

	Subject	Object	Possessive	Pronunciation	Example
Gender Binary	She	Her	Hers	As it looks	She is speaking.
	He	Him	His	As it looks	He is speaking
Gender Neutral	They (Sing.)	Them	Theirs	As is looks	They are speaking.
	Ze	Hir	Hirs	Zhee, Here, Heres	Ze is speaking.
	Ze	Zie	Zirs	Zhee, Zhere, Zheres	Ze is speaking.
	Xe	Xem	Xyr	Zhee, Zhym, Zhyre	Xe is speaking.

However, our consistent use of 'othering' is often manifested by legitimate teaching tools such as the CEFR (2001) that enables the development of language curriculums, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. As the guidelines in the CEFR highlight, our knowledge of the differences between the "world of origin" and the "world of the target community" are how intercultural awareness is produced (CEFR, 2001, p. 103). Intercultural awareness necessitates that we become aware of the underlying value system of the foreign culture and learn to comprehend why its members behave as they do. This also entails that we resist the inclination to observe and interpret the ideas and actions of others via our own cultural lens. Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the capacity to communicate effectively and appropriately in diverse cultural settings and is comprised of various components: motivation, self- and other- knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty are essential components (Byram, 1997, 2002).

The CEFR's assertion that the interaction with and experience of Otherness is a crucial element of foreign language education. These encounters with Other in language teaching are a part of the development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity and aim to progress the worldview necessary for ongoing, independent discoveries of Otherness. It endorses a broader agenda of tolerance for cultural variety and an openness to engaging with otherness and emerges as a key value of the CEFR that learners are able to acquire knowledge about and relate to Otherness. Whilst it may not appear intended for this CEFR support of Otherness, it appears to lead to an 'othering' that maintains the idea that any difference is inherently Other.

2.2 Addressing Issues in ELT Classrooms: Breaking the Chains of Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is a term coined by Warner (1991) to illustrate the privileging of heterosexuality and the assumption of a gender binary. It can be described as a hegemonic system of norms, discourses and practices that constructs heterosexuality as natural and superior (Robinson, 2016) and relationships and behaviours that fall outside of this norm are considered deviant or abnormal. According to these values, the perpetuation of heterosexuality condemns all 'other' sexualities to be judged and subordinated (Ferfolja, 2007) as it brands itself on society's notions of morality and 'truth' (McCabe, 2021). Moreover, heteronormativity marginalises sexual minorities and legitimises homophobia (Robinson 2016).

The more common concepts and understanding of homophobia, which refers to personal prejudice against queer people, and heterosexism, that refers to discrimination against queer people on a structural level, are related to but not synonymous with heteronormativity. Both of these principles are formed from a hegemonic understanding that heterosexuality is fundamentally superior, and desirable whereas same-gender attraction is unnatural, inferior, undesirable or unthinkable (Curran, 2006). It is possible to see heteronormativity as the source of both homophobia and heterosexism (Moore, 2020) and is often accompanied with shame for the queer individual who still feels the need to conceal their identity in a tolerant society (Rohleder, 2019).

Heteronormativity is reinforced by silencing (Ferfolja, 2007; Griffin, 1992) as the visibility of non-heterosexuality is deemed inappropriate or irrelevant to social

relations. As Griffin (1992) highlighted, reluctance to discuss lesbian women in sport was a reaction induced out of fear and concern for the consequences of public dialogue. Silence was considered a survival strategy for [women and] lesbians trying to gain social approval and recognition for their achievements. Yet, research (Ferfolja, 2007; Heasley, 2021; Hongboontri & Duangsaeng, 2022) indicates that anti-gay discrimination in education — frequently in the form of silence, omission, and presumption — persists, despite an apparent greater cultural 'tolerance' for non-heterosexuality and legislation that condemns it.

Curriculums governed by heteronormativity generate problems as they do not include safe spaces for LGBTQ students. The exploration of identities is an integral part of the language classroom. However, English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language (EFL/ESL) education often reinforces heteronormativity—as the norm that presumes and normalises culture in a heterosexual framework (Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015). This means that heterosexual identities have an unchallenged position of unreflective norms that dominate all sexuality discourse. There is also the suggestion that queer identity is sexualised in a manner that heterosexuality is not. The inclusion of discussions of heterosexual marriages and nuclear families in Dumas' (2010) study was not cited by any of the participants as being contentious, demonstrating that heterosexuality is not hypersexualised in the manner that same-sex relationships are. Moreover, heterosexuality is present in language classes through imagery of heterosexually centred culture, such as marriage, romance, and life stories of fictional and real people; and for gay and lesbian language students, the classroom can be a setting that excludes and marginalizes many aspects of their existence (Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015; Liddicoat, 2009).

The assumption that heterosexuality is the default setting for all romantic relationships can have negative consequences for LGBTQ students. Amongst other unfortunate outcomes, these can include a reluctance to engage in seemingly straightforward classroom tasks, such as discussing what one did on the weekend, and even withdrawing from courses and schools completely (Moore, 2020).

The potential conflict for a queer student in a heteronormative language classroom is discussed by Liddicoat (2009), who observed how a heteronormatively constructed context with questions makes self-disclosure a relevant activity. The learner's personal life receives a lot of questioning attention in language sessions, especially in the beginner-level classes. Self-disclosure of a minority sexual identity in such situations is a potential approach within the classroom. These positions place the queer learner with the following possibilities (Liddicoat, 2009):

- Passing: lying in order to be seen as heterosexual.

- Covering: not disclosing information.

- Being implicitly out: using explicit language to indicate sexual orientation.

- Affirming identity: encouraging others to view him or her as gay.

As a result of their heterosexual privilege within a heteronormative context, heterosexual students rarely confront or need to address these perspectives. The bias toward heteronormativity can be addressed by teachers who generally play a part in determining what constitutes allowable discourses in the classroom. Although learner-centred models have slowly eroded the all-knowing, authoritative role of the teacher and encouraged a focus on learners' needs and goals (Brown & Lee, 2015), teachers' beliefs take precedence in determining how topics are to be taught. This may lead to a language learning process that involves teaching practices without negotiating sexual

identities and, in some EFL classrooms, there is a reluctance to embrace queer inquiry when it comes to the issues of homosexuality (Evripidou, 2018). As a result, discourse often emerges from a heteronormative perspective. Thus, the critical need to 'queer' ELT stems from the essential requirement to acknowledge and vocalise LGBTQ+ identities, lives, and experiences within the EFL classroom (Evripidou, 2021).

This necessitates the importance of a teacher's role in creating a classroom environment where LGBTQ themes can be discussed (Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015) and for the advantages this could offer all students. As advocates for queer spaces and learning suggest, the process of learning a language is hampered by eliminating sexual identity, but accepting it can benefit and empower all students, regardless of their sexual identity (Dumas, 2010).

The ramifications of heteronormativity cannot be underestimated for LGBTQ students. School spaces and educators within provide opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills, but also have a significant impact on students' experiences, feelings, attitudes, and perspectives (Szalacha, 2004). Language classrooms are powerful places for heteronormative discourse and evident for individuals that frequently gauge how much they differ or resemble others in their environment when defining who they are. A person's social identity is crucial in determining how they see themselves as well as in enabling them to fit into groups and feel a part of their social environment. Furthermore, studies indicate that many young people anticipate heteronormative futures and learn to promote heteronormativity through social experiences (Pollitt et al., 2019).

2.3 Advocating for Inclusive Education: The Importance of Queer Pedagogies

Like queer theory, queer pedagogy examines educational processes through the lens of the lived experience of the queer or non-normative. The aims of queer pedagogy are to provide classroom settings and experiences that support a safe space for queer students as well as to identify and challenge the hidden curricula of heteronormativity. Although there has been an increase in making classrooms and curricula more inclusive of LGBTQ issues in English Language Learning (ELL) (Halberstam, 2003; Nelson, 2002; Paiz, 2019), EFL classrooms still lack this inclusivity (Guney, 2018; Paiz, 2019) with research and studies still requiring a standard educational practice to create awareness about the place of sexual and gender diversity in the context of [foreign] language learning (Neto, 2018).

Queer inquiry is not free of paradoxical difficulty (Nelson, 2006). It entails focusing on sexual issues (identities, norms, relationships) within the context of everyday patterns of thinking, speaking, learning, and functioning; and involves highlighting straight, lesbian, bisexual, and gay perspectives, as well as the contradictions of producing such categorisations. As such, Queer studies needs to be incorporated into educational curriculum and this integration should not be restricted to gender and sexuality studies but should encompass all fields of study. However, the (dis)placement of sexuality studies in study programs are inconsistent. As Halberstam (2003) observes, Feminist studies are typically incorporated into academic programs centred around women and gender studies at universities. Meanwhile, examinations of race and racialisation are often integrated into Ethnic Studies programs. The disciplines of sociology, literature, history, and anthropology are among those that

examine the topic of sexuality. Halberstom (2003) also observed the noteworthy point that sexuality is a component of the curricula both in women and gender studies programs, as well as Ethnic Studies programs.

Although Sexuality studies appears disadvantaged, without a dedicated field of discipline it becomes multidisciplinary (Shlasko, 2005) like a "promiscuous rogue in a field of focused monogamists" (Halberstam, 2003, p. 362). Thus, the insights generated by sexuality studies have practical applications in a variety of fields as well as having the potential to shape forces with broad societal significance (Nelson, 2006).

Sexuality studies play a significant part in queer pedagogy because they provide a deeper understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity, and the experiences of LGBTQ+ persons. This knowledge contributes to the challenge of heteronormative and patriarchal norms and provides a framework for promoting equity, inclusion, and social justice in educational contexts. In addition, sexuality studies equip educators with the resources necessary to create safe and welcoming environments for LGBTQ+ students, to support their academic success, and to promote their general well-being. By integrating sexuality studies into curriculum and instruction, queer pedagogy contributes to the dismantling of harmful stereotypes and misconceptions and provides a forum for critical reflection and dialogue on these issues. However, integration of sexuality studies is challenging. Concerns to move beyond 'monosexual pedagogies' have been prompted by research, 'classroom cohorts,' and curriculum that tend to be structured as spaces in which straight individuals interact only with other straight individuals (Nelson, 2006). The majority of these problems stem from inclusive pedagogies that unwittingly favour heteronormativity.

Discussions on the influence of heteronormativity (Pollitt et al., 2019), heterosexuality representation and its prevalence as the norm (Ferfolja, 2007; Selvi & Kocaman, 2021) and studies conducted to highlight the prominence of homophobia (The Stonewall School Report 2017; The Trevor Project, 2022) in schools, generally serve to promote policies and practises that more effectively uphold the rights and well-being of the LGBTQ community. Inclusion also builds on a foundation of tolerance required from heterosexual people to recognise that, while not desirable, being gay is acceptable (Shlasko, 2005), which encourages a sense of othering. By contrast, studies have demonstrated that teaching to and about non-binary speakers in foreign language classrooms can support inclusivity and competence development, and foster an awareness of "inclusivity, co-cultures, language attitudes, and power" (Knisely, 2020, p. 23). These pedagogies of inclusion raise the question of who is included/excluded, whereas a queer inquiry approach invites educators to problematise the "production of all sexualities," allowing pedagogies of inclusion.

Inclusion pedagogies are educational approaches endeavouring to ensure equal educational opportunities for every student, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds and abilities. According to Florian (2015), the inclusive educational approach acknowledges the diverse capabilities of learners, avoiding the negative consequences associated with categorising individuals as different. It underscores the idea that learning achievements stem from active engagement within the classroom community. Moreover, it inspires educators and educational researchers to embrace innovative methods that align with the evolving demographic makeup of contemporary schools; it emphasises the creation of an inclusive, supportive, and culturally sensitive learning environment for all students. This approach encourages diversity and tries to recognise

and include each individual's unique viewpoints and experiences into the learning process.

A queer Pedagogy of Inquiry, on the other hand, is a response to the critique by Nelson (2006) of traditional "monosexual pedagogies and research agendas" (p. 2) within the field of language education. This pedagogical approach emphasises a student-centred and hands-on learning environment. Nelson proposes a shift in language instruction away from one-dimensional perspectives towards the recognition of settings as multi-sexual environments. In this pedagogical framework, students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process by asking questions, seeking answers, and developing their understanding of the external world. The primary objectives of a queer Pedagogy of Inquiry include the cultivation of critical thinking, curiosity, and creativity among students. Additionally, the approach aims to empower students to take ownership of their own learning experiences.

In essence, a queer Pedagogy of Inquiry seeks to create inclusive and dynamic learning environments that challenge traditional norms and foster a deeper engagement with diverse perspectives and experiences in the realm of language education. However, both pedagogies attempt to improve the learning experience and promote student achievement, but they do it from different angles, with pedagogies of inclusion emphasising equity and diversity and pedagogies of inquiry emphasising active, student-led learning.

Nevertheless, attempting to find a home for sexuality studies such as queer studies can be problematic due to its multidisciplinary nature (Halberstam, 2008). Despite its problematic nature, the advantage of incorporating a critical and inclusive assessment

of sexual orientation and gender identity into the curriculum allows for the incorporation of sexuality studies into queer pedagogy. This may also include studying the social, cultural, and historical conceptions of sexuality, exploring the different experiences and views of members of the LGBTQ+ community, and examining the intersections of sexuality with other forms of oppression and privilege. Incorporating the views and perspectives of queer scholars and activists in the subject of sexuality studies can also contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and empowering learning environment for all students (Halberstam, 2008).

In English language learning classrooms, queer pedagogy plays a vital role in advancing linguistic and cultural diversity. By seamlessly incorporating LGBTQ+ themes and experiences into the curriculum, educators can establish a more inclusive learning environment, fostering greater intercultural understanding. An illustrative example is the use of pronouns. Notably, the widespread acceptance of gender-neutral pronouns like *they* to signify non-binary identities in English stands in contrast to languages that exclusively offer masculine or feminine pronouns, potentially marginalising non-binary individuals (Neto, 2018). Embracing queer pedagogy involves employing inclusive language, such as gender-neutral pronouns, and incorporating a variety of texts, including those authored by members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Furthermore, queer pedagogy can provide English language learners with opportunities to critically examine and challenge the cultural norms and assumptions they bring to the classroom. Students' ideas and positionings about sexual identity are conditioned by cultural context and in some classrooms the notion of a gay identity may not be available with the discourses that are familiar to them (Nelson, 2004).

Queer pedagogy can support breaking down complex ideas of (sexual) identities into their constituent parts to better understand them; and in doing so, this can lead to the development of more nuanced understandings of language, culture, and identity and help students to expand their perspectives and worldviews.

The value of LGBTQ teachers teaching queer pedagogy in English Language Learning (ELL) courses cannot be overstated. Teachers that identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community provide a distinct perspective to the classroom, fostering a more accepting learning environment. The presence of queer identifying teachers sends a message of acceptance and support to LGBTQ+ students through representation and visibility. However, Nelson (1993) in her seminal speech on gay and lesbian issues in the classroom, contended that being a queer teacher was not a requirement to address gay issues; students are aware of gay people and will discuss topics relating to gay issues if they feel safe enough to do so. Therefore, irrespective of their sexual identity, teachers with an awareness of queer pedagogy can provide a welcome environment and incorporate a range of resources and activities that reflect the diverse perspectives of the LGBTQ+ community, such as literature, film, and discussions on LGBTQ+ themes. Initiating discussions on LGBTQ issues in the classroom need not be exclusive to a queer identity; in fact, 'heterosexual privilege' advantageously positions straight teachers to be potentially influential and can encourage understanding and provision of safe spaces (Nelson, 1993).

Often the issue arises of heterosexual teachers that may not feel informed enough to address queer topics in class. Ironically, as Nelson (1993) noted, those who can speak about these issues with first-hand knowledge often do not feel safe or free to do so. However, Queer Pedagogy has the potential to positively impact English language

learning classrooms by promoting inclusivity, linguistic and cultural diversity, and critical thinking. It provides an opportunity for teachers to challenge dominant power structures and promote social justice, while also supporting the academic and personal growth of all students. This may involve employing texts and materials that challenge binary and essentialist conceptions of gender and sexuality, engaging in critical discussions of language and its relationship to marginalisation and oppression, and encouraging students to reflect on and challenge their own assumptions and biases. Above all, open discussions in the classroom provide safe spaces for learners to speak honestly as themselves, an increasingly recognised necessity in the development of second language proficiency (Moore, 2016), and empower students to become more inclusive and equitable communicators and to build more socially just communities.

Finally, issues surrounding queer pedagogy also include a need to break with the "oedipal deadlock" that creates and sustains intergenerational conflict. (Halberstam, 2003, p. 363). Queer pedagogy provides LGBTQ members with a means to go beyond the difficulties that have afflicted them in the past. As society becomes increasingly diverse and interconnected, queer pedagogy holds great potential for promoting inclusivity and equity in education. It provides framework for doing so by centring the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. However, the future of queer pedagogy is entirely contingent on the acknowledgement of queer studies' diverse and complicated past (Halberstam, 2003), which must be taught, passed on and learned from.

2.4 Queer Materials and Representation in ELT

Textbooks and instructional materials are crucial in language courses as these courses are often structured and planned around the content provided in these books and

materials (Brown & Lee, 2015). They constitute a central and foundational aspect of the learning experience, acknowledged as "curriculum and cultural artefacts" by Gray (2013, p. 3). These elements are intentionally crafted to facilitate learning and contribute to the emergence of meanings based on the instructional methods, connecting the language to distinct behaviours, language varieties, usage patterns, and values. These resources serve as pivotal instruments, not only facilitating the process of learning but also functioning as instructive tools for educators. They stand as powerful evidence of teachers' perceptions of the world, the way they shape their students' worldview, and how values and attitudes are communicated through language (Selvi & Kocaman, 2021). These combined elements form an essential pedagogical aspect of classroom discourse, offering insight into the shared perception of the world.

However, several studies (Dumas, 2008; Evripidou, 2014; Ghajarieh & Cheng, 2011; Gray, 2013, 2022; Hongboontiri & Duangsaeng, 2020; Paiz, 2015; Selvi & Kocaman, 2021) frequently cite how textbooks contribute to the silencing and subsequent erasure of content related to queer experiences (Ferfolja, 2007), establishing an environment where heteronormativity is pervasive. This prevalence can lead to the alienation, exclusion, and relegation of learners to the status of the 'other' (Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2019) as well as reinforcement of heteronormative values for LGBTQ youth (Pollitt et al., 2019). In addition, beyond rendering certain subjects unspeakable, the process of erasure encompasses the denial of acknowledgment and recognition. This act of negation is identified as a manifestation of symbolic violence (Gray, 2022) by individuals subjected to it.

Amidst growing concerns, proponents of affirmative action assert the necessity for an increased emphasis on teacher materials as "central avenues" (Paiz, 2019, p. 2) for

addressing and evaluating instances of homophobia and heteronormativity (Dumas, 2008). In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL), sexual identity is inherently entwined, manifesting through references to family structures and relationships that reinforce binary norms, such as husband/wife and boyfriend/girlfriend, perpetuating the framework of the nuclear heterosexual family (Gray, 2013, 2022; Liddicoat, 2009; Nelson, 1999). This results in the marginalisation of queer lives, and simultaneously fortifying the dominance of heterosexual narratives.

In Gray's (2013) investigation, a comprehensive analysis of ten UK-produced publications reveals a complete absence of references to non-heterosexual forms of sexuality. The intentional focus on lower proficiency texts, particularly those involving family relationships, exposes a deliberate 'blanket avoidance' of LGBT characters. Notably, even figures widely recognised as gay, such as Elton John or Gianni Versace, are mentioned without any explicit references to their sexual identity (p. 49). Furthermore, Gray (2013) observes instances where same-sex desire could be inferred, as in a photo depicting two men preparing a meal together, and notes that textbook publishers often go to lengths to "provide clarification to the contrary" by explaining that the meal is intended for their girlfriends, thereby avoiding any potential misinterpretation (p. 50).

Gray (2013) posits that framing discussions on same-gender relationships negatively or limiting the representation of gay individuals to those conforming to conventional norms inadvertently reinforces the notion that heterosexuality is the standard. Despite well-meaning intentions, Gray's findings emphasise that educators and material producers, lacking awareness of the underlying mechanisms, may inadvertently

perpetuate heteronormative ideologies. Consequently, the imperative lies not solely in good intentions but in comprehending and actively rectifying how certain perspectives might unintentionally endorse conventional and limited perspectives on sexuality.

The conspicuous absence of gay themes and representations in English language course books and materials primarily stems from publishers' hesitancy to incorporate them. Research findings by Ghajarieh and Cheng (2011) indicate that certain countries exhibit religious and cultural reservations, leading to the exclusion of individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in materials used for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Publishers may fear that including gay characters or themes could potentially offend certain readers or adversely impact sales. Motivated by commercial concerns to reach a wide audience in numerous countries (Gray, 2013), publishers in the capitalist framework of the neoliberal market prioritise profit, leading to the exclusion of "sensitive content" even in less conservative markets (Selvi & Kocaman, 2021, p. 121). It is crucial to note that, in some regions globally, institutionalised or state-sanctioned homophobia renders it impossible to include queer themes and representation (Gray, 2013). Consequently, publishers might choose a safer, more heteronormative approach to their materials, thereby perpetuating traditional gender roles and societal norms. This decision not only reinforces discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community but also restricts the diversity of language learning materials, offering a limited perspective on the world.

Finally, the absence of gay representation in English language course books and materials holds significant implications for LGBTQ+ learners. Despite receiving positive attitudes from instructors and classmates, the lack of adequate queer representation may still engender feelings of exclusion among learners (Hongboontori

& Duangsaeng, 2022). Undoubtedly, the influence of heteronormativity has adversely affected queer lives and the narrative construction of heteronormativity by young individuals (Pollitt et al., 2019). This influence communicates to LGBTQ+ learners that their identities may not be valued or deemed worthy of inclusion, potentially leading to emotions of isolation and shame. Such emotional responses can, in turn, exert detrimental effects on mental health and academic performance. Consequently, the oversight of LGBTQ+ presence in English language course books and materials signifies a failure to establish a secure and inclusive learning environment for all students.

In conclusion, the absence of queer themes and representation in English language course books and materials serves as a manifestation of broader societal perspectives on LGBTQ issues. It not only perpetuates discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community but also limits the scope of language learning materials. Factors such as publishers' hesitancy to incorporate gay characters or themes, the dominance and perpetuation of heteronormativity, and the adverse effects on LGBTQ+ learners underline the imperative for addressing this issue. It is imperative for educators and publishers to acknowledge their pivotal role in cultivating inclusivity and diversity, thereby guaranteeing the establishment of a secure and supportive learning environment that caters to the needs of all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In the realm of critical applied linguistics, queer pedagogy seeks to challenge and disrupt prevailing heteronormative discourses in language education by spotlighting the experiences and perspectives of queer individuals and communities. This involves the incorporation of a diverse array of texts and materials that mirror the richness of

LGBTQ+ identities, alongside the creation of a supportive and inclusive learning environment that acknowledges the intricate interplay of language and power in shaping our experiences of sexuality and gender. While considerable strides have been made to integrate LGBTQ issues and a queer perspective into English Language Teaching (ELT), there remains a need for further advancement in this domain. Importantly, the responsibility for addressing these issues should not rest solely on the shoulders of queer colleagues within the field (Paiz, 2019). Instead, ELT practitioners at large should actively work towards cultivating a deeper understanding and heightened sensitivity to LGBTQ perspectives.

2.5 Related Studies in the Literature

Within the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT), a critical exploration of LGBTQ representation in educational materials has emerged as a focal point of scholarly inquiry. This section synthesises a range of studies addressing the deficiency of LGBTQ themes in ELT materials, examining the repercussions on learners, exploring pedagogical approaches to bridge these gaps, and scrutinising the attitudes and challenges faced by educators. The studies discussed shed light on the imperative need for inclusivity in language education, paving the way for a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between curriculum design, teacher training, and the creation of an affirming educational environment.

A growing body of literature highlights the inadequacy of ELT materials in representing LGBTQ themes, contributing to the reinforcement of heteronormativity. This omission poses a risk of exclusion for queer learners who lack representation in these materials. Despite the expectation that ELT textbooks should expose learners to diverse identities, existing materials lag behind societal changes (Paiz, 2015). Those

who make and share representations, whether aware or not, often play a key role in power dynamics, typically supporting and reinforcing existing hegemonic relations (Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015).

The selection of texts or textbooks for classroom use not only provides students with valuable insights into a target culture, but it also shapes their perceptions of acceptable identities and ways of life within that culture (Paiz, 2015). Unfortunately, this often reinforces heteronormativity as the expected 'norm,' predominantly depicting heterosexual relationships. Gray's (2013) examination of globally marketed course books revealed a striking absence of LGBTQ representation, highlighting missed opportunities for discussions on queer topics. Analysing 10 popular course books, Gray reasoned that lower proficiency levels could serve as an ideal entry point for exploring LGBTQ themes, as they naturally facilitate the introduction of diversity. This includes depicting families with openly identified LGBT members, exploring families with same-sex parents, and teaching terms like 'civil partnership' in conjunction with terms like 'marriage.'

Paiz (2015) arrived at a similar conclusion after examining 45 ESL textbooks designed between 1995 and 2015. The study aimed to investigate the prevalence of heteronormativity in publishing practices and to gauge the levels of heteronormativity in the sampled textbooks. It specifically sought to measure changes in heteronormativity over the two decades covered by the textbooks. Despite spanning two decades, the analysis revealed minimal actual changes in the degree of heteronormativity evident in these texts.

The research has suggested that teachers need to find a way to queer commercially available classroom materials (Paiz 2015). Gray (2022) revisited the topic of queering materials and lack of queer representation concluding that a way forward is to include literary texts and teacher generated materials. Without the constraints of instructional materials, literary texts offer the opportunity to expand on themes; whilst teacher generated materials possess the benefit of situating language within the relevant life contexts of students, providing timely and related content, and demonstrating the teacher's dedication through a personalised approach tailored to the specific student group.

Evripidou and Çavuşoğlu (2015) call for significant changes in curricula and course books to address this gap. They note that positive attitudes toward inclusive topics hinge on their integration into the course book. However, commercial considerations raised by Gray (2013) suggest that the inclusion of LGBTQ representations might impede ELT materials, potentially endorsing heteronormative hegemony. Ghajarieh and Cheng's (2011) study point out that heterosexual characters in ELT materials only depict married couples, likely influenced by Sharia Law in Iran, indicating publishers' concerns about cultural sensitivities. Nelson (1999) also reiterated the difficulties of organising a lesson with classroom materials inclusive of gay and lesbian content might not be viable. This is due to concerns that such a lesson could reinforce minority sexualities and might be considered taboo, particularly in conservative countries. Despite this, Paiz (2015) argues that teachers play a pivotal role in guiding students through queer issues and should not be the sole responsibility of LGBTQ teachers. Teachers and language program administrators face the decision of either allowing students to navigate queer identity issues independently, possibly from

heteronormative or homophobic perspectives, or actively facilitating informed and critical discussions. This guidance has the potential to contribute to recognising underrepresented voices within classrooms and curricula.

In the literature, challenges related to the inclusion of LGBTQ literature and issues in the classroom curriculum are often attributed to teacher attitudes and insufficient training. Grasso's (2016) exploration of this topic reveals divergent views among both pre-service and in-service teachers. One perspective involves differing opinions on the integration of LGBTQ content into the curriculum, while an opposing viewpoint centres on debates regarding its inclusion altogether. Similarly, Moito-Lopes' (2006) attempt to introduce queer themes into literacy education faced hurdles: although students showed eagerness to engage in discussions about queer issues, challenges arose due to the reluctance of teachers and, seemingly, a lack of adequate support materials, making it difficult to navigate conversations about non-heterosexual identities in the classroom.

Nevertheless, it is not practical to overlook the evolving discourses, norms, and practices related to sexual identities and their implications for educational settings (Nelson, 2006). Nelson (1999) highlighted concerns about colleagues "who were puzzled or perturbed" by the notion that lesbian or gay identities could be relevant to language learning [in ESL contexts] (p. 3) and may only have relevance primarily for a minority of learners or gay teachers, and at its worst, it could be perceived as intrusive. Yet, Nelson (1999, 2002) illustrated that pedagogies grounded in queer theory's principles redirect attention from merely learning about or accepting lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals to analysing how language and culture interact with various sexual identities.

Nelson (2002) suggested an inquiry approach, inspired by queer theory, which views sexual identities as performative rather than fixed facts, critically examining the normalisation and marginalisation of various identities. In diverse settings, investigating sexual identities as socially situated practices is deemed more advantageous than merely advocating for tolerance towards individuals identifying as queer. In other words, Nelson (2002) suggests that sexual identities are not straight forward truths, facts or things, but theoretical constructs and problematising all identities may actually be more inclusive. The practical solution for teachers means they are not expected to transmit knowledge (which they may or may not have) but to frame tasks that encourage investigation and inquiry.

According to Nelson (1999), the act of framing tasks in an approach that encourages investigation and inquiry might serve as a catalyst for initiating talks on sexual identity. Through the utilisation of prompts centred around relationships, students are able to engage in reflection regarding their cultural viewpoints. This process reveals the notion that actions that are categorised as acts of 'homosexuality' in one cultural context may not necessarily be regarded as such in another cultural context.

Curran's (2006) study introduces an inquiry-based pedagogy in ESL contexts, disrupting the normalisation of knowledge about sexualities. The researcher applied key tenets of queer theory by reframing mainstream questions about queer topics, moving away from the "teacher-as-expert" model, and involving students in reconsidering and deconstructing sexual norms. This approach, consistent with queer theory, features inquiry-based methods, urging teachers to play a facilitative role in guiding students to recognise and engage with discourses surrounding sexual identities.

The researcher initiated 'getting to know you' activities with ESL learners, involving the identification of family structures. Similar to Nelson's (1999) experience, there was internal conflict about discussing queer sexuality-related topics due to concerns voiced by ESL teachers, deeming it inappropriate and problematic for the ESL classroom. To navigate job security concerns, Curran (2006) adopted a 'reflective' approach, avoiding reliance on data from student interviews or class transcripts, which, unfortunately, limited access to student perspectives. Despite these challenges, it was observed that participants grew frustrated and annoyed due to a lack of clear responses. Moreover, their heteronormative knowledge appeared largely unchanged, and there were limited opportunities for expressing personal thoughts or engaging with classmates' ideas.

O'Mochain (2006) also expressed apprehensions regarding job security, fearing that certain pedagogies might be perceived as 'promoting homosexuality.' Consequently, the researcher aimed to explore gender and sexuality issues in contextually appropriate ways. The study unfolded in a subtly heteronormative setting, catering to EFL students enrolled in a cultural studies course at a Christian women's college in western Japan. The institution seldom engaged in discussions or encouraged discourse on sexuality issues, raising concerns for the researcher about students who might have had questions regarding their own sexual identities, as minimal literature was available to address these inquiries.

To mitigate the risk of oversimplifying the dichotomy between Western and Eastern cultures, O'Mochain (2006) pursued a pedagogical approach that prioritises the examination of queer experiences within the specific local context. The goal was to avoid depicting them as remote or too polarised between the Eastern and Western regions. The study determined that engaging in discussions about local queer

narratives empowered students to generate and analyse language meaningfully. It also provided an opportunity for them to contemplate potentially controversial topics in a non-threatening manner. Therefore, adopting a queer narrative approach could be beneficial in offering essential validation for students identifying as queer. It can also foster empathetic values and open-ended perspectives on gender and sexuality, especially in institutional or regional contexts where these matters are seldom openly discussed.

Advocating for teacher training and programs to support LGBTQ youth in schools, Swanson's (2015) study highlighted how teachers are not providing adequate support. The findings suggest that teachers may lack awareness of both the diverse roles they can adopt to support LGBT youth and the significance of undertaking supportive roles for this demographic. Furthermore, the study revealed significant barriers faced by educators in supporting LGBT youth, with challenges including a lack of specific training for effectively assisting the diverse spectrum of LGBT students (Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015), reluctance to assume supportive roles and inadequate backing from administrative staff (Swanson, 2005; Szalacho, 2004).

Szalacho's (2004) findings on teacher training programs raised concerns about their effectiveness, citing resistance from educators who feared repercussions and stigmatisation. Some teachers reported negative consequences, ranging from a cooling of friendships to workplace harassment. The reluctance to include LGBTQ curricula was linked to the misconception of hyper-sexualisation associated with diverse sexual identities, as highlighted by Grasso (2016). Much of the research suggests the crucial need for institutional support in addressing LGBTQ issues, particularly for in-service

teachers, who currently receive inadequate attention in this regard (Grasso, 2016; Szalacho, 2004) and demonstrates the need for ongoing evaluations (Grasso, 2016).

2.6 Summary

This chapter focused on queer theory within the context of language teaching, providing an overview of pertinent terminology. Emphasis was placed on recognising queer theory as a critical instrument for investigating and questioning the prevalent heteronormative discourse that frequently shapes language education. The literature review revealed a noticeable abundance of queer studies in ESL settings, yet a relative scarcity of research in EFL contexts. Moreover, within the EFL landscape of northern Cyprus, there is a lack of research concerning teachers' practical experiences and instructional interventions related to affective and sexual diversity. This study attempts to recognise, teacher perceptions and the absence of LGBTQ inclusion materials, underscoring the necessity for further investigations into teachers' perspectives and their comprehension of effective approaches to address LGBTQ topics.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology employed to investigate the viewpoints and instructional approaches of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in relation to LGBTQ issues. It provides in detail the research design, the research context and the participants and the rationale behind selecting the questionnaire as the principal research instrument, outlining the adaptations made to it based on the study conducted by Çavuşoğlu and Evripidou (2015), as well as a modified version of Dumas' (2010) and Gray's (2013) interview questions. The chapter ends with a detailed description of the data analysis procedures and how this research addressed issues of credibility and validity.

3.1 Research Design

The exploration of queer research methodologies and methods reveals a landscape rich in both challenges and opportunities, particularly when considering their alignment or potential discord with existing queer theoretical frameworks. Central to this exploration is the acknowledgment that gender and sexual identities are inherently dynamic and in a state of constant evolution. This understanding necessitates a re-evaluation of traditional data collection methods, such as interviews and questionnaires, to ensure their effectiveness and relevance in queer research contexts.

In this vein, Browne and Nash (2016) have highlighted the significant impact of cultural backgrounds and personal experiences on queer research. They argue for the

adoption of methodologies that are acutely aware of and responsive to the global diversity of gender and sexual identities. This approach requires a nuanced and context-sensitive strategy, capable of adeptly navigating the complexities inherent in these identities.

To effectively address the complexities of the research topic, a mixed methods research design was chosen. This design strategically combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, aiming to provide a comprehensive analysis. The quantitative aspect offers broad statistical insights, while the qualitative component delves into the depth of individual experiences. This synergy between the two methods not only broadens the scope of the research but also deepens its understanding.

Morgan (2007) suggests that the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods can significantly enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of research. Qualitative research is characterised by its open-ended approach, which often yields unexpected results and new insights. In contrast, quantitative research, while sometimes viewed as a mechanical application of tools, can also lead to fresh understandings, especially when creative analytical techniques are employed.

Bryman (2006) highlights that integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in research notably increases the potential for unanticipated outcomes, leading to a more comprehensive and adaptable study. This approach not only uncovers subtle perspectives and unforeseen developments but also enhances the credibility of the research. Findings from both quantitative and qualitative research tend to corroborate each other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), reinforcing the reliability and depth of the

research outcomes. This integrated methodological strategy thus ensures a robust and well-rounded investigation into the study area.

The quantitative and qualitative sequences are demonstrated below (Figure 3.1):

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
• Questionnaire: Quantitative Analysis	• Questionnaire (Open ended questions): Qualitative Analysis	• Semi-structured interviews: Qualitative Analysis	• Analysis and interpretation
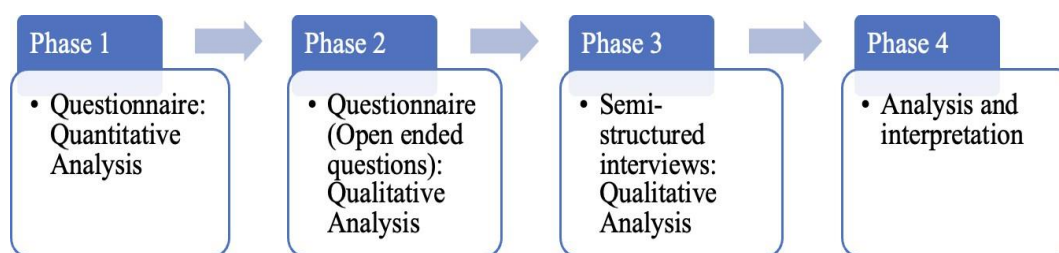
Figure 3.1: Phases of research design

The integration of Queer Theory, particularly in the qualitative aspects of the study like semi-structured interviews, is closely aligned with the principles of queer theory, traditionally linked with qualitative research. Queer theory's emphasis on challenging established norms and structures complements the qualitative method's focus on delving into individual perspectives and experiences.

Furthermore, the research design incorporates a robust contextual analysis, taking into account the cultural and socio-political landscapes. This consideration is crucial in deepening the understanding of how these environments influence the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers regarding LGBTQ issues. By doing so, the research design not only captures a wide array of data but also ensures that the findings are grounded in the specific socio-cultural realities of the participants.

3.1.1 Queer Theory and its Relationship with Qualitative Research

Queer theory demonstrates a significant alignment with qualitative research, attributable in part to its non-conformist features, characterised by its inherent fluidity

and its purpose of dismantling established norms and structures. Consequently, queer theory presents itself as a valuable framework for critically reassessing socio-political, historical, and cultural norms and values. Within the realm of qualitative research, queer theory frequently finds application in scrutinising the narratives of LGBTQ+ individuals and groups, seeking to disrupt and contest.

According to Wozolek (2019), the integration of queer theory into qualitative research and educational institutions is both a topic of discussion and necessity within the field of education. Furthermore, queer theory has exerted influence on historical, political, and interpersonal domains, thereby fostering the exploration of a diverse range of possibilities within academic contexts (Sedgwick, 1993).

Although these institutions and contexts have significantly informed qualitative research, the imperative nature of this undertaking carries profound ramifications for students. The underlying issue is how educational institutions are serving as locations where LGBTQ+ students and groups experience intersectional marginalisation (Taylor, 2010; Pollitt et al, 2019). These establishments have contributed to the continuation of societal and cultural marginalisation (Nelson, 2004), thereby upholding prevailing systems of power (Wozolek, 2019). The inclusion of a diverse range of voices, perspectives, and insights in educational settings can offer a valuable collection of information that prompts a re-evaluation of the commonplace experiences encountered within schools.

However, there are certain challenges associated with collecting data using conventional research methods in the context of queer theory, which acknowledges the perpetual transformation and fluidity of individuals and identities (Butler, 1990); as

such, proposed methodologies within queer studies advocate for a transformative approach. These methodologies, as highlighted by Browne and Nash (2016), prioritise reflexivity and inclusivity in research practices. Reflexivity assumes a crucial role in examining teachers' perspectives on LGBTQ+ issues, allowing researchers to acknowledge their own subjectivity and biases, resulting in a more nuanced interpretation of data. By incorporating queer theory, intersectionality, and anti-oppressive frameworks, researchers can formulate and execute research endeavours that critically examine normative assumptions and binary categorisations while emphasising collaboration, trust-building, and the recognition of power dynamics with research participants.

3.2 Context

3.2.1 Cultural and Socio-Political Landscape

Evripidou (2018) asserts that heteronormativity serves as the dominant narrative within the education system of south Cyprus, portraying deviations as 'taboo' and subject to 'embarrassment' in various aspects such as lessons, schoolwork, and interactions among students and teaching staff (p. 3). This prevailing mindset is largely attributed to the conservative nature of the community, strongly influenced by the socially conservative Eastern Orthodox Church (Evripidou, 2018, 2021).

In contrast, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Constitution outlines TRNC as a secular state, affirming the freedom of conscience, religious faith, and opinion for every individual. The Constitution explicitly prohibits forced participation in worship and religious services, with religious education being under state supervision. There exists a collective inclination in the TRNC to maintain a clear separation between religion and the functioning of the state. While faith and religion

hold importance in the lives of some Turkish Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriot community, in general, is characterised as a very secular society (HDT-report, 2019).

Following the reformation (decriminalisation of same-sex activity in 2007) in the Turkish Republic of Cyprus (TRNC), Queer Cyprus Association (QCA) initiated campaigns aimed at both protecting and fostering acceptance of LGBTI individuals (HDT-report, 2019, p. 90). However, these efforts faced challenges. For instance, the 2016 billboards campaign sought to raise awareness through simple slogans like "Brother Kamil, I'm a lesbian" or "Auntie Mediha, I'm gay" (p. 90). This approach was met with condemnation as some offended TRNC residents expressed their disapproval on social media. They argued that the messages on the billboards were deemed 'provocative' and feared they could 'normalise homosexuality,' potentially influencing children (p. 91).

In delving into the perceptions of EFL teachers, it is crucial to consider how cultural backgrounds and personal experiences shape their choices and perspectives in education. For this reason, the questionnaire was designed to offer anonymity, recognising the varied reasons teachers may have for preferring to remain nameless. This approach aims to create an environment where teachers feel comfortable expressing their views, acknowledging the potential influence of their cultural context on their responses.

3.2.2 The University Context

The universities selected for this study each possess distinct English Preparatory Departments, catering to a diverse student body that includes a significant number of international students from various cultural backgrounds. This diversity plays a crucial

role in shaping the educational and social dynamics within these institutions. While all three universities promote an environment of ethnic and cultural diversity, a notable observation is the apparent absence of specific policies or guidelines addressing LGBTQ issues. This lack of formal recognition and policy could imply either a developing stage of awareness and inclusion regarding LGBTQ matters or a deliberate institutional stance. Additionally, the universities' commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse environment is reflected in their various cultural activities and programs, which aim to celebrate and integrate the multitude of ethnic backgrounds represented on campus. However, the degree to which this inclusivity extends to sexual orientation and gender identity remains a subject worth exploring, especially considering the potential impact such policies, or the lack thereof, can have on both the academic and social experiences of students and staff. This context provides a critical backdrop for understanding the perceptions and attitudes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers towards LGBTQ-related topics in their professional settings, as their approaches are likely influenced by these institutional cultures and policies.

Among the universities included in the study, Girne American University (GAU) was one of the institutions where the research took place. Established in 1985 as a private institution, GAU accommodates approximately 20,000 students from multiple countries. Embracing an American-style higher education model, GAU has established numerous strategic alliances with North American and European universities. The university is accredited by both the Higher Education Coordinating Council of Northern Cyprus (YÖDAK) and the Turkish Council of Higher Education (YÖK). Its academic offerings include 15 faculty departments, along with the Foundation English

School (FES) which provides intensive English language courses to over 1000 students annually and employs around 30 qualified English language instructors (https://www.gau.edu.tr/en/foundation-school).

The second university was Final International University (FIU), founded in 2015. It is a private, co-educational institution located in Kyrenia, north Cyprus. Despite its relatively recent establishment, FIU has made its mark as a modest-sized Cypriot higher education institution, with enrolment figures ranging between 4,000 to 4,999 students, according to its website. The university has a total of nine faculty departments, three vocational schools and three schools one of which is the School of Foreign Languages with around 15 instructors (https://www.final.edu.tr/ufu-7-academic/o-3-schools/f-3-school-of-foreign-languages/i-1-general-information).

The third university where data was collected for the study was European University of Lefke (EUL). Founded in 1990 by the Cyprus Science Foundation, the European University of Lefke has grown into a notable non-profit private institution, initially established as a State Foundation University. Accredited by the Turkish Republic's Higher Education Council and continuingly by YÖK and YÖDAK, EUL caters to a diverse international student body with a current enrolment range of 3,000–3,999 students with 11 faculties, seven schools and the English Preparatory School (eul.edu.tr/en/academic/graduate-programs/english-preparatory-school-eps/).

3.3 Participants

The study's participants all met specific criteria, being EFL teachers currently employed in northern Cyprus universities within the Preparatory/Foundation

departments. The participants for this study were selected using the snowball sampling technique, whereby initial participants were identified through purposive sampling methods based on their relevance to the research topic. Subsequent participants were then recruited through referrals from these initial participants, allowing for the expansion of the participant pool within the target population. The total number of participants was 32, with quantitative data collected through questionnaires and qualitative data obtained via semi-structured interviews.

A significant portion of the participants fell within the age range of 25 to 34, constituting almost half of the study's demographic at 46.9%. Gender distribution revealed a majority of female participants (22 in number), accounting for 68.8%, while the remaining participants (10 in number) identified as male, comprising 31.2% of the sample. Notably, all participants explicitly specified their gender, either male or female. Furthermore, during the survey, participants were queried about their willingness to engage in interviews, with six participants expressing agreement to participate in this additional qualitative component. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the study was designed such that individuals were not required to disclose the specific university at which they are employed. The participants are named throughout the study by their pseudonyms.

The following table presents the demographic distribution of participants categorised by age and gender:

Table 3.1: Participants' age and gender distribution:

Participants' age	Male	Female
Under 25	3	2

25-34	3	11
35-44	1	7
45-54	1	1
55-64	1	1
Over 65	1	0

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

For the purpose of this study, two primary data collection tools were utilised: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires were designed to gather quantitative data on a wide range of EFL teachers' perspectives regarding LGBTQ-related topics. Complementing this, semi-structured interviews provided detailed qualitative insights, allowing for an in-depth exploration of individual educators' views and experiences.

3.3.1 The Questionnaire

The decision to employ a questionnaire as the primary data collection method in this study was motivated by several considerations. First, utilising a questionnaire allows for the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The survey design facilitated the acquisition of statistical data on the frequency of specific practices or beliefs among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, while also providing an avenue for participants to articulate their personal perspectives and experiences.

A section provided an opportunity for teachers to leave open-ended responses, allowing them to share more detailed perspectives and experiences. This qualitative aspect of the survey was designed to complement the quantitative data, offering a

richer, more nuanced understanding of teachers' views and experiences regarding LGBTQ topics in the classrooms. Through these comments, teachers could express their thoughts, concerns, or insights that might not have been fully captured by the predefined response options.

Moreover, the use of a questionnaire as a research instrument offers efficiency and the ability to engage with a large number of participants concurrently. Given the potential sensitivity of the research topic, establishing a procedure that ensures participants' anonymity was crucial to foster an environment conducive to open and honest responses. Teachers may face social and institutional pressures that hinder them from openly discussing their attitudes or practices regarding LGBTQ+ issues. Thus, ensuring anonymity becomes particularly significant in such contexts.

Furthermore, employing a questionnaire helps establish a standardised approach to data collection, minimising potential bias or variability in participant responses. To comprehensively explore LGBTQ+ matters within EFL classrooms, careful question design was essential to cover a wide range of relevant topics. The structured framework of the questionnaire ensured uniformity in the questions posed to all participants, enhancing the comparability of the gathered information and facilitating subsequent analysis processes.

Finally, the questionnaire was strategically administered online to ensure convenience, accessibility, and participant anonymity. This method allowed participants to respond at their own pace, eliminating time constraints associated with traditional paper-based surveys. By making the survey accessible through a digital platform, respondents could easily engage with the questionnaire from any location with internet access.

Additionally, the online format provided a layer of anonymity, encouraging more honest and open responses from participants.

The analysis method involved cross-tabulating Likert scale responses, covering a spectrum from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree,' with demographic variables, namely age groups, across all survey items. This approach provided a comprehensive view of how teachers of various ages respond to multiple aspects of handling LGBTQ-related topics in the classroom, thereby revealing insightful generational trends and attitudes within the educational context.

3.3.1.1 Adaptation of the Çavuşoğlu and Evripidou's (2015) Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed using Evripidou and Çavuşoğlu's (2015) study which had been designed and informed by a focus group on its principles. The modifications made corresponded with the specific context of EFL instruction and to accommodate any additional research questions identified for this study.

From an initial item pool of 15 items, 11 items were chosen, and a 5-point Likert scale adopted for all questionnaire items. 4 questions were omitted from the survey as they did not align with the study's primary objectives. These questions inquired about teachers' own feelings regarding religious sensibilities and students' linguistic skills, which were unrelated to the core focus of the research. In addition to the questions about teachers' feelings on religious sensibilities and students' linguistic skills, the item that asked whether the topic of lesbian and gay issues had been discussed in classrooms was also deemed unnecessary for the study. This question did not directly contribute to the study's primary objectives, which focused on different aspects of education and teacher perception.

To maintain the survey's precision and relevance to the study's goals, these extraneous questions were excluded, ensuring that the data collected would be directly applicable to the intended research objectives. Adaptations to the questionnaire also included replacing the term 'Lesbian and Gay' with 'LGBTQ' to be more inclusive. To encourage further insight, participants are also provided with extra space on the questionnaire for additional comments (Appendix J).

Three specific items were selected from Dumas' (2010) research and incorporated into the questionnaire. These items were strategically chosen to assess various aspects related to LGBTQ+ students within the classroom environment. The first item aimed to gauge teachers' awareness of LGBTQ+ students in their classrooms, helping to measure the extent of their knowledge about this demographic. The second item focused on teachers' concerns about inadvertently offending students' cultural sensibilities, emphasising the importance of inclusivity and sensitivity. Lastly, the third item inquired whether teachers were familiar with available resources, ensuring that educators knew where to access valuable information and support when needed. These additions aimed to enhance the questionnaire's comprehensiveness and provide insights into teachers' perspectives and preparedness in fostering an inclusive educational environment.

The validity of the questionnaire can be evaluated in terms of content validity; it was constructed using a previous study by Çavuşoğlu and Evripidou (2015), which indicates it was based on previously validated items. Additionally, the researcher made adaptations to the questionnaire to make it more inclusive. These adaptations were in consideration of the sensitivity of the topic being researched and an effort to be more inclusive in the language and recognition of diversity within the LGBTQ community.

Moreover, the use of a 5-point Likert scale for all items in the questionnaire enhances the content validity of the questionnaire. Likert scales are a popular way to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions, and using a consistent scale across all items in the questionnaire ensures that the results are comparable and reliable (Nemoto & Beglar 2014). In addition to the Likert scale, the provision of extra space on the questionnaire for additional comments encourages participants to provide more detailed responses, thus offering a qualitative dimension to the study. This qualitative data, obtained through open-ended responses, complements the quantitative findings by providing further insight into the participants' thoughts and attitudes. This dual approach not only facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the construct being measured but also enhances the overall content validity of the questionnaire.

While the adapted questionnaire may have the advantage of being a validated instrument, it is important to acknowledge Oppenheim's (1992) caution regarding the potential mismatch between the adapted version and the specific characteristics of "our population" and ambition to "yield the data require[d]" (p.47). In light of this comprehension, the adjusted questionnaire underwent a pilot testing phase with a select group of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors to discern potential concerns related to clarity, length, or response options. This pilot testing aimed to identify and address any challenges that participants may encounter while completing the questionnaire. On the basis of the received feedback, minor modifications were made to enhance the overall usability and efficacy of the questionnaire. Each piloted item included the layout, instructions and question and answer sequences and categories. The respondents were also asked to use pseudonyms so that they may openly and confidently express their opinions.

The questionnaire included demographic questions to gather information on participants' age, gender, teaching experience, and qualifications. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. This analysis provided a quantitative description of the data collected from the questionnaire, aiding in the identification of trends and patterns. The questionnaire data served as the primary source of information for the study and complemented the data obtained from interviews. The data collection process for the questionnaire was completed first, and participants' confidentiality and anonymity were ensured using pseudonyms.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with consenting participants. The interview questions (Appendix K) were adapted from Dumas's (2010) and Gray's (2013) studies. This qualitative method of data collection allowed for an in-depth examination of participants' perspectives and classroom experiences regarding LGBTQ issues. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to elaborate on their responses and offer detailed insights. The interview procedure allowed for a more individualised and comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and behaviours of participants regarding LGBTQ-related topics.

Some items were modified to reflect the distinctions of teaching English to speakers of other languages. Additionally, the modifications were introduced to address specific aspects not covered by the original instrument and to account for cultural or contextual differences between Dumas's and Gray's studies and the current research.

The interview questions, initially drawn from Dumas (2010), underwent a piloting phase and subsequent modifications based on reviewer suggestions. Structured into

four sections—The Role of the Teacher, Materials, Students, and Classroom (refer to Appendix K)—the semi-structured interview items were designed to adhere to a time limit of 30 minutes, with flexibility for additional time if participants deemed it necessary.

The adaptation of semi-structured interview questions from Dumas' (2010) study allowed the researcher to build upon prior research, incorporating established and validated questions. This approach aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of the interview process.

A thorough review and necessary modifications were conducted on the questions to align them with the research context and objectives. Two items were omitted to better meet the research goals, and the term 'Lesbian and Gay' was replaced with LGBTQ to foster inclusivity and acknowledge diversity within the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, four items were introduced to the questions from Gray's (2013) study under the Materials section. This addition aimed to explore teachers' knowledge and perceptions regarding how LGBTQ invisibility may or may not impact students.

Finally, qualitative research is centred on understanding real-life circumstances through interpreting individuals' experiences. In this approach, the researcher actively engages in the study, considering their own personal and professional background. The objective of this study is to examine the insights gained by participants through their experiences. Specifically, it aims to identify recurring patterns in participants' interviews and explore the potential insights these patterns can offer, particularly within the realm of education.

The table below demonstrates how specific survey and interview items aligned with each research question:

Table 3.2: The alignment of research questions and related items in data collection tools

Research Questions	Related Items
1. What are the perceptions of English language teachers towards the inclusion of queer issues in English language classrooms?	Survey: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6,7, 8, 10, 11, 12 Interview: 1 a, b, c
2. How do English language teachers describe their knowledge and use of queer pedagogy in class?	Survey: 3, 4, 5, 9, 14 Interview: 3 a, b, c, d, 4 a, b, c, d, e
3. How do EFL teachers perceive the impact of LGBTQ invisibility in educational materials on both the learning environment and student engagement?	Survey: 2, 5, 8, 12 Interview: 2 b, c, d, e, f
4. What are the suggestions of English language teachers as regards instructional modifications for an inclusive pedagogy?	Interview: 2 a, b, c, d

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Upon securing ethical consent from the Ethics Boards of the involved universities, I initiated the participant invitation process. The initial invitation, as detailed in Appendix H, was distributed via email. This correspondence outlined the research's subject, primary objectives, types of data collection, measures ensuring data anonymity, and an estimate of the time commitment expected from participants. Respondents returned signed consent forms, following which they were provided with a digital link to complete the questionnaire online.

Coordinating with institutions posed the most significant challenge during this research endeavour. Despite submitting permission applications in accordance with each university's stipulations and receiving the required paperwork needed to proceed, establishing communication with department heads and subsequently, the teaching staff proved to be difficult.

Out of the four universities approached, only one head of department responded positively and agreed to support the research by circulating the questionnaire link within the department. Despite not receiving responses from the department heads, two universities were chosen as the teaching staff themselves proved receptive to my emails. Unfortunately, despite numerous attempts, one university remained unresponsive, leading to the decision to discontinue efforts with that institution. Consequently, the data collection process proceeded in three out of the four universities.

However, I successfully reached out directly to teachers (utilising convenience sampling) within the remaining three universities, with whom I had established

familiarity. With their assistance, data collection proceeded as planned.

Given the participants' busy schedules, it was evident that their time was a valuable commodity. To facilitate their participation without imposing on their busy timetables, I opted for an online approach following our initial contact. Utilising Google Forms, I manufactured a digital version of the questionnaire and shared a direct link with each participant.

This method proved particularly efficient for those participants already within my network, as they could conveniently assist in extending the reach of the study by introducing me to their colleagues. For these new contacts, I sent a detailed email encompassing a letter of consent and a thorough explanation of the study's objectives, accompanied by the questionnaire link.

Upon receiving their consent and agreement, participants were able to easily access and complete the questionnaire online at their convenience. This approach not only respected their time constraints but also streamlined the data collection process, ensuring a smooth and efficient experience for all involved.

The questionnaires included an option for participants to leave their email addresses if they were interested in further engagement through an interview. For those who expressed interest, I sent emails to coordinate a suitable time for the interview, taking into account their convenience and availability.

Considering the time constraints faced by both the participants and myself, I opted for video calling as the primary medium for conducting interviews. This choice not only facilitated time efficiency but also empowered the participants to select their own environment for the call. Given the sensitive nature of the discussion topics, it was

crucial that participants felt comfortable and secure in their chosen setting, whether that meant a private room or another secluded space, ensuring their privacy and potentially aiding their openness during the conversation. To accommodate the preferences of the participants, I offered the choice of using either Zoom or Skype for the video calls. Both platforms were selected for their reliability and built-in recording capabilities, which were essential for the subsequent analysis and transcription of the interviews.

To assist the transcription process and ensure accuracy, I used the Krisp application, a tool designed to transcribe each recording effectively. This approach not only streamlined the transcription process but also ensured that the data collected was as precise and comprehensive as possible, contributing significantly to the integrity and quality of the research findings.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics to determine the central tendency, spread, and distribution of responses, providing a comprehensive overview of participants' attitudes and enabling a nuanced understanding of the dataset. In this study, descriptive statistics play a pivotal role in uncovering valuable insights from the quantitative data, providing a foundation for a detailed understanding of participant perspectives. The analysis of central tendency not only reveals overarching trends but also guides the interpretation of sentiments embedded in the dataset. Delving into the assessment of variability focuses on identifying consensus or divergence among responses, shedding light on the spectrum of perspectives (Leob et al., 2017). Additionally, the detection of outliers proves instrumental in uncovering unique and potentially influential viewpoints within the data.

One of the critical aspects of our exploration involves making comparisons across demographic groups. This approach offers a comprehensive view of variations in participant experiences, laying the groundwork for informed decision-making. The communication of results through measures like the mean and standard deviation facilitates clear and concise reporting.

Descriptive analysis holds significant value as an independent research method, particularly when uncovering undocumented phenomena, revealing hidden patterns within extensive datasets, or diagnosing real-world needs that necessitate policy or intervention (Leob et al., 2017). By employing descriptive analysis, stakeholders can gain a comprehensive understanding of existing issues, enabling them to strategically target and test interventions tailored to the needs of the population.

In the context of this study, the utilisation of descriptive statistics is anticipated to serve as an informative tool for practitioners. The study aims to shed light on problems, opportunities, and various aspects of their system that may not have been previously understood. Descriptive statistics go beyond mere data representation; they contribute to hypothesis validation and provide a holistic comprehension of participant experiences. This understanding, in turn, facilitates the derivation of meaningful implications for the refinement of educational strategies and the formulation of effective policy considerations (Leob et al., 2017). Through a systematic analysis of data, the descriptive study endeavours to empower practitioners with actionable insights, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of educational practices and policies.

The qualitative aspect of this study involved the collection of data through semi-structured interviews, meticulously transcribed verbatim, and subsequently shared with participants for validation, ensuring the accuracy of their responses. Thematic analysis was applied to explore the rich narratives and lived experiences of each participant, identifying patterns and emerging themes. This analysis adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2006) established model, as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below:
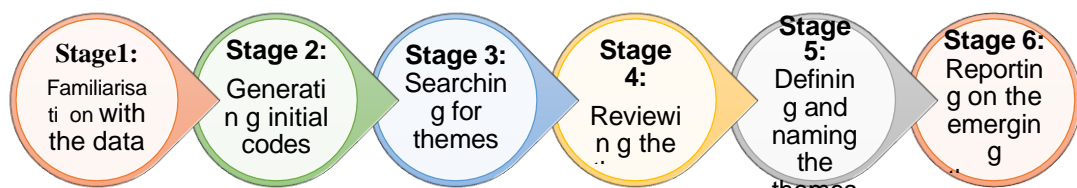
Figure 3.2: Stages of thematic analysis

To generate key codes for the study, a detailed and systematic analysis of the data was conducted. Examples of the key codes and their development are as follows:

i) Attitudes Toward Teaching LGBTQ Topics: While analysing interview transcripts and survey responses, recurring themes related to teachers' attitudes were identified. Comments expressing support, hesitance, or neutrality towards LGBTQ topics in education were grouped together. These comments formed sub-codes such as 'acceptance', 'resistance', and 'neutrality', providing a nuanced view of the teachers' attitudes.

ii) Generational Differences: observations on how teachers' ages influenced their views on LGBTQ topics emerged from the data. Teachers from different age groups displayed varying perspectives. These observations were coded under 'Generational Differences', highlighting contrasts and comparisons among different age groups in their approach to LGBTQ topics.

iii) Comfort Level with LGBTQ Content: Responses indicating how at ease or uneasy teachers felt about incorporating LGBTQ topics into their curriculum were grouped under this code. This code captured a range of feelings from comfort to discomfort, showcasing the variance in teachers' readiness to engage with these topics.

iv) Institutional Support: Teachers' reflections on the level of support or opposition they received from their institutions regarding LGBTQ inclusivity were coded under 'Institutional Support'. This involved examining mentions of policies, administrative attitudes, and institutional culture towards LGBTQ topics.

v) Cultural and Religious Influences: The influence of cultural and religious backgrounds on teachers' and students' perceptions and handling of LGBTQ topics was a recurring theme. Statements and experiences reflecting these influences were coded under this category, offering insights into the socio-cultural dynamics at play.

vi) Student Reactions and Sensitivities: Teachers' observations and experiences related to student reactions, including both positive and negative responses to LGBTQ content, were identified and coded. This code helped in understanding how teachers navigate student sensibilities and reactions in diverse classroom settings.

Each of these key codes was generated through careful examination of the data, ensuring that they accurately represented the recurring themes and patterns observed in the teachers' responses. This process allowed for a structured and meaningful interpretation of the data, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding LGBTQ topics in EFL teaching contexts.

3.6 Issues Related to Credibility and Validity

Several measures were taken to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings. To begin with, the questionnaire was pilot tested to refine its effectiveness and ensure

clarity in its questions. This preliminary testing allowed for adjustments based on initial feedback, ensuring that the questionnaire was well-suited for the target participants. Further enhancing credibility, the questionnaire items, as well as the semi-structured interview questions, were adapted from validated instruments used in previous studies, ensuring a solid foundation for the data collection tools.

To confirm the accuracy and applicability of the data collected, a member checking process was employed. This involved providing participants with a summary of their responses or interpretations for their review and validation. By doing so, participants were able to confirm, correct, or elaborate on the information, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences. This step was crucial for maintaining objectivity and demonstrating how conclusions were directly drawn from the data, thus addressing confirmability. Participants were encouraged to express their views freely, knowing that they would have a say in how their responses were ultimately interpreted and represented in the research. These combined approaches significantly contributed to the trustworthiness of the study, ensuring that the findings were a true reflection of the participants' insights and not shaped by any potential biases or motivations of the researcher.

3.6.1 Positioning Myself in the Context of the Research

Often research, even supposedly rigorous quantitative research methodologies can contain some bias. Topic selection, for instance, is biased. It is not random; rather, it is founded on certain tenets, assumptions, and biases towards the subject at hand. Therefore, situating myself in the research is unavoidable.

Studies that focus on LGBTQ topics have revealed that it is challenging to maintain an unbiased approach when the researchers' personal experiences and expertise serve

as catalysts and inform decisions in the research (Guney, 2018; Laurion, 2017). This strategy will contribute to the study and involve the researcher directly. As an ally with the purpose of highlighting some of the challenges experienced by LGBTQ students, I share this sentiment.

3.7 Summary

In this study, the selection of a questionnaire as the principal data collection instrument was driven by its capacity to adeptly capture both quantitative and qualitative data, whilst ensuring anonymity and standardisation. Drawing inspiration from the questionnaire developed by Çavuşoğlu and Evripidou (2015), the researcher customised the instrument to specifically address LGBTQ issues in EFL classrooms. Rigorous pilot testing and expert evaluations further enhanced the questionnaire's validity and reliability. This methodological approach establishes a robust framework for investigating the perspectives and practices of EFL teachers concerning LGBTQ issues in the classroom, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. The next chapter reports the results obtained from the analysis of the collected data according to the order of the research questions.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis of data that was collected from the English teachers in three selected universities, employing a comprehensive approach that includes the examination of both quantitative data (questionnaire) results and qualitative data findings (derived from the open-ended comment section of questionnaire and mainly from the semi-structured interviews). The results are reported according to the order of the research questions. The first research question in the study focused on the perceptions of English language teachers towards the inclusion of queer issues in English language classrooms. The second research question investigated how English language teachers described their knowledge and use of queer pedagogy in class. The third question examined how English language teachers view the effects of LGBTQ absence in educational materials on learning and student engagement. Finally, the fourth question aimed at eliciting the suggestions of English language teachers as regards instructional modifications for an inclusive pedagogy. All responses in this study are attributed to pseudonyms, chosen by the participants themselves, to ensure anonymity and privacy.

4.1 English Language Teachers' Perceptions of the Inclusion of Queer Issues in English Language Classrooms

This section of the study presents an analysis of English language teachers' perceptions regarding the inclusion of queer issues in English language classrooms. It delves into their attitudes towards their professional roles, particularly focusing on whether they

view teaching responsibilities as extending beyond mere language instruction to encompass broader educational topics, including LGBTQ issues. The analysis further explores generational differences in attitudes, highlighting how perceptions vary among teachers of different age groups and their views on the relevance of LGBTQ topics in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching.

To collect perceptions of the English language teachers as regards the inclusion of queer issues in their classrooms, the questionnaire comprised of 14 items that sought to reflect the different perspectives and attitudes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers towards LGBTQ-related topics and their willingness or concerns about including them in their teaching.

The findings obtained after the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data (from the survey and the interviews) have been reported under three categories: a) openness as a professional role, b) support for the inclusion of LGBTQ-related topics in the EFL classroom, and c) opposition to it. Each of these categories will be elaborated below by referring first to the quantitative data and then qualitative data. When cited, all participants are assigned pseudonyms to de-identify them, and they actively use these chosen pseudonyms in their interactions or contributions.

a) *Openness as a professional role*

The initial question in the survey aimed to assess the sentiments of EFL teachers towards their profession and sought to understand whether they perceived their role solely as English language instructors. According to the responses the participant teachers gave to the first survey item ("*My job is to teach the English language only*"), a significant portion of EFL teachers, 14 teachers out of 32 (43.8%), disagreed with the view that their role solely involves teaching English, showing openness to

broader educational responsibilities. Conversely, a notable group (n=12, 37.5%) strongly agreed that their primary duty is confined to English language instruction, indicating a more traditional view of their role. The remaining six teachers (18.7%) preferred to be neutral on this issue.

In the under 25 and 25 to 34 age groups, teachers exhibited diverse attitudes towards their professional roles in English language teaching. A portion of teachers (n=8 out of 19), within this population demonstrated an openness to discussing broader issues, including queer topics, as part of their teaching responsibilities. However, this age group also included a significant number of educators who maintain a more traditional view, limiting their role to language instruction alone. This variance highlights a clear division in perspectives within this age range, reflecting the range of approaches among teachers regarding the scope of their teaching roles.

Opinions were divided on the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in EFL teaching. The responses given to the second survey item ("*I think that LGBTQ related topics are related to teaching EFL*") indicated that while a number of teachers (n=9, 39%) acknowledged their relevance, the remaining majority (n=23, 61%) either disagreed or had neutral stances.

Younger teachers, particularly those under 25 and in the 25–34 age range, tended to be more open or neutral towards LGBTQ topics (n=16). Relatively older teachers, especially those aged 45–54 (n=11) and over 65 (n=5), were more likely to disagree with the relevance of LGBTQ topics in teaching, suggesting a conservative approach. Although the sample size for these age groups is smaller, the findings indicate a potential generational shift in attitudes toward LGBTQ topics in education.

Another related item on the survey was item #5 ("*There is a place for open discussions on LGBTQ related topics in the EFL classroom).* The focus of this item concentrated on evaluating EFL teachers' viewpoints regarding the facilitation of open discussions on LGBTQ topics within the EFL classroom setting. This particular item provided valuable insights into teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion and handling of LGBTQ-related dialogues in their educational environments, reflecting their readiness to engage with these topics in a classroom context.

Responses from teachers across all age groups exhibited a wide range of attitudes towards open discussions on LGBTQ topics, with a discernible trend among younger teachers (under 25 and 25-34) leaning towards neutrality (n=8) or agreement (n=8). In contrast, older teachers (over 34) showed a mix of responses, with an equal number expressing disagreement (n=5) and agreement (n=5). This pattern indicated a relative openness among these younger teachers to engage in such discussions, highlighting a potential shift towards more inclusive attitudes in younger educational professionals.

Table 4.1: Responses related to the participants' perceptions regarding the integration of LGBTQ topics in classroom settings

Survey item	Strongly agree/agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree/disagree
1.My job is to teach the English language only	37.5%	18.7%	43.8%

2. *I think that LGBTQ related topics are related to teaching EFL*	39%	34.2%	26.8%
5. *There is a place for open discussions on LGBTQ related topics in the EFL classroom*	42.2%	31.1%	26.7%

In addition to structured survey items, the questionnaire also incorporated a comment section. Despite the limited number of participants, with only six of them opting to provide comments on the questionnaire, the insights gained were substantial. The comments capture a range of perspectives among EFL teachers regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in education, highlighting themes of support for inclusion, the need for resources, the impact of cultural and religious influences, and varying educational approaches. It also reflects differing opinions on the matter, from strong support to outright opposition, underlining the complexity and sensitivity of this issue in diverse educational contexts.

b) *Support for the inclusion of LGBTQ-related topics in the EFL classroom*

In a markedly developing theme of 'Support for Inclusion,' many of the comments reflected the critical significance of integrating LGBTQ topics into educational curricula. These reflections emphasised both the need for resources and administrative support for effective teaching, but also firmly advocated a strong belief in the value of an inclusive educational approach that prepares students for a diverse world.

One participant's comment, "Fostering an inclusive environment is important in any classroom and recognising all people are different" (Elizabeth) highlights the importance of creating an inclusive classroom environment. It reflects the teacher's understanding of diversity and the need to respect and acknowledge differences, including those related to LGBTQ identities.

Other comments agreed with the sentiment of 'fostering an inclusive environment,' but also directly addressed the need for more resources and administrative support to effectively include LGBTQ topics in the curriculum. One teacher, Rick, asserted, "This is an important topic. Thank you for your research. I believe more classroom resources are needed and more administrative support is essential". This comment suggests that the teacher recognised the value of these topics but also acknowledged the practical challenges in teaching them without adequate resources and institutional backing.

Furthermore, one teacher's statement explicitly supports the inclusion of LGBTQ topics, and suggests these issues are relevant and should be part of the educational content: "I think LGBTQ related topics should be a part of EFL teaching materials and classroom discussions" (Ayşe). Another participant echoed the sentiments with a similar comment: "We should add LGBTQ-related activities in our lesson plans as it is a popular topic" (Tuğdem). The comment acknowledges that the participant recognised LGBTQ topics as not only significant but also "popular" or current, implying an awareness of contemporary social issues and their pertinence to the educational content. The statement reflects an understanding of the need to keep educational material relevant and engaging by including topics that are prevalent in societal discourse.

A final comment further reinforces the theme of support for inclusion: "These topics are part of everyday life and should be discussed. If we don't include these topics in education, we are doing students a disservice and not preparing them for the wider world properly" (Elizabeth). The teacher argued that LGBTQ topics are a part of everyday life and excluding them from education does a disservice to students. This perspective highlights the importance of preparing students for the real world, which is diverse and includes LGBTQ individuals and issues.

In the interviews some teachers highlighted the critical importance of integrating LGBTQ content, particularly in diverse classrooms. One teacher encapsulated this viewpoint, stating:

> "If you're reducing it to just teaching... you're missing out on what your responsibility is as a teacher... and especially in a classroom where you can look out and you can see the diversity just physically in the students there, LGBTQ issues: I personally don't see how they are different from these other things (Rick)"

This statement underlines the belief that addressing LGBTQ issues is part of the broader educational role, especially in a diverse learning environment.

c) *Opposition to LGBTQ and a heteronormative stance*

There is a significant disparity among teachers regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in ELT. Some teachers viewed these topics as unrelated to their teaching responsibilities, with comments like "I don't think it's got anything to do with teaching" (Q), illustrating this perspective.

An unexpectedly candid remark disclosed a perspective that, while straightforward, harbours anti-LGBTQ sentiments: "This LGBTQ business just seems too confusing to me. You're either male or female. There's no in between. Why are we even discussing

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this…" (John Travolta). The comment reflected a limited understanding or acceptance of gender diversity beyond the traditional binary view of gender. The teacher expressed confusion and a belief in a strict male/female dichotomy, disregarding non- binary and transgender identities. Further to the personal beliefs of the commenter, there is also an indication of a reluctance to discuss LGBTQ topics which can suggest a discomfort with or resistance to addressing issues and potentially avoiding or glossing over topics, vocabulary, or discussions that are relevant to gender and sexual diversity in the classroom. In any case, the comment signals a potential need for professional development in areas like diversity, inclusivity and LGBTQ awareness; and raises the question of how EFL teachers can balance their personal or cultural beliefs with the need to provide an inclusive, respectful, and informed environment for all students.

i) Cultural and religious influences

A significant number of comments also voiced apprehensions regarding the impact of the cultural and religious origins of their students on the educational experience and classroom dynamics. One teacher noted how students' religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds shape their attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals and issues: "…students' religion affects the way they view LGBTQ, as well as their culture…" (James).

This perspective was further deepened by an additional comment highlighting the extent to which entrenched traditional viewpoints on gender and sexuality, profoundly shaped by religious beliefs, often culminate in conservative stances towards LGBTQ communities, as voiced by another participant: "I don't think that Sudanese students,

who are extremely religious and so sensitive about their cultures, would be okay during the classes if they had LGBTQ classmates or topics related/ about" (BB).

The sensitivity to religious and cultural norms clearly becomes evident in classroom dynamics – particularly when LGBTQ topics arise. The teacher's observation about Sudanese students' potential discomfort with LGBTQ classmates or discussions attempts to reflect a need for cultural sensitivity.

The impact of religion and cultural sensitivity was also illustrated by a comment that referenced the strict adherence to traditional gender pronouns in the classroom and the challenges it placed on the teacher. BB stated:

> "…most of the students are [M]uslim and from Sudan or Libya…and we teach them the subject pronouns. You cannot call a girl, a boy. Or a boy, a girl. There is no possibility as the teacher to even tell these kind of things incorrectly. The students always correct me..."

Deviating from established gender 'norms' can be deemed controversial or unacceptable by students and poses problems for the teacher who needs to navigate a delicate balance without stifling open discussion. However, the comment below also recognises how cultural and religious conventions can limit open debate on topics, such as LGBTQ issues. This can impede the development of critical thinking and open discussion in educational settings.

> "…it's important to recognise that some aspects of cultural and religious conventions can restrict debate about topics like this. If students are aware of this and that all people are different, then they can start to openly discuss and debate these topics." (Elizabeth)

The teacher's response points out the importance of recognising these restrictions while encouraging awareness and acceptance of diversity. Despite the constraints of

cultural and religious 'norms', it suggests there is a need for educational strategies to promote understanding and respect for different perspectives.

A final comment in this section recommended an approach that suggested gauging the students' attitudes and introduce the topics accordingly: "…it all depends on the students in the classroom and the way you introduce and then discuss these topics..." (Elizabeth). Ultimately, this perspective advocates for a student-centred methodology that respects diversity while encouraging engagement with complex social issues.

ii) Importance of a safe and supportive environment

A recurring theme identified across all interviewed teachers was the significance of establishing a safe and supportive environment within the classroom. It was universally acknowledged that teachers bear a crucial responsibility in ensuring the classroom remains a secure space, though none confessed to having directly encountered or observed any form of discrimination in their classes. All the teachers recognised the difficulties faced by students and the importance of providing a friendly and comfortable environment. One teacher noted that with a safe environment, students "feel safe to experiment make mistakes and work together" (Rick).

Additionally, the challenges encountered by students relocating from their home countries posed significant difficulties, with one teacher observing, "The student can become very depressed because when they come to Cyprus, they leave their home, their family, their friends, and find themselves completely alone" (Ray). This teacher further emphasised the urgency of promptly addressing 'bullying' to avert its potential exacerbation and the risk of driving a homesick student further into any sort of depression.

While another teacher expressed concern about the challenges faced by queer students, whilst attempting to maintain their boundaries: "You've got to have real[ly] clear... boundaries. But I think it's probably harder for young queer students... especially here" (Jade Eyes). This reflection stresses the intricate balance teachers strive to achieve between establishing clear boundaries and acknowledging the unique difficulties that young queer students may face, particularly in certain environments.

When asked whether students, including those from diverse backgrounds, had received sufficient information and support, the majority of the teachers reported a significant lack of institutional backing when it came to addressing LGBTQ issues. It was commonly observed that there appeared to be a substantial absence of a supportive framework within their institutions:

> "I personally didn't encounter any issues on this topic but I do think that if I had in any of the institutions that I worked in... I wouldn't be able to find the kind of support that I would need." (Jade Eyes)

This sentiment was echoed in the concern that faculty departments might not back the use of more diverse materials, as indicated by: "If I found a book... that had a lot of diversity in their depictions of families... I don't know that anybody [faculty departments] would support that" (Rick).

The responses from the interviewed teachers shed light on the complex landscape in English language teaching, where the inclusion of LGBTQ issues and the creation of a supportive learning environment present both challenges and opportunities. While there is a noticeable discrepancy in beliefs about the relevance of LGBTQ topics in ELT, a common thread is the recognition of the teacher's role in fostering an inclusive and safe classroom atmosphere. However, the lack of institutional support remains a

significant barrier, underscoring the need for more systemic changes to better equip teachers in addressing the diverse needs of their students.

4.2 English Language Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Queer Pedagogy in Class

This section presents a detailed report on the findings related to English language teachers' knowledge and use of Queer Pedagogy within the classroom context. It examines the extent to which teachers claim they understand and apply the principles of queer pedagogy, focusing on their approaches to LGBTQ issues, their efforts to promote inclusivity, and the way they manage sensitive discussions. The findings are based on data collected from surveys (including the comment section) and interviews, offering insights into the teachers' preparedness, perspectives, and the challenges encountered in integrating LGBTQ+ content into their teaching. Additionally, this section explores the influence of cultural, institutional, and personal factors on the effective use of queer pedagogy. The categories listed below represent the various perceptions gathered from the responses to the survey questions.

a) *Confidence in discussing LGBTQ issues*

The analysis of teachers' confidence in discussing LGBTQ topics in the classroom reveals a pronounced generational divide. Survey results, obtained from items 4 (*"I'm confident in my ability to talk about LGBTQ related topics in the classroom"*), 9 (*"I am able to deal with homophobic comments in the classroom"*)*,* and 14 (*"I have or have had LGBTQ students in my classes"*), particularly from item number 4 which specifically asked teachers about their confidence in addressing LGBTQ-related topics, highlight these differences. Younger teachers, especially those under 25 and in the 25–34 age group (n=13), demonstrated significantly higher confidence levels. This

trend is indicative of an increasing comfort and familiarity with LGBTQ issues among newer generations of teachers.

Conversely, older teachers, particularly those in the age brackets of 45-54, 55–64, and over 65, showed a wider spectrum of confidence levels. However, a notable portion of this demographic (n=5) reported lower confidence in engaging with LGBTQ discussions. The diversity observed among older age groups highlights a generational gap in comfort and familiarity with these subjects. It points to an ongoing shift in teacher preparedness and attitudes towards LGBTQ inclusivity in education.

Overall, as Table 4.2 shows, while a substantial majority (64.4%) of teachers indicated confidence in talking about LGBTQ topics in the classroom, the disparity in confidence levels across different age groups highlights the evolving landscape of teacher education and the need for continued professional development in LGBTQ inclusivity.

Table 4.2: Responses related to the participants' knowledge and use of queer pedagogy in class.

Survey item	Strongly agree/agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree/disagree
4. I'm confident in my ability to talk about LGBTQ related topics in the classroom	64.4%	15.2%	20.4%

9. I am able to deal with homophobic comments in the classroom	64.2%	18.3%	17.5%
14. I have or have had LGBTQ students in my classes	YES (62.5%)	MAYBE (28.1%)	NO (9.4%)

i) Institutional concerns

Whilst probing EFL teachers' comfort level with teaching LGBTQ topics, item 8 (*I am not concerned with how the university I work for might react towards me, if I used LGBTQ related topics in my classroom*) focused on their concerns about potential reactions from their university administration.

In general, teachers seemed unconcerned about potential university reactions to teaching LGBTQ topics. The greatest concern was observed in the 45–54 age bracket, where both participants (n=2) disagreed, indicating a cautious approach and possible awareness of institutional attitudes toward LGBTQ issues. In contrast, younger teachers (under 25 and 25-34) generally showed less concern (n=7) or neutrality (n=9), reflecting a perception of a more progressive and accepting environment within educational institutions. The middle-aged group (35-44) similarly exhibited minimal concern, with only one teacher expressing disagreement.

Table 4.3: Responses related to participants' institutional concerns

Survey item	Strongly agree/agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree/disagree
4. I am not concerned with how the university I work for might react towards me, if O used LGBTQ related topics in my classroom	42.3%	37.1%	20.6%

ii) Confidence in addressing homophobic comments

The inquiry about how teachers address homophobic comments in their classrooms serves multiple critical purposes: it evaluates teachers' preparedness and the extent of their training in managing sensitive issues, provides insights into their classroom management strategies, and assesses the level of inclusivity and diversity promotion within the educational environment. The responses are pivotal in identifying the need for additional training and support, thereby helping educational institutions in developing targeted professional development programs. Furthermore, the findings offer valuable data for informing policy and curriculum development, with a focus on fostering a safe, respectful, and non-discriminatory learning atmosphere. This question is a vital tool for gauging the commitment of schools to creating an inclusive environment and ensuring the safety and well-being of all students, particularly those from the LGBTQ+ community.

The survey results for item 9 (*"I am able to deal with homophobic comments in the classroom"*) revealed distinct generational trends in teachers' confidence in addressing homophobic comments in the classroom. Among the youngest group, those under 25, there was a pronounced inclination towards neutrality and agreement, with none selecting the 'Strongly Disagree/Disagree' options. In the 25 – 34 age bracket, the majority echoed this confidence, with only one teacher indicating disagreement. However, the responses from the middle-aged group (35 – 44) were more varied: a considerable number (n=5) expressed confidence, while a smaller segment (n=2) showed discomfort or a sense of inadequacy in handling such situations. This diversity in responses suggests varying degrees of comfort and experience with managing homophobic remarks among different age groups.

In contrast, teachers in the older age groups (45 – 54, over 65) displayed generally lower levels of confidence. This was particularly evident in the 45 – 54 group, where no teachers reported agreement in their ability to handle addressing homophobic comments, and the 'Disagree' responses were more prevalent (n=3). Moreover, the responses from the older age groups were distinctly polarised, lacking any neutral positions, indicating more definitive viewpoints on this issue

Table 4.4: Responses related to the correlation of participants' age and level of confidence.

Item 9. I am able to deal with homophobic comments in the classroom	*Strongly disagree/disagree*	*Neutral*	*Strongly agree/agree*
Under 25	0	2	3

25-34	1	4	10
35-44	2	0	5
45-54	2	0	0
55-64	0	0	2
Over 65	1	0	0

The trend indicates that younger teachers (particularly those under 34 years of age) are more confident or prepared to handle homophobic comments in the classroom, while older age groups exhibit more varied or lower levels of confidence in managing such situations. This could reflect generational differences in attitudes, training, or experience in dealing with LGBTQ-related issues.

b) Awareness of LGBTQ student presence

In the analysis of English language teachers' knowledge and use of Queer Pedagogy, a critical survey item, number 14 ("*I have or have had LGBTQ students in my classes*"), specifically queried teachers about their experience with LGBTQ students in their classrooms. This question plays a crucial role in assessing teachers' awareness of the presence of LGBTQ students, which is fundamental to the application of queer pedagogy. It sheds light on how this awareness—or its absence—may influence teachers' pedagogical choices and their perceived relevance of inclusive teaching practices. Additionally, the responses to this item offer insights into the diversity of classroom demographics and can highlight potential areas for professional development. By reflecting on their experiences with LGBTQ students, teachers can better understand the importance of adopting inclusive and representative teaching materials, underscoring the need for a curriculum that caters to a wide spectrum of

student identities. This survey item, therefore, is instrumental in exploring how the recognition of LGBTQ students in the classroom impacts the implementation of queer pedagogical approaches in English language teaching.

The survey data on whether EFL teachers have or have had LGBTQ students in their classrooms revealed insightful patterns across different age groups. In the youngest age group, those under 25, responses were split across all three options – 'Yes', 'No', and 'Maybe', indicating a varied experience with LGBTQ students. Two teachers had had LGBTQ students, one had not, and two were uncertain.

The 25–34 age group showed a higher incidence of teachers having had LGBTQ students in their classes, with 10 affirming this experience. However, there was also a presence of uncertainty, with three responses indicating 'Maybe', and two stating 'No'. In the 35–44 age group, most teachers (n=5) had LGBTQ students, with two being unsure, indicating a significant level of exposure to diverse classrooms. There were no responses for 'No' in this group.

In the 45–54 age group, the trend shifted. No teachers reported having had LGBTQ students, and two were uncertain. This might suggest either a lack of awareness or recognition of LGBTQ students, or a genuine lack of such diversity in their teaching experiences.

Teachers aged 55–64 and over 65 showed a limited response. In the 55–64 group, two teachers reported having had LGBTQ students. In the over 65 group, one teacher reported having had such students, with no responses for 'No' or 'Maybe'.

Overall, the data suggests that younger teachers, particularly those under 35, are more likely to have had LGBTQ students in their classes or are more aware of their presence. This could be attributed to a growing acceptance and openness regarding LGBTQ issues in more recent years. In contrast, older age groups, particularly those over 45, either have less exposure to LGBTQ students or are less aware of their presence in their classrooms. This trend might reflect generational differences in attitudes towards LGBTQ inclusivity and recognition. The data highlights the dynamic nature of diversity in the classroom and the differing degrees of teacher interaction with LGBTQ students among various age groups.

c) *Challenges in addressing disparaging remarks and bullying*

During the semi-structured interviews, teachers agreed that negative remarks about the LGBTQ community should be addressed, but there was a noticeable uncertainty or discomfort in how to effectively do so. The varied approaches, ranging from enforcing respect to avoiding direct confrontation, reflected the complexities teachers face in managing such situations. The discussion of ELT knowledge and use of queer pedagogy in class relating to students was both enlightening and worrisome, highlighting critical issues for the researcher. It put emphasis on potential discomfort among students and emphasised the pivotal role of a teacher in creating a conducive learning environment in the classroom.

The inquiry began with questions about teachers' awareness of LGBTQ students and their strategies for handling any harassment or bullying directed at them. One teacher, who exhibited a distinct anti-gay perspective, recalled only a single instance from their extensive teaching career. This involved a young student who, according to the teacher, "flounced" into the classroom and was perceived as "shoving it into the faces

of other students" (Q). Problematically, the teacher referred to this individual as "it", despite the student having indicated a preference for she/her pronouns and identifying as a transgendered female.

Interestingly, throughout the interview, the teacher was keen to maintain a distinct separation between personal convictions and their professional approach to teaching, particularly in relation to LGBTQ issues. Despite expressing a personal disagreement with gay marriage, the teacher indicated a preference for avoiding such topics in class, and admitted they would rather direct students to other teachers for these discussions. Yet, when faced with an openly transgender individual, the teacher exhibited uncertainty in handling the situation and did not seem surprised that the student attended only a few classes.

In contrast, a different teacher (Ray) recounted an instance where a student felt comfortable enough to come out to them, indicating a sense of trust and safety in the teacher-student relationship. Additionally, another teacher (Jade Eyes) described a scenario where a student faced bullying due to being openly gay, highlighting the potential impact of peer behaviour on students and underscoring the necessity for teacher involvement in such situations.

d) Diverse strategies and discomfort in addressing LGBTQ topics

From the limited yet insightful experiences recounted by just a handful of teachers, it became evident that student safety and well-being could be potential concerns. This raised questions about the strategies employed by teachers in addressing issues like disparaging remarks about the LGBTQ community by the students in a classroom. Should these remarks be ignored, or is it more effective to confront and address them directly?

All teachers agreed that disparaging remarks needed to be addressed but some indicated a level of uncertainty or discomfort with methods or approaches of doing so. In contrast, others displayed a clear adherence to strict procedures when handling such situations. One teacher seemed to rationalise that homophobic remarks was acceptable if they were articulated respectfully, stating:

> "I haven't experienced such a thing in my class about the gay community, but same thing happens with the race... And my attitude about that is so strict like if it needs to be said then I always make them... express it in a respectful manner." (James)"

However, this approach raises concerns, as it potentially legitimises harmful stereotypes under the guise of respectful expression, thereby undermining the efforts to create a truly inclusive and safe learning environment.

One teacher adopted a proactive approach, aiming to pre-empt potential insults and conflicts by incorporating diverse experiences into the classroom environment, with the hope of fostering understanding and avoiding disputes: "I would try to group them so that there were students from different backgrounds... finding a dialogue where they're able to talk about their differences and their similarities" (Rick). The approach suggested a focus on fostering understanding and dialogue among students from diverse backgrounds, including those who might be conservative or liberal.

Another teacher indicated they were uncomfortable with responding to disparaging remarks, but did so when put in a position that expected them to confirm or confront the students: "But when they asked, I did say that people are different, everyone's different and I had to kind of go at them... I addressed them" (Q). The teacher's response, though marked by discomfort, demonstrated a necessary willingness to

engage and address issues directly when the situation demands it, underlining the importance of teacher intervention in challenging and educating students on matters of diversity and respect.

Another teacher candidly expressed their unease and discomfort that stems from uncertainty in how to appropriately address disparaging remarks: "I'm a bit scared of it to be honest... I'm scared of saying something wrong so I usually [don't address it] if it's not something too disruptive or something too [...] insulting" (Jade Eyes). The admission revealed a significant gap in the teacher's preparedness to handle sensitive topics, possibly due to a lack of training in diversity and inclusion. The teacher's reluctance to intervene unless remarks are highly disruptive or insulting suggested a defensive stance, possibly driven by fear of exacerbating the situation or being perceived as inadequately informed.

While managing disparaging remarks is an integral part of classroom management, it appeared that some teachers were apprehensive about the repercussions such incidents might have, particularly in terms of feedback reaching their department. In one discussion, there was speculation about the potential escalation of an incident requiring intervention; however, the recurrent theme of inadequate institutional support was identified as a significant barrier in effectively addressing these situations: "…it just kind of seems like, in all of the institutions I worked in, they would rather skirt the issue rather than directly deal with it if there was anything in this regard" (Jade Eyes). While teachers endeavoured to uphold and foster an inclusive environment, it became evident that institutional pressures significantly influenced their approach and effectiveness in implementing strategies for inclusivity.

e) *Cultural and religious barriers*

The predominant challenges in addressing LGBTQ topics within the classroom were consistently identified as stemming from religious and cultural barriers. These deeply ingrained beliefs and norms significantly impede the facilitation of meaningful discussions around LGBTQ issues, as vividly illustrated by a teacher's experience: "one of my colleagues mentioned eating pork and they [Muslim students] couldn't accept that…imagine discussing gay relationships?" (Ray).

This comparison highlighted the depth of cultural and religious convictions among students, which can create a substantial hurdle in broaching topics like LGBTQ relationships. The reluctance to even entertain discussions about dietary choices based on religious beliefs serves as a telling indicator of the potentially greater resistance educators might face when introducing concepts related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

These challenges also extended to incorporating various cultural elements, including religious holidays, in the curriculum: "…the prepared curriculums in the country they don't really incorporate culture because there's a thin line between culture and religion maybe and that's why they're not really delving too deeply into it…" (Jade Eyes).

The commenter appeared to indicate that curricula often steer clear of delving into cultural elements, owing to their intricate association with religion, a domain fraught with sensitivity and potential controversy. This connection draws attention to how religion, deeply intertwined with culture, often influences the perception and treatment of sensitive topics like LGBTQ issues. Consequently, this entanglement of cultural

and religious sensitivities significantly shapes the approach to addressing LGBTQ topics within educational environments.

In one response, there was a noted difficulty in comprehending why issues of religious diversity and LGBTQ matters were perceived similarly; yet the response highlighted the significance of inclusivity, especially in respecting diverse religious backgrounds. This was paralleled with the approach towards LGBTQ issues:

> "And that if you're accepting of it [diversity] and if there's an inclusivity where we are able to have, you know, the Christians and the Christian students and the Muslim students respecting each other's holidays… Well, LGBTQ issues? I personally don't see how they are different from these other things." (Rick)

This perspective suggested a viewpoint where the principles of inclusivity and respect should transcend different areas of identity, whether religious or sexual orientation. The comparison made here stressed a fundamental belief in equality and acceptance across various aspects of student identity. The comment, thus, reinforces the idea that embracing diversity, in all its forms, is crucial in creating a harmonious and respectful educational environment.

The discussions with teachers about their students highlighted a complex landscape where the challenges of addressing LGBTQ issues in the classroom intertwine with cultural, religious, and institutional factors. Teachers, in their efforts to promote diversity, often navigated uncertain terrains marked by personal discomfort, lack of training, and institutional pressures. Their approaches ranged from cautious avoidance to proactive engagement, revealing a broad spectrum of strategies in handling sensitive topics. The reluctance to delve into cultural and religious elements, as well as the apprehension surrounding potential backlash, highlights the need for more robust

support systems and comprehensive training for teachers. This would empower them to confidently address LGBTQ issues, thereby cultivating a more inclusive and respectful learning environment for all students.

4.3 English Language Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of LGBTQ Invisibility in Educational Materials on Learning and Student Engagement

This section examines English language teachers' perceptions of the impact that the invisibility of LGBTQ topics in educational materials has on learning and student engagement. It explores key themes such as the effect of non-representative curricula on student inclusivity and the potential consequences of excluding LGBTQ perspectives in classroom discussions. Teachers' views on how the absence of LGBTQ content influences the classroom dynamics, student participation, and overall engagement in the learning process are examined. Additionally, this section assesses the teachers' perspectives on the need for integrating LGBTQ topics into educational resources to enhance the inclusiveness and relevance of the teaching content. Through an analysis of teachers' responses, the study aims to understand the broader implications of LGBTQ invisibility in educational materials and its impact on fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

a) Exploring the divide: Teacher perceptions and the inclusivity of LGBTQ content in EFL education

In analysing English language teachers' perceptions of LGBTQ invisibility in educational materials, the appropriateness of survey items 2 and 5, which had already been discussed, proves invaluable. Item 2 ("*I think that LGBTQ related topics are related to teaching EFL*") effectively assesses the perceived relevance of LGBTQ topics in EFL teaching, determining if teachers consider these issues integral to their

curriculum, which in turn influences their choice of teaching materials. This not only reflects their broader educational goals but also their readiness to adopt a more inclusive curriculum. Item 5 ("*There is a place for open discussions on LGBTQ related topics in the EFL classroom*"), on the other hand, gauges teachers' willingness to conduct open discussions on LGBTQ issues, serving as a key indicator of an inclusive classroom environment and influencing student engagement and comfort levels. While the suitability of these items had been established in prior discussions, their responses offer vital insights into the current state of teaching practices and attitudes towards LGBTQ inclusivity. Collectively, they guide the necessary dialogue for understanding the impact of LGBTQ invisibility on learning and student engagement.

The responses regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in EFL teaching were notably divided, with 39% (n=9) acknowledging their relevance, while a majority of 61% (n=23) expressed either strong disagreement or neutrality. This polarisation suggested a significant variance in English language teachers' perceptions of LGBTQ visibility in educational materials and its impact on learning and engagement. The acknowledgment from some teachers highlighted a growing recognition of the importance of inclusive content for a comprehensive learning experience. In contrast, the substantial portion exhibiting disagreement or neutrality may indicate a hesitancy or lack of awareness about the benefits of integrating LGBTQ topics, reflecting potential barriers to fully engaging students in an inclusive environment.

The results from Item 5, which explored the openness of English language teachers to discussing LGBTQ topics in the EFL classroom, revealed a divided stance. While 42.2% of respondents agreed that there is a place for open discussions on LGBTQ-

related topics, a significant 57.8% either disagreed or remained neutral (see Table 4.3). This split indicated a notable disparity in perceptions regarding the visibility of LGBTQ issues in educational settings. The agreement by nearly half suggests a growing recognition of the importance of addressing these topics for a more inclusive learning environment. However, the substantial proportion of disagreement or neutrality highlights persistent reservations or indifference, pointing to the continued invisibility of LGBTQ content in some educational contexts.

b) Cultural sensitivity vs. inclusivity

The invisibility of LGBTQ topics in educational materials can significantly affect classroom dynamics, student participation, and overall engagement in the learning process. A common concern is the potential for offending students' cultural and religious sensibilities. Teachers often grapple with the challenge of balancing cultural sensitivity against the imperative of providing an inclusive education. In diverse classrooms, the fear that addressing LGBTQ topics might conflict with the cultural or religious beliefs of some students or their families can hinder open discussions and limit the representation of these important issues.

Survey question items 10 ("*I am concerned I may offend my students' cultural sensibilities if I teach LGBTQ related topics*") and 11 ("*I am concerned I may offend my students' religious sensibilities if I teach LGBTQ related topics*") address potential barriers that teachers face when incorporating LGBTQ-related content. These items specifically highlight how concerns over cultural and religious sensitivities can impact the inclusivity of educational materials.

In the survey item 10, examining EFL teachers' apprehensions about offending students' cultural sensibilities when teaching LGBTQ-related topics, responses

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revealed significant variation across different age groups. The youngest age group, those under 25, predominantly indicated a lack of concern, with the majority (n=4) disagreeing that such topics would offend. The 25 – 34 age group presented the broadest spectrum of opinions, primarily leaning towards neutrality (n=8), yet exhibiting a variety of stances, demonstrating diverse perspectives. Teachers in the 35 – 44 age range showed mixed feelings but tended slightly towards concern (n=4). In stark contrast, all respondents aged 45 – 54 unanimously believed that teaching LGBTQ topics would offend cultural sensibilities. The 55 – 64 age group was polarised, with an equal split between disagreement and agreement, reflecting no clear consensus. Although the over 65 group was small (n=1), its members generally expressed concern. These patterns emphasise distinct generational divides in how teachers perceive the impact of discussing LGBTQ issues on cultural sensitivities in the classroom.

The survey responses for item 11 regarding EFL teachers' apprehensions about offending students' religious sensibilities while teaching LGBTQ topics exhibited a wide array of viewpoints among different age groups. The youngest teachers, those under 25, mainly disagreed with having concerns, with most responses categorised as 'Neutral' (n=2) or 'Disagree' (n=3), mirroring the trends seen in responses to cultural sensitivities. In contrast, the 25–34 age group predominantly leaned towards 'Disagree' (n=7), indicating a prevalent belief that teaching LGBTQ topics might significantly offend religious sensibilities. However, this age group also showed diverse attitudes, with a substantial number expressing no concern (n=4) and others maintaining neutrality (n=4), highlighting the complexity and range of teachers' perspectives on this issue.

In the 35–44 age group, survey responses depicted a split opinion on concerns about offending religious sensibilities while teaching LGBTQ topics. A balanced number of teachers indicated no concern (n=3) through disagreement, while an equal number (n=3) expressed agreement, suggesting they do have concerns. Additionally, one teacher demonstrated a neutral stance, reflecting moderate confidence in addressing these topics sensitively. The presence of both agreement and disagreement within this age bracket highlights a diversity of views and indicates that concerns about addressing religious sensitivities persist among some teachers.

The 45–54 age group unanimously believed that teaching LGBTQ topics would offend religious sensibilities, possibly reflecting a more conservative or regressive stance on these issues. Contrasting this, the 55–64 age group showed polarised views, evenly split between Disagreement and Agreement. The oldest group, over 65, with only one response of Disagree, hinted at concerns about religious sensitivities, albeit based on limited data.

Overall, the data suggests that younger teachers, especially those under 25, have a range of views on this issue, while the 25–34 group generally does not perceive a significant conflict with religious sensibilities in teaching LGBTQ topics. The 35–44 and 45–54 groups are more confident, though not unanimously so. In contrast, the older age groups (55–64 and over 65) exhibit more divided and cautious perspectives, highlighting the varied approaches to religious sensitivities in LGBTQ education across different generations of teachers.

c) Gauging student interest

Item 12 ("*I think my students would be interested in LGBTQ topics*") was focused on understanding student interest and plays a crucial role in examining teachers'

perceptions of LGBTQ invisibility in educational materials and its impact on learning and student engagement. Teachers' beliefs about their students' interest in LGBTQ content directly influence the inclusion of such topics in the curriculum and consequently, classroom engagement. If teachers perceive a genuine interest, they may be more likely to introduce these topics, reducing LGBTQ invisibility and fostering a more inclusive learning environment. This not only reflects the demand for a broader representation in education but also highlights the necessity for teacher training in diversity and inclusion. Understanding and acknowledging student interest is key to enhancing the relevance and inclusivity of educational materials, thereby encouraging active participation and a more comprehensive learning experience for all students.

The survey responses to the item 12 *'I think my students would be interested in LGBTQ topics'* revealed a nuanced landscape of teacher perceptions across various age groups, reflecting potential generational differences in attitudes toward LGBTQ inclusivity in the classroom. Among the youngest teachers, those under 25, a majority were neutral (n=4) with one agreeing (n=1), suggested hesitancy or uncertainty about their students' interest in LGBTQ topics. The 25-34 age group, with the highest number of responses supporting student interest (n=8), indicated a growing recognition among newer educators of the relevance of LGBTQ content. In stark contrast, teachers aged 45-54 showed the most scepticism with all respondents (n=2) disagreeing, pointing to more conservative views or a perceived lack of relevance in their teaching contexts. The 35-44 age group displayed a balanced mix of opinions (n=3 agree, n=2 neutral, n=2 disagree), while the 55-64 age group was evenly split between agreement and disagreement (n=1 each), suggesting a divided perception of student interest. Notably, the single positive response from the over 65 group (n=1 agree) hints at recognition

for LGBTQ topics among even the most senior educators. Overall, these findings, with a substantial percentage (45.2%) indicated comfort with including LGBTQ topics, highlighted a significant variance in perceptions of student interest in LGBTQ topics across age groups, underscoring the importance of addressing these generational differences in curriculum development and teacher training to promote a more inclusive and engaging learning environment.

Table 4.5: Responses related to the participants' perceptions of LGBTQ invisibility in educational materials on learning and student engagement

Survey item	Strongly agree/agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree/disagree
2. I think that LGBTQ related topics are related to teaching EFL	39%	34.2%	26.8%
5. There is a place for open discussions on LGBTQ related topics in the EFL classroom	42 .2%	31.1%	26.7%
10. I am concerned I may offend my students' cultural sensibilities if I teach LGBTQ related topics	39.1%	31.1%	29.8%
11. I am concerned I may offend my students' religious sensibilities if I teach LGBTQ related topics	42.3%	21.9%	35.8%

12. I think my students would be interested in LGBTQ topics	45.2%	37.1%	17.7%

d) Limited perspective representation

When LGBTQ topics are not included in educational materials, it can lead to a classroom atmosphere that lacks diverse perspectives. This omission may inadvertently signal to students that LGBTQ identities and issues are less valid or important. During the semi-structured interviews, teachers were asked about materials and if the current materials used in their courses reflected the target language culture. The comments indicated a perception among some teachers that current educational materials do not adequately reflect the target language culture, particularly in terms of gender neutrality and LGBTQ representation, as Ray pointed out: "I've never seen this is Jenny and Jenny has a girlfriend... the materials are really lacking." The sentiment was similarly reflected by another participant who also believed that the status would not change: "I can't really see anything related to LGBTQ being added into any of the curricula soon." (Rick)

However, the majority of comments highlighted that some teachers felt a significant number of contemporary family structures were not represented in the current materials. These omitted representations include 'blended families', single-parent households, and portrayals of inter-racial relationships. The inclusion of non-heteronormative and non-white family depictions presents additional challenges, as

noted by one educator: "…students who are racist or prejudice are often prejudice[d] towards most issues including LGBTQ issues making it difficult to encourage them to be more open and accepting." (James)

One teacher (Ray) expressed a strong conviction regarding the overly simplistic portrayals of families in current materials. To counter this limitation, they proactively included terms like 'divorce' and 'stepsister' in their lessons, thereby expanding the range of representations, along with the associated vocabulary and tasks.

e) Reduced engagement from LGBTQ students

Students who identify as LGBTQ may feel less motivated to engage in class discussions or activities when they perceive these as excluding or ignoring their identities. This perception can significantly affect their sense of belonging and safety, potentially making them feel isolated or invisible if the curriculum does not reflect their experiences. Furthermore, a lack of LGBTQ topics in the classroom not only impacts LGBTQ students but also hinders the development of empathy and understanding among non-LGBTQ students, leading to a less inclusive classroom culture. Teachers themselves might feel unequipped or apprehensive about addressing these sensitive topics due to cultural or societal pressures, often resulting in the complete avoidance of such essential discussions.

i) Inhibits open discussion

The absence of LGBTQ representation can significantly deter open discussions about sexuality and gender identity. This lack of open discourse fosters a classroom environment where all students, especially those from the LGBTQ community, may feel uncomfortable expressing themselves. As a result, engagement from LGBTQ students may diminish, as they might be less inclined to participate in discussions or

activities where they feel their identities are being overlooked or marginalized. One participant (Ray) poignantly captured this sentiment by describing the situation as "unfair for gay students", highlighting the direct impact on LGBTQ students' classroom experiences and engagement.

Another comment offered an insightful reason that attempted to understand from a student perspective of how open discussions may be inhibited: "Students might fear being judged or bullied by their peers for either identifying with or supporting LGBTQ issues" (Jade Eyes).

f) Navigating controversial topics

Teachers may feel unequipped or apprehensive about navigating topics that are considered controversial or sensitive in certain cultures, leading to the avoidance of these topics altogether. Concerns about cultural readiness and potential backlash also play a role in the selection and use of these materials. This concern can influence curriculum choices, with teachers opting for 'safer' content that avoids potential cultural sensitivities, at the expense of excluding important discussions on LGBTQ issues.

One teacher acknowledged the powerful role of cultural constraints in limiting discussions on LGBTQ topics, stating: "I've never seen [gay representations] ... But as I said before, our culture doesn't permit us to engage with these issues" (Ray).

Another teacher, James, expressed concern about the potential for divisive reactions within the class, noting that while some students might be accepting of LGBTQ-related discussions, others could respond with laughter or discomfort, especially among Cypriot students, making the topic challenging to navigate:

> "I can feel that some students might feel worried about it. Like when they see that they will... some of them would start laughing about it and some of them would be like totally okay with it... I can feel that my Cypriot students may feel awkward about it. It can be difficult to deal with."

The invisibility of LGBTQ topics in educational settings can have far-reaching effects on classroom dynamics, student engagement, and the overall learning experience. Teachers' concerns about cultural sensibilities further complicate the inclusion of such content, requiring careful consideration and a balanced approach to ensure both inclusivity and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds.

However, the scarcity of LGBTQ-inclusive materials emerged as a prominent concern among most educators, though one teacher firmly maintained that such content "had no place in teaching" (Q) and further expressed opposition to gay marriage, stating a preference against its inclusion in course materials. Despite this, teachers were generally mindful of this deficiency and its potential implications on shaping student perceptions. For instance, Rick stated: "Teachers generally have to if they want to kind of break those sort of heteronormative themes they […] bring their own materials or try and bring discussions into the groups."

Even in the absence of readily available inclusive resources, some teachers showed readiness to integrate LGBTQ topics, recognising the relevance of these issues in broader societal contexts: "…we become aware that this concept exists in the society... So, I think it could be in the book." (James)

g) *Perceived impact of LGBTQ invisibility on student engagement and learning*

Constructive comments highlighted the potential benefits of incorporating same-sex families in educational materials, suggesting that such inclusion could promote greater

open-mindedness and understanding. This approach posited that students might

modify their initial negative reactions upon observing their peers' positive responses

to LGBTQ-inclusive content:

> "I think it would help them gauge other people's reactions to that situation... if
> they had a class that was accepting and they acted as if it was something
> completely normal then that would encourage them to be more open about it."
> (Jade Eyes)

It was also emphasised that the introduction of these materials should be gradual and

measured. A sudden or abrupt inclusion of LGBTQ+ themes might provoke adverse

reactions and potentially backfire, underscoring the need for a thoughtful and sensitive

approach: "But if they had a class that was like what is this? And they gave all these

big reactions for it then that would kind of backfire." (Jade Eyes)

Other notable concerns pertained to the students' home backgrounds. A significant

number of the students, being relatively young teenagers fresh out of High School,

remained heavily influenced by or reliant on parental support. Consequently, some

teachers, despite recognising the value of inclusivity, harboured apprehensions about

potential backlash from parents or caregivers. This concern was particularly focused

on the risk of these guardians pressuring institutions to eliminate materials that

diverged from traditional heteronormative narratives.

> "I don't think that would be a good idea to use because it would cause backlash
> from parents as well [...] in Cyprus and in Turkey, I don't think they are ready
> for it yet. They're still scared of the idea of it." (Jade Eyes)

h) *Visibility and Comfort*

While teachers harboured apprehensions regarding the general reception of LGBTQ

materials, each teacher was queried about their perceptions of the impact that the lack

of LGBTQ visibility in educational materials might have on students – particularly students from the LGBTQ community. A predominant sentiment was that more inclusive representations could foster greater 'openness' and address the current 'unfairness' experienced by LGBTQ students: "If there was more openness and more understanding... if it was less hidden that they might actually feel more comfortable and less forced to hide" (Ray).

This sentiment suggested that the invisibility of LGBTQ issues in materials contributes to students feeling compelled to conceal their identities. Another teacher supported and expressed the same viewpoint: "I think a lot of them are hiding their identity and... it doesn't help when there's such a sort of a shield of invisibility for them. It's not encouraging" (Rick).

Considering these insights, it became clear that enhancing LGBTQ visibility in educational materials is not just a matter of representation, but a crucial step towards creating a more accepting and supportive environment. This would not only help in alleviating the sense of concealment felt by LGBTQ students but also pave the way for a more inclusive and understanding educational landscape.

However, one educator (Q) firmly opposed the idea that inclusive materials would create a more welcoming environment, holding the view that "students were there to learn English and anything else isn't appropriate" and thus, their personal lives should remain separate from classroom discussions.

The discussions surrounding educational materials revealed an extensive understanding among teachers of the need for greater representation and diversity.

While some teachers are actively seeking to broaden the scope of their teaching materials to include a wider array of family structures and LGBTQ topics, concerns about societal readiness and potential backlash from parents or care givers remain significant barriers. This hesitancy reflects a broader tension within the teaching community between the desire to foster inclusivity and the challenges posed by existing cultural norms. The absence of LGBTQ visibility in educational content not only limits student exposure to diverse perspectives but also, as some teachers feared, may inadvertently perpetuate a culture of concealment among LGBTQ students.

4.4 English Language Teachers' Suggestions for an Inclusive Pedagogy

This section explores teachers' perceptions and strategies for incorporating LGBTQ issues into the classroom, a critical aspect of fostering an inclusive pedagogy. The semi-structured interviews with teachers delved into various aspects of classroom dynamics, particularly focusing on the presence and handling of LGBTQ issues as they relate to teachers' understanding and suggestions for an inclusive pedagogy. Key areas explored included the frequency and context in which LGBTQ topics arise, the nature of these discussions, and the teachers' comfort level in addressing them, all of which are crucial for understanding how to adapt teaching strategies to create a more inclusive environment. Additionally, the interviews probed the use of role plays, especially those revolving around family scenarios, to understand their frequency and how they might incorporate diverse family structures, including LGBTQ representations. Discussions around marriage, including gay marriage, were also a focal point, aiming to gauge how often and in what manner these topics are broached in the classroom setting. This section aimed to uncover the depth and breadth of LGBTQ representation and discussion in everyday classroom interactions, providing

insights into potential areas for pedagogical enhancement to ensure a more inclusive and respectful learning space for all students.

A prevalent sentiment among most teachers was the recognition of the classroom as a space for fostering inclusivity. The conversation with one teacher shed light on the breadth of diversity in the classroom, encompassing both cultural and religious aspects. This teacher emphasised the necessity of accommodating every student, particularly those from conservative backgrounds, noting the significance of inclusivity in an educational setting: "It certainly includes LGBTQ individuals…students... I think my approach is to have an overall acceptance of all the diverse students that are there" (Rick).

The teacher's comment emphasised their dedication to creating an inclusive environment supportive of LGBTQ students, emphasising the importance of embracing all forms of diversity. This dedication was further evident when they elaborated on their approach to classroom discussions, stating: "I think everything has a place in the classroom because it's the students' lives" (Rick). This assertion reflected the teacher's strong belief in the significance of incorporating all facets of students' lives, including LGBTQ issues, into classroom dialogue. It revealed a comprehensive educational approach that acknowledges and honours the varied experiences of students.

However, a notable exception was observed in one teacher who expressed a distinct reluctance to engage with LGBTQ topics within the classroom under any circumstances. This teacher's position was firmly stated: "I'm anti this in the

classroom." (Q). The response stood out as a marked contrast to the inclusive attitudes expressed by other educators.

a) Depicting diversity: Teachers' suggestions for family representation

The inquiry sought to understand how teachers incorporated role-playing activities, particularly in family scenarios. One teacher shared their approach to role plays, mindful of LGBTQ students' experiences. They ensured these students represented themselves, demonstrating a thoughtful approach to avoid placing them in potentially uncomfortable scenarios, like specific relationship role plays. This consideration reflected an awareness and sensitivity towards the unique experiences of LGBTQ students in the classroom: "Maybe some of them […] they would have the problems... I often do you know role plays because I think... I just let the students... comfortably slip into what you know what works for them" (Ray).

While the teacher took careful consideration of students' comfort levels, it seemed that most educators perceive their students as being well-acquainted with the diverse family structures represented in their classrooms, suggesting a general comfort with these discussions. This perspective is echoed by two teachers who shared similar experiences regarding classroom conversations about family depictions, indicating a consensus on the familiarity and ease with which students engage in these topics.

> "We've talked about... depictions of families... the husband and the wife or the mother and the father... there are families where there [are] two fathers or two mothers or there are two male figures in the family. There are two females in the family and it's... generally accepted as an awareness that there is this situation." (James)

Whilst Rick stated: "It just seems like there's a general acknowledgement that there are those families now... And I've never had any resistance to that. Where someone would say that's unacceptable or anything like that."

These comments may indicate that within the context of this particular educational setting, there's an awareness of the need to go beyond traditional family depictions in teaching materials and classroom discussions, and to include diverse family structures, including LGBTQ+ families. The teachers' classroom discussions acknowledge the typical heteronormative themes in standard materials and the importance of introducing broader representations. Consequently, they aimed to enrich classroom discussions by integrating a broader spectrum of family depictions, thereby fostering a more comprehensive and inclusive educational experience.

With regard to discussing gay marriage in the classroom, it appeared to be a more controversial topic. One teacher disclosed adopting a cautious approach, typically avoiding conversations about gay marriage due to uncertainties regarding student perspectives and the legal context in north Cyprus. They also expressed concern about the possibility of students reporting them to the faculty director. Nevertheless, this teacher endeavoured to use inclusive language in interactions with students, inquiring about boyfriends or girlfriends irrespective of the student's gender. This method suggested a deliberate effort to normalise such conversations, albeit subtly, within the constraints of their educational and societal context.

> "I didn't talk about [gay marriage]. But I tried to imply that …that there are, men who love men or who[ever]. That's what I say. I say, maybe you have a boyfriend. I say, or maybe you have a girlfriend or maybe you have both? That's how I ask my questions to them." (Ray)

The teacher's strategies reflected a balancing act between addressing LGBTQ+ issues and navigating the restrictive social and legal environment. The indirect approach ("I tried to imply...") showed an attempt to introduce the concept of diverse sexual

orientations without direct confrontation or discussion of controversial topics like gay marriage.

The same question regarding how the teacher addressed gay marriage in the classroom led to an insightful revelation about the complexities surrounding discussions of marriage and family structures. They reflected on the challenges inherent in broaching the topic of marriage, highlighting a distinct issue that might explain why marriage might not necessarily be a pertinent subject for classroom discourse:

> "Well, family, yes, marriage, yes, I guess. But that's kind of become a bit of a taboo topic as well now, because in, for example, in my last class. I asked students to draw a family tree when they learned family. And half of them came from divorced parents and they didn't know which side of the family to draw." (Jade Eyes)

The comment uncovered a sensitive area in classroom discussions, particularly in relation to family dynamics. The exercise of drawing a family tree brought to light the diverse and often complicated familial backgrounds of students, particularly those from divorced families. This situation posed a challenge for students in deciding which familial connections to represent, reflecting the broader complexities and emotional nuances associated with discussing family structures in an educational setting. It accentuates the evolving nature of family compositions in contemporary society and the need for sensitive handling of such topics in classrooms, where traditional notions of marriage and family may not align with students' lived experiences. The teacher's observation serves as a reminder of the delicate balance educators must maintain when navigating topics that intimately touch on students' personal lives.

The interviews revealed a sensitive approach by educators in addressing LGBTQ issues. Most teachers demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity, recognising the

classroom as a space for embracing diversity. The discussions showed that while some teachers actively integrate diverse family dynamics, including LGBTQ+ topics, into their teaching, others proceed cautiously, particularly in restrictive environments. This reflected a broader effort by teachers to balance traditional educational content with the evolving personal and social realities of their students, underscoring a conscious move towards a more inclusive and adaptable educational approach.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented and dissected the results obtained from comprehensive research conducted across three universities. This involved a detailed analysis of responses gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The chapter unravelled the various attitudes, perceptions, and challenges these educators face regarding LGBTQ-related topics in their teaching. By systematically exploring and interpreting these findings, the chapter provides valuable insights into the current state of LGBTQ inclusivity within EFL education and paves the way for understanding the evolving dynamics of classroom environments and educational approaches. In the following chapter, the discussion of these findings will be presented along with their implications.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings derived from semi-structured interviews and questionnaires completed by EFL teachers. These tools were employed to examine their experiences and perspectives in the context of classroom dynamics, with a specific focus on LGBTQ issues. The analysis investigates the frequency and nature of these issues as they arise in educational settings, the educators' use of various teaching methodologies such as role plays, and the extent to which discussions around family structures and marriage, including gay marriage, are integrated into their teaching practices. The responses from educators provide critical insights into their strategies for navigating these complex topics, revealing their comfort levels and the integration of these subjects into their pedagogical approaches. This chapter aims to offer a comprehensive synthesis of these findings and discuss the implications for practices, limitations and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Overview of the Study

This study explored the perspectives of teachers of the incorporation of discussions on queer issues in English Language Teaching (ELT), focusing on the experiences of teachers in University Preparatory departments in north Cyprus. Acknowledging the challenges faced by educators in integrating or confronting heteronormative narratives, the study aimed to bridge the gap between theory and practice in ELT literature. Key research questions included:

1) What are the perceptions of English language teachers towards the inclusion of queer issues in English language classrooms?

2) How do English language teachers describe their knowledge and use of queer pedagogy in class?

3) How do EFL teachers perceive the impact of LGBTQ invisibility in educational materials on both the learning environment and student engagement?

4) What are the suggestions of English language teachers as regards instructional modifications for an inclusive pedagogy?

5.2 Discussion of the Major Findings

The overarching theme, as evident in all the teachers' comments, endorses the integration of LGBTQ topics in the classroom, but reveals a complex array of effects. While it can promote inclusivity, understanding, and societal change, it also faces challenges due to cultural, religious, and personal beliefs. The effectiveness of including such topics depends significantly on the approach, resources available, and the broader institutional support and openness to diversity within the educational environment. This complexity is further unpacked through four distinct, but interconnected themes identified in the data:

i. Generational differences in attitudes toward LGBTQ topics in EFL teaching

ii. Influence of cultural and religious backgrounds

iii. Varied comfort levels in discussing and handling LGBTQ topics

iv. Institutional support and resource availability

Each of these themes contributes a unique perspective to our understanding of the multifaceted nature of LGBTQ inclusivity in educational settings, offering a nuanced view of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

i)   Generational differences

The study unveiled distinct generational trends in EFL teachers' approaches to LGBTQ topics, revealing a notable correlation between age and attitude. Younger educators, particularly those under the age of 35, showed a marked openness and enthusiasm for incorporating LGBTQ themes in their teaching materials and classroom discussions. In stark contrast, their older counterparts generally exhibited more conservative or ambivalent attitudes, delineating a clear generational divide that points to an evolving educational landscape in terms of LGBTQ inclusivity.

This generational disparity aligns with the findings of Paige (2017), who also noted age as a critical factor in teachers' comfort levels with integrating LGBTQ literature and addressing related issues in the classroom. In general, the study observed an inverse relationship between age and comfort level: the older the educator, the lower the comfort with LGBTQ topics, and awareness of relevant resources. Intriguingly, Paige's (2017) research identified an exception in the oldest age bracket (over 60 years), where these senior teachers exhibited a higher comfort level, paralleling that of the youngest group (20 to 30 years). However, the current study presents a different scenario for the older age groups. While these senior teachers did not show comfort and confidence in integrating LGBTQ content, they exhibited a willingness to accept that open discussions of LGBTQ issues in the classroom had a place and a significant level of comfort regarding their colleagues' concerns about these topics. This suggests that experience might play a role in shaping their perspectives and attitudes towards

peer perceptions and workplace dynamics in the context of LGBTQ inclusivity in education.

Incorporating the findings of Tran-Thanh (2020) further enriches our understanding of the generational trends in teachers' attitudes towards LGBTQ topics in the classroom. Tran-Thanh's (2020) study highlighted a prevailing positive attitude towards LGBTQ-inclusive discussions among educators, with a noteworthy observation that the participants who exhibited these positive attitudes were predominantly under the age of 32. This aligns with the current study's findings, where younger teachers, especially those under 35, demonstrated a greater openness and willingness to integrate LGBTQ themes into their teaching materials and classroom discussions.

ii)   Cultural and religious influences

The range of comments from teachers revealed a profound interplay between cultural and religious influences and the educational experience, particularly in the context of addressing LGBTQ topics. These insights illustrated the challenges educators face in navigating students' deep-rooted cultural and religious backgrounds, which shape their perceptions and reactions to topics related to gender and sexuality. The tension between adhering to traditional views and fostering an environment of open debate and inclusivity is evident. Teachers find themselves at the crux of this tension, striving to respect cultural and religious norms while also advocating for the importance of understanding and respecting diversity. This delicate balance highlights the need for educational approaches that are both culturally sensitive and conducive to promoting critical thinking and open-mindedness.

The overarching goal, as suggested by these reflections, is to create an educational framework that not only acknowledges but also bridges the gap between diverse

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cultural and religious perspectives and the imperative of preparing students for a globally diverse and inclusive society.

Guney's (2018) study echoes these concerns, revealing that pre-service teachers often harbour reservations about addressing LGBTQ-inclusive topics due to fears of negative feedback from conservative parents, institutional opposition rooted in religious, cultural, and moral stances, and potential job insecurity.

Similarly, Dumas' (2010) survey respondents expressed worries about the potential for controversy, antagonistic comments, offense to cultural or religious sensibilities, and concerns about students' language proficiency when discussing sexual diversity.

In Curran's (2006) reflective study, the teacher admitted to feeling apprehensive about teaching LGBTQ issues in the classroom. They frequently encountered assumptions that students, particularly those from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, might exhibit homophobia. However, the study also revealed students' willingness to engage in these discussions, resulting in the conclusion that a pedagogy of inquiry could facilitate meaningful discussions.

The current study further reinforces the apprehensions expressed by teachers regarding the potential offense to students' cultural and religious sensitivities, with additional concerns about repercussions from conservative parents and institutions. This underlines the powerful influence of religion, closely intertwined with culture, on the perception and treatment of sensitive LGBTQ topics within educational environments.

iii)   Teacher comfort levels and concerns with LGBTQ topics

Teachers' comfort levels in addressing LGBTQ topics in the classroom exhibit significant variation across age groups. Younger educators typically show greater confidence and readiness to engage with these subjects, while their middle-aged and older counterparts often display varied or lower levels of comfort. This disparity highlights the importance of targeted training and support to equip all teachers to effectively facilitate sensitive discussions related to LGBTQ issues.

Reflecting on the study by Evripidou and Çavuşoğlu (2015), EFL teachers initially expressed a willingness to integrate gay and lesbian topics into their lessons. However, they also voiced concerns about the potential impact on their credibility and apprehensions about negative reactions from school authorities, colleagues, and students. In contrast, findings from the current study suggest a decreasing level of concern, particularly among younger and middle-aged teachers. This indicates a generational shift towards a more inclusive approach in education, with younger educators demonstrating a notable openness and confidence in addressing LGBTQ topics. This evolving attitude signifies a shift in the educational landscape towards greater inclusivity.

Despite this positive trend, the wide range of comfort levels across all age groups, influenced by the fear of negative reactions, highlights the complex nature of introducing LGBTQ content in educational settings. These findings emphasise the need for comprehensive training and policy development to create a supportive and inclusive environment for both teachers and students. By implementing such measures, educational institutions can better promote the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in EFL teaching, contributing to a more accepting and progressive educational culture.

iv) Institutional support and resource availability

The data gathered in this study revealed a notable apprehension among teachers regarding insufficient institutional support and resource availability when it comes to addressing LGBTQ issues in the classroom. Teachers voiced concerns about the inadequacy of existing resources and the absence of a supportive framework from their respective institutions. This lack of backing was seen as a major impediment to effectively incorporating LGBTQ themes into their teaching practices. Some educators felt isolated in their efforts to introduce these topics, often resorting to self-sourced materials and personal strategies in the absence of institutional guidance.

Some studies (Kosciw et al., 2013; Swanson and Gettinger, 2016), have accentuated the substantial disadvantages students may encounter when their teachers lack adequate support and training. Merely fostering a positive attitude toward LGBTQ inclusiveness in the classroom, as Tran-Thanh (2020) revealed in their research, is insufficient. Equally crucial is the ability to recognise and address homophobic situations while nurturing a genuine interest in expanding one's knowledge on these matters.

The findings emphasise the necessity need for educational institutions to provide more robust support systems and resources. This would not only aid teachers in navigating the complexities of LGBTQ topics but also ensure a more inclusive and comprehensive educational experience for students. The provision of such support and resources is pivotal in empowering educators to address LGBTQ issues confidently and competently in their classrooms.

5.3 Implications for Practice

Understanding the impact of cultural backgrounds and personal experiences on the teachers in the study aligns with the broader imperative to approach the application of queer theory with sensitivity and awareness on a global scale. Recognising the roots of queer theory in specific regions underscores the need for subtle considerations, as this theoretical framework may not universally capture the complexities of gender and sexual identities across diverse geographical locations (Browne & Nash, 2016). In groups marked by diverse cultures and languages, a more effective approach might involve studying how individuals express their sexual identity within the context of their respective societies (Nelson, 2002). This connection draws attention to the importance of a contextualised understanding, both in the broader theoretical framework and in the specific study of EFL teachers' perceptions. With this understanding, the following implications for practice can be made:

i) The need for professional development

The semi-structured interviews allowed for an insight into personal convictions, such as views on same gender relationships, that can impact a teacher's approach to LGBTQ issues in the classroom. This includes a tendency to separate personal beliefs from professional responsibilities, though this separation can be challenging, as evidenced by the teacher who struggled to appropriately address a transgender student.

The interviews revealed a spectrum of belief integration among teachers, with some successfully separating their personal beliefs from their professional duties, maintaining objectivity in the classroom. However, others found this separation challenging, with personal convictions inadvertently impacting their teaching approach and interactions, particularly when addressing sensitive LGBTQ issues. For

example, teachers with conservative views avoided or mishandled discussions on topics like gay marriage, reflecting discomfort and potential biases.

This inconsistency in personal belief management can lead to varied treatment of students, especially those from the LGBTQ community. Cases where teachers struggle to address transgender students appropriately highlight how personal discomfort can negatively influence professional conduct and create a less inclusive environment. Such situations highlight the urgent need for professional development and training. Educators need support to reconcile their beliefs with their professional responsibilities, ensuring an inclusive, respectful classroom where all students feel valued.

Furthermore, teachers' personal beliefs can significantly shape the educational content, influencing the choice of materials and topics discussed in class. This might lead to the exclusion of LGBTQ content, thereby affecting the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of the education provided. It's crucial to recognise and address these influences to promote a more inclusive educational environment that accommodates and respects the diversity of all students.

In conclusion, this study shed light on the multifaceted nature of LGBTQ inclusivity in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, revealing critical insights that encapsulate the evolving landscape of educational attitudes. The study observed pronounced generational differences, with younger teachers demonstrating a progressive openness to integrating LGBTQ topics, in contrast to the more conservative or mixed attitudes of their older counterparts. The investigation also highlighted varied comfort levels across age groups, pinpointing a clear need for

enhanced training and support to equip teachers with the skills necessary to navigate these sensitive discussions. Furthermore, the influence of cultural and religious backgrounds emerged as a significant factor affecting both teachers' and students' engagement with LGBTQ issues, emphasising the importance of adopting culturally sensitive educational practices. Lastly, the study identified a notable gap in institutional support and resource availability, underscoring the urgency for systemic changes within educational institutions to foster an environment that truly supports LGBTQ inclusivity. These findings collectively provide a roadmap for future efforts aimed at enhancing the inclusivity and responsiveness of EFL teaching to the needs of all students.

ii) Addressing invisibility through a 'queer' perspective in ELT

The integration of a 'queer' perspective in English Language Teaching (ELT) seems to be essential to prevent the marginalisation and suppression of LGBTQ+ identities, lives, and experiences, especially in the EFL classroom (Evripidou, 2021). The invisibility of LGBTQ topics not only impacts classroom dynamics and student engagement but also affects the overall learning experience. The challenge of incorporating these topics is further complicated by teachers' concerns about offending cultural and religious sensibilities. This situation necessitates a careful and balanced approach that ensures both inclusivity and respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds of students.

iii) The need for institutional support and resources

The data consistently points to a lack of sufficient institutional support and available resources as significant barriers for teachers in effectively addressing LGBTQ topics. Educators have voiced the need for more comprehensive training and better access to inclusive educational materials, as well as stronger administrative support to

confidently incorporate LGBTQ content into their lessons. These findings highlight the need for systemic changes within educational institutions to foster an environment that supports and promotes LGBTQ inclusivity. Addressing these issues seems to be crucial for empowering teachers to create a more inclusive, understanding, and respectful educational setting for all students.

5.4 Limitations and Delimitations

This study, while insightful, faces several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, it primarily captures the perspectives of teachers, with a total sample size of 32 educators, and does not directly include the viewpoints of students. This exclusion is significant as understanding students' attitudes and experiences is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of LGBTQ inclusivity in the classroom. The lack of student perspective might lead to an incomplete understanding of the classroom environment and the effectiveness of the current approaches to LGBTQ topics. On the other hand, the data collected from the participating teachers was rich enough to enable the researcher to define the challenges, issues and needs as regards the integration of LGBTQ topics for discussion in EFL classrooms. Also, in the research context the potential student participants might not be willing to reveal themselves (even when asked to participate into the study) because of the social and cultural pressures that they might be undergoing. Yet, without their perspective, the picture will remain incomplete.

Additionally, the relatively small sample size of teachers limits the generalisability of the findings. It may not fully represent the wide range of experiences and attitudes that exist across different regions, school types, and cultural contexts. However, despite

their small size, the data the participants provided was rich and informative, touching upon the deep and vital issues on the topic under investigation.

Furthermore, the study's reliance on self-reported data could introduce bias, as teachers might respond in ways they perceive as socially desirable rather than reflecting their true practices and opinions. As detailed in Chapter Three, the researcher took all required measures to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and data in order to minimise this. However, when it comes to a sensitive subject like LGBTQ concerns, it is impossible to ensure that the self-reported data is reliable.

These limitations suggest the need for further research involving larger, more diverse samples and incorporating the perspectives of both teachers and students to provide a more holistic view of the educational landscape regarding LGBTQ inclusivity.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the limitations of the current study, certain suggestions can be made for further research.

i) **Incorporate student perspectives:** Future research should include the voices of students to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how LGBTQ topics are perceived and experienced within the classroom. Exploring students' attitudes, comfort levels, and personal experiences will contribute to already existing literature (e.g., Ordem & Ulum, 2020; Pollitt et al, 2019) to develop a more nuanced view of the educational environment and the effectiveness of current teaching practices regarding LGBTQ inclusivity.

ii) **Expand sample size and diversity:** Subsequent studies should aim for larger and more diverse samples of teachers. This would enhance the generalizability of the

findings and allow for comparisons across different regions, school types, educational systems, and cultural contexts. Research that includes a variety of educational settings can uncover broader trends and more specific challenges or successes related to LGBTQ inclusivity.

iii) **Longitudinal and comparative studies:** Conducting longitudinal studies to track changes over time or comparative studies between different educational institutions or countries could provide deeper insights into how attitudes and practices evolve. This could also reveal the impact of specific policies or training programs on promoting inclusivity.

iv) **Focus on training and development:** Investigate the effectiveness of various teacher training programs and professional development initiatives aimed at promoting LGBTQ inclusivity. Identifying which strategies are most successful could guide the creation of more targeted and effective training modules.

v) **Examine policy impacts:** Study the influence of school and governmental policies on LGBTQ inclusivity in the classroom. Understanding how different policies affect teacher practices and student experiences can inform advocacy and policy-making efforts.

vi) **Qualitative deep dives:** Employ qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or focus groups with teachers and students to gain a deeper understanding of the personal, cultural, and institutional factors influencing the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in education.

vii) **Barrier and facilitator analysis:** Explore the specific barriers and facilitators teachers encounter when attempting to integrate LGBTQ content into their teaching. This could help in developing more effective support systems and resources for educators.

By addressing these suggestions in future research, scholars can build upon the findings of the current study and contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of LGBTQ inclusivity in education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Petition to the Ethics Committee Board (EMU)

To: Chair, Department of Foreign Language Education

From: Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu (St. No: 21505071)

Date: 17th May 2023

Permission Request

Dear Members of the Ethics Committee Board,

I, Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu, am officially registered in the Master of Arts program in English Language Teaching (ELT). My current academic endeavor involves the execution of a research project titled "Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions Towards LGBTQ Issues in a North Cyprus Classroom." This study is being conducted under the guidance and mentorship of Professor Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam.

I am writing to formally request the acceptance of my revised application, which incorporates all the revisions that were requested by the committee.

I am sincerely grateful for the committee's time and consideration during this evaluation process. I fully understand and value the importance of maintaining the highest ethical standards in research, and I assure you that I have made every effort to align my application accordingly.

I kindly request the Ethics Committee Board to thoroughly review my revised application and evaluate it for acceptance. I remain committed to contributing to the advancement of knowledge and upholding the principles of ethical research within the university community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu

E-mail : yvonne.cerkez@gmail.com

Phone : 0533 826 0210
Attachments:
1. BAYEK application
2. Appendix A Consent Form (Questionnaire)
3. Appendix B Consent Form (Interview)
4. Appendix C Teacher Questionnaire
5. Appendix D Semi Structured Interview Questions
6. Permission letter from Girne American University
7. Permission letter from Final International University
8. Permission letter from European University of Lefke

Appendix B: Petition to Departments

Dear ………….

My name is Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu, and I am an MA candidate in the ELT Program at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). I am conducting my MA study entitled "Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions Towards LGBTQ Issues in a North Cyprus Classroom" under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam.

I am writing to request permission to conduct a questionnaire survey for teachers in the Foundation department of your esteemed institution.

The purpose of this survey is to gather valuable insights and feedback from teachers regarding their teaching experiences, challenges, and opinions on LGBTQ -related issues in the English language classroom. The data collected from this survey will be used for academic research purposes and will remain confidential.

I am hoping to conduct this survey within the next few weeks and would greatly appreciate your support in facilitating its administration among the teachers in the preparatory department.

Thank you for considering my request. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu

Appendix C: Supervisor's Letter of Support

13 April 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in support of my supervisee Ms. Yvonne Senel Saffetoğlu about her research study for her MA thesis titled **"Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions towards LGBTQ Issues in a North Cyprus Classroom".** In this study, she aims to explore EFL teachers' beliefs and experiences of teaching students from the LGBTQ community and examine their articulation of strategies to support LGBTQ students. To this end, her study will address the following research questions:
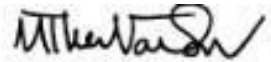
i) How do English language teachers describe their knowledge and use of queer pedagogy, methods and techniques to deal with discrimination towards sexual identity minorities?

ii) What are the pedagogical implications of teachers' perceptions, knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ issues and topics in the classroom?

The participants in the study will be English language teachers currently employed in North Cyprus universities and working in Preparatory school departments. She will use convenience sampling to determine the minimum five English language teachers (from each institute) who work in Preparatory departments at four universities in North Cyprus, your university being one of them provided that you kindly give your consent. She will collect data through a questionnaire and interviews to explore teachers' knowledge and understanding of queer pedagogies and attitudes towards LGBTQ-related topics.

The study will adhere to ethical guidelines and procedures to ensure the protection of the participants' rights and well-being. Participants will be provided with information about the study and asked to sign a consent form before participating. They will be assured that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be maintained throughout the study, and data will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

I kindly request you seriously consider Ms. Yvonne Senel Saffetoğlu's application for your consent to collect some part of her data from your institution. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information on this matter.

Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam
Supervisor
Faculty of Education, Dept. of Foreign Language Education
Eastern Mediterranean University
Famagusta
Tel: 630 26 19
Email: ulker.osam@emu.edu.tr

Appendix D: Letter of Approval (EMU)

EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE

Reference No: ETK00-2023-0109   30.05.2023

Subject: Application for Ethical Approval

Dear: Yvonne Senel Saffetoğlu (21505071)

Your application regarding your master's thesis on "Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions Towards LGBTQ Issues in a North Cyprus Classroom" under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam at Eastern Mediterranean University has been examined and approved in the meeting, dated 25.05.2023 and numbered 2023/137, by the Educational Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee at Eastern Mediterranean University

I wish you success in your work

Regards

Prof.   r. Sıtkıye Kuter

Head of Educational   ciences Ethics Sub-committee
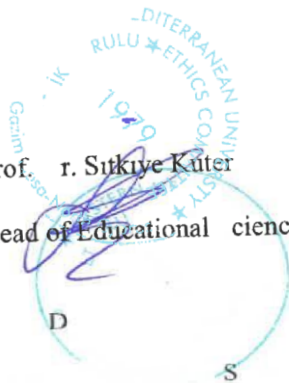
Appendix E: Letter of Approval (EUL)

11 Mayıs 2023

Ref: 110317(100/A/16)/618/Rek.Yrd./2023/LA

Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü'ne

İlgi: 19 Nisan 2023 tarih ve RKY00-2023-0365 sayılı yazınız

Üniversiteniz Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi Yvonne Saffetoğlu'nun ilgi yazınızda sunulan anket çalışmasını Üniversitemizde yapabilmesi uygun görülmüştür. Gereğini arz/rica ederim.

Saygılarımla,

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ali YÜKSELEN
Rektör

Appendix F : Letter of Approval (FIU)

İÇ YAZIŞMA / INTER OFFICE MEMORANDUM

ULUSLARARASI
FINAL ÜNİVERSİTESİ

Gönderilen/To: Yvonne Senel Saffetoğlu   **Tarih/Date:** 11/05/2023

Gönderen/From: Prof. Dr. Hüseyin YARATAN   **Ref/Sayı:**100/050/REK.001
Rektör

Konu/Subject: Etik Kurulu onayı hk.

9 Mayıs 2023 tarihli Etik Kurulu toplantısında alınan karar doğrultusunda çalışmalarınızın uygun olduğuna karar verilmiştir. Bilgi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Etik Kurulu Kararı:

Karar Sayısı 2023/015/01:

Yvonne Senel Saffetoğlu'nun Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam'ın rehberliğinde yürütülmek üzere, Etik Kurulu'na sunduğu, "Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions Towards LGBTQ Issues in a North Cyprus Classroom" başlıklı başvurusu görüşülmüş, önerilen araştırma, başvuruda belirtilen gerekçe, amaç, yaklaşım ve yöntemleri ile, etik ve bilimsel açıdan uygun bulunmuştur.

SK/HY

17th May 2023

Appendix G Letter of Approval (GAU)
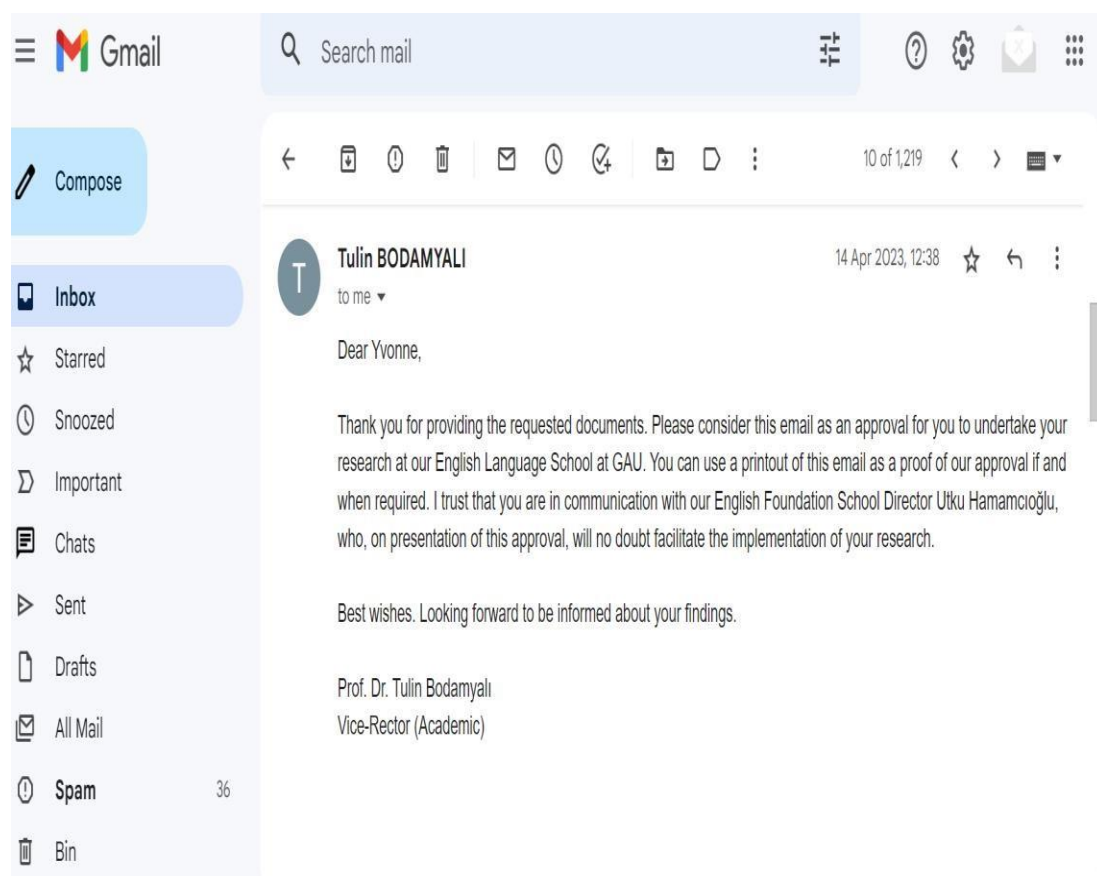
Appendix H: Participant Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

I am a master's degree candidate who is currently writing a thesis titled "Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions Toward LGBTQ Issues in a North Cyprus Classroom." I would greatly appreciate your involvement and contributions to this study. Before agreeing to participate in this study, please take a moment to carefully read the following information.

The questionnaire should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. If you have agreed to an informal interview, this is expected to last for approximately15-20 minutes. There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study, but you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants choosing to leave the study before completion will not face any penalties, negative consequences or prejudice. The right to withdraw from the study will be respected. All responses and questionnaires will be treated confidentially.

Data collected is for research purposes only and will not be used or given to any third parties. All data will be kept in an encrypted file on a password protected device. After being analysed, the online questionnaire will be destroyed due to ethical rules and regulations. Your identity will remain confidential, and no information about you will be disclosed.

If you have any queries about this research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu, or the thesis supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam, who will provide additional information. Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu
MA. Candidate
Dept. of Foreign Language Education
Faculty of Education,
Eastern MediterraneanUniversity
e-mail: yvonne.cerkez@gmail.com
Mobile tel.: 0533 826 0210

Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam
MA. Thesis Supervisor
Dept. of Foreign Language Education
Faculty of Education,
Eastern Mediterranean University
e-mail: ulker.osam@emu.edu.tr
Tel: 0392 630 2619

✄

- -
Consent Form

Please tick the boxes to confirm that you agree to each statement.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask any questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation.
3. I agree to take part in this study.

Your pseudonym: _____

Signature: ....   Date ....

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Appendix I: Participant Consent Letter (Interview)

Dear Participant,

I am a master's degree candidate who is currently writing a thesis titled "Exploring English Language Teachers' Perceptions Toward LGBTQ Issues in a North Cyprus Classroom." I would greatly appreciate your involvement and contributions to this study. Before agreeing to participate in this study, please take a moment to carefully read the following information.

The informal interview is expected to last for approximately15-20 minutes. There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study but you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants choosing to leave the study before completion will not face any penalties, negative consequences or prejudice. The right to withdraw from the study will be respected. All responses will be treated confidentially.

During the informal interview, the session will be recorded using a smartphone and stored in a password-protected file until the conclusion of the research study. After being analysed, these recordings will be destroyed in accordance to ethical rules and regulations. You will receive the recording's transcript and have the opportunity to rectify any misunderstandings or errors. Your identity will remain confidential, and no information about you will be disclosed.

Data collected is for research purposes only and will not be used or given to any third parties. All data will be kept in an encrypted file on a password protected device.

If you have any queries about this research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu, or the thesis supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam, who will provide additional information. Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

Yvonne Senel Saffetoglu	Prof. Dr. Ülker Vancı Osam
MA. Candidate	MA. Thesis Supervisor
Dept. of Foreign Language Education	Dept. of Foreign Language Education
Faculty of Education,	Faculty of Education,
Eastern MediterraneanUniversity	Eastern Mediterranean University
e-mail: yvonne.cerkez@gmail.com	e-mail: ulker.osam@emu.edu.tr
Mobile tel.: 0533 826 0210	Tel: 0392 630 2619

✂

Consent Form

Please tick the boxes to confirm that you agree to each statement.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask any questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. ☐

3. I agree to take part in this study. ☐

Your pseudonym: _____

Signature: _____ Date : ....

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Appendix J: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers

PART 1: Fill in or tick as necessary:

1. Pseudonym:	
2. Age:	Under 25___ 25–34____ 35–44____ 45–54____ 55 and over____
3. Gender:	
4. Years of experience teaching EFL:	
5. Current level teaching:	
6. Email address if you would like to participate in an interview (optional):	

PART 2: Tick as appropriate.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My job is to teach the English language only					
2. I think that LGBTQ related topics are related to teaching EFL					
3. I would be fine teaching LGBTQ related topics that were included in the course book I used in class.					

		150			
4. I'm confident in my ability to talk about LGBTQ related topics in the classroom.					
5. There is a place for open discussions on LGBTQ related topics in the EFL classroom					
6. I am not concerned with what my students would say about me if I discussed LGBTQ related topics in the classroom					
7. I am not concerned with what my colleagues would say about me if I discussed LGBTQ related topics in my classroom					
8. I am not concerned with how the university I work for might react towards me, if I used LGBTQ related topics in my classroom					
9. I am able to deal with homophobic comments in the classroom					

10. I am concerned I may offend my students' cultural sensibilities if I teach LGBTQ related topics					
11. I am concerned I may offend my students' religious sensibilities if I teach LGBTQ related topics					
12. I think my students would be interested in LGBTQ related topics					
13. I have or have had LGBTQ students in my classes					
14. I know where to find and access LGBTQ materials for the purpose of teaching					

Please add any additional comments in the space provided below:

Appendix K: Guided Interview Questions

1. Role of Teacher
a) What do you see as your main role as an English Language teacher?
b) Do you think LGBTQ issues are outside the mandate of English Language Teaching?
c) Is there a place for open discussions of LGTBQ issues in the classroom?
d) Do you have enough information to deal with issues of sexual diversity in your classroom? Enough support?
e) Are there practical – i.e., quick and easy – strategies that could be made available to you?

2. Materials
a) Do you think current materials adequately reflect the target language culture and are relevant to teach?
b) Do you think it is important that there is LGBT representation in ELT material?
c) Do you think depictions of the family should be traditional? Why or why not?
d) Do you see any problems with regard to incorporating LGBT representation in ELT materials?
e) What do you think is the effect of LGBT invisibility in ELT materials on LGBT teachers/teacher educators – and on those who are not LGBT?
f) What do you think is the effect of LGBT invisibility in ELT materials
on LGBT students – and on those who are not LGBT?

3. Students
a) To your knowledge, have you ever had students in your classroom that identified as LGBTQ?
b) If yes, were the other students aware?
c) Do your students ever make jokes about LGBTQ people? If so, how often? What is your response? Do you think it best to ignore such jokes? Is it best to respond?
d) Do your students ever make disparaging remarks about LGBTQ people? Do you think it best to ignore such remarks? Is it best to respond?

4. Classroom
a) How often do LGBTQ issues arise in the classroom? If issues do arise, what are they? Who brings them up? In what circumstances? How comfortable are you in dealing with them?
b) Do you use role plays in your classroom? How often?
c) Do you use family role plays? How often? In what context?
d) Do you ever discuss marriage and the family? How often? In what context?
e) When discussing marriage do you talk about gay marriage? If yes, what do you say about it?

Participant Age: Under 25___   25–34_____   35–44____   45–54____   55 and over____
Participant Gender: _____
English Language level currently teaching: _____
Years of experience teaching EFL: _____