UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DEL ESTADO DE QUINTANA ROO

DIVISIÓN DE HUMANIDADES Y LENGUAS

EFL teachers' conceptions and ideologies toward incorporating queer content in their classrooms

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Para obtener el grado de

Licenciado en Lengua Inglesa

PRESENTA

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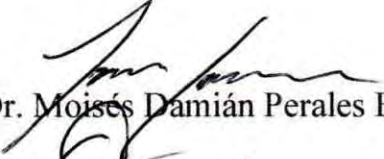content in their classrooms
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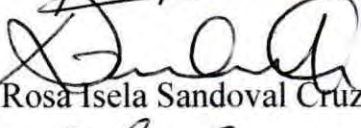
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

It has been proven that in English language classrooms students examine various identities and learn the language simultaneously. Not only that but both teachers and learners with diverse sexual identities are inherently encompassed in the language classroom (Tran-Thanh, 2020). Nevertheless, when it comes to identity discussion, cultural and racial rather than sexual identity are the focus. Likewise, educators tend to be reluctant to encourage classroom conversations related to sexual identities other than heterosexuality (Liddicoat, 2009). Consequently, a heteronormative language classroom is promoted, while other sexual identities are suppressed. More importantly, the lack of attention to sexual identities can cause problems to learners as they should find the English language classrooms as a safe space to increase both their cultural awareness and increase their linguistic proficiency (Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016).

For the most part, the English language classroom must serve as a safe space for students to explore diverse facets of their identities as they are learning the language. More importantly, whereas most educators promote healthy and respectful relationships among students, not all learners have the same experience. Specifically, pupils who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community tend to feel less safe, respected, and valued than do their heterosexual and cisgender peers (Paiz, 2018). Therefore, a discriminating learning environment may hinder students' language learning. For instance, pupils may be prevented from producing meaningful language as they are ashamed of writing or speaking about their queer issues.

In this sense, LGBTQ+ students, including myself, tend to feel isolated and dispraised at school because of our sexual orientation as we are not represented in the language classroom. In my own experience, throughout all the English language courses I have enrolled in, I have been assigned numerous tasks that demotivated me to complete them as I could not relate to the content. More often than not, I have been ashamed of writing a letter to my boyfriend or writing an essay on my coming-out process for my English class, since I do not know how my classmates and professor would react to that since LGBTQ+ issues are not openly discussed in class.

In recent years, the need to create a safe school environment for LGBTQ+ students has been growing among teachers and school staff (Moore, 2016; Page, 2017; Rhodes & Coda, 2017; Tran-Thanh, 2020). Although queer identity inclusion in the EFL classroom has been discussed

overseas, studies on this issue in the Mexican context are scarce or non-existent. Therefore, the purpose of this research is not only to explore EFL teachers' conceptions and ideologies toward incorporating/excluding queer issues in their classrooms but also to examine their knowledge of queer issues across levels and contexts. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What degree of LGBTQ+-related knowledge, as well as professional and personal experiences, do EFL teachers have?

2. What are EFL teachers' conceptions and ideologies towards including LGBTQ+-related content in EFL classrooms?

3. What factors do EFL teachers believe influence the inclusion/exclusion of LGBTQ+-related topics and materials into their teaching?

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will focus on reviewing and discussing the critical work and literature written on four vital topics for this study. Section one (2.1) and two (2.2) will present the relevant literature on Critical Applied Linguistics (CAL) and queer theory by which this study is guided. The following section (2.3) will introduce queer pedagogy as a queer approach for language education. Lastly, section four (2.4) will present an overview of the queer studies conducted in the English Language Teaching (ELT) field as well as the Mexican education context.

2.1 Critical Applied Linguistics

Critical Applied Linguistics relates aspects of Applied Linguistics (AL) to the social, political, and cultural spheres of life (Pennycook, 2001); thus, understanding its emergence from AL is necessary. Over the years, AL has been defined and interpreted in several different ways. Back in the 1940s during the aftermath of the Second World War, AL emerged as the mere application of linguistics to language teaching contexts (Pennycook, 2001); the term linguistics applied then is used to describe this view (Widdowson, 1980). Nevertheless, due to the increasingly broadening of its scope of study, in the 21st century, this discipline deals with language-based problems in real-world contexts (Grabe, 2012; Widdowson, 1980). From this perspective, AL is an interdisciplinary field of work with a more autonomous status, and is concerned with language

use in professional settings, language education, translation, literacy, and speech pathology; whilst drawing on different areas including education, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies (Pennycook, 2001).

Due to the asocial and apolitical form of inquiry of AL, in 1990, Pennycook calls for an urgent need for AL to be responsive to its cultural, social, and political context and to reflect on how ideologies may reinforce inequalities. It is evident that social disparity permeates several aspects of life. As the linguist stated, we live in a world where "differences constructed around gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual preference and other distinctions lead to massive inequalities" (Pennycook, 1990, p.8). In response, Critical Applied Linguistics (CAL) then emerges as a critical approach to AL, which addresses social problems of disparity (Hall et al., 2017).

I adhere to Pennycook's (2001) notion of CAL as a critical approach that aims at potential change by tackling issues of social inequality in relation to language and its critical role as a perpetrator of these issues, because he provides a more encompassing and accurate conceptualization. Furthermore, not only does CAL relate the social, cultural, and political domains to AL, but it also questions and examines the notions that have been naturalized or normalized within this field (Pennycook, 2001). As Pennycook (2001) explains, due to the dynamic nature of CAL, it also opens up to raising new questions and concerns regarding power, resistance, desire, sexuality, and identity; categories that were not originally addressed in AL. Similarly, CAL relies on work in other areas such as antiracism, feminism, or queer theory to map relations between culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, ideology, and classroom discourses, conversations, genre, translation, language learning, and teaching (Pennycook, 2001).

Additionally, Pennycook (2001) states that the list of domains encompassed within CAL is varied and unrestricted, and includes critical discourse analysis and critical literacy, critical approaches to translation, critical approaches to language teaching and language testing, critical approaches to language planning and language rights, as well as critical approaches to language, literacy, and workplace settings. Consequently, this dissertation is enclosed within the CAL approach as it is responsible for critiquing the dominant ideologies in language classrooms that perpetuate inequalities regarding sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

2.1.1 Ideology

As stated above, CAL is concerned with how ideologies may reinforce inequalities (Pennycook, 1990). Since schools and language classrooms mirror the inequalities that are rooted in our society, CAL should be concerned with critiquing the ideologies that perpetuate social disparity in language classrooms (Ibrahim, 1999; Pennycook, 1990, 2001). Hence the relevance of defining ideology in this dissertation project. Blommaert (2005) separates "ideology" into two categories. In the first one, ideology is understood as the set of biased representations, views, and opinions that characterized a particular social group with specific interests, and is associated with a "school", "doctrine", or "-ism", e.g., the Chicago School, the Monroe Doctrine, communism, liberalism, and so forth (Blommaert, 2005). This concept of ideology will not be used in this dissertation project.

The second category describes ideology as the collective thinking of societies or communities, "the normal perceptions we have of the world as a system, the naturalised activities that sustain social relations and power structures", as well as the patterns of behavior that bolster those collective perceptions (Blommaert, 2005, p. 159). In a similar view, ideology refers to the set of fundamental, socially shared beliefs that guide or control practices (Van Dijk, 1999). Moreover, ideologies are inherently integrated into everyday life and are reflected in gender, race, or class issues (Van Dijk, 2003). Based on these ideas, ideologies are conceived in this thesis as the collective normalized notions and beliefs we are not necessarily conscious of, but that prescribe and reinforce how society should act in the different spheres of life.

In this sense, ideology becomes pertinent to this research study as EFL teachers may have an ideology where the exclusion of queer issues in language education has been normalized due to the influence of a specific group of actors or materials that reflect and reinforce this ideology. As Van Dijk (1999) states, ideologies are learned and reproduced through discourse. Moreover, Thompson (1990) states that institutional environments, the media, and discourses mediate the construction of ideologies. Indeed, this ideology of LGBTQ+ exclusion is reflected in the guidelines for inappropriacy most ELT coursebooks follow (Gray, 2002). These guidelines are based on client's perceived sensitivities and recommend excluding a group of characters and topics that may be perceived as culturally offensive, including sexism, sex, as well as gay and lesbian characters (Gray, 2002). Consequently, supposing the dominant ideology in the

classroom is sexist or homophobic, pupils will not be invested in their learning process (Norton, 2000; Norton & Gao, 2008) as they might be discouraged and prevented from expressing their sexual identities freely.

Identifying ideologies then becomes necessary. Since ideologies are verbalized through discourse, Van Dijk (2005) has proposed a set of categories to examine an ideological discourse. There are four main categories, which will be used in this research study to identify ideologies: context, text/discourse, meaning, and form. Context refers to the participants' expression as members of an ideological group, while the text/discourse deals with the positive self-presentation of that group against the negative presentation of "others". The form category has to do with the repetition of lexical choices made to verbalize their ideological discourse. Lastly, the topics or semantic macrostructures, i.e., the stances or outstanding information in each discourse are encompassed within the meaning category. These can be expressed implicitly/explicitly, clearly/vaguely, or by either taking responsibility for certain actions or holding other people accountable for those actions. Additionally, Pilkinton-Pihko (2010) demonstrates that ideologies in ELT can be identified by analyzing the conceptions found through a phenomenographic approach. These ideologies are tracked using expressions of feelings and attitudes (Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010).

2.2 Queer theory

As stated above, CAL tackles social inequality problems in relation to the ideologies that reinforce them (Pennycook, 2001). In this regard, Sauntson (2021) states that queer theory serves as an interdisciplinary theoretical approach that draws on methods from diverse disciplines to problematize fixed social notions and ideologies around gender and sexuality. Hence, queer theory can be employed in CAL to address inequalities regarding gender and sexuality in the educational sphere (Sauntson, 2021).

Queer theory deals with all sexual identities and deconstructs the binary view of gender (Browne & Nash, 2010). It developed as a result of the gay and lesbian liberation movements in the 1960s (Sullivan, 2003). This approach has moved its focus from gay men exclusively to investigating a wide array of sexualities and genders (Sauntson, 2021). Not only does it analyze how all sexual and gender identities are constructed through discourse (Sauntson, 2021), but also

socially and educationally problematizes and takes heteronormativity as its object of critical investigation (Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016). Cameron (2005, p. 489) defines heteronormativity as 'the system which prescribes, enjoins, rewards, and naturalizes a particular kind of heterosexuality – monogamous, reproductive, and based on conventionally complementary gender roles – as the norm on which social arrangements should be based'. Thus, part of its analysis explores how other sexualities outside heterosexuality become non-normative (Sauntson, 2021).

Queer is considered a problematic term as it has been redefined multiple times over time. While it was originally used with a pejorative connotation to shame and discriminate against non-heterosexual individuals, it was reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community during the AIDS crisis in the early 1990s when the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power became known as Queer Nation (Levy & Johnson, 2012). Nowadays, the term queer is academically employed as an umbrella term for LGBT that refers to any sexual orientation or sexual/gender identity other than heterosexual or cisgender (Chase & Ressler, 2009). Queer, then, can be conceived as "a challenge to hetero and cisnormative understandings of gender and sexual identity by deconstructing the categories, binaries, and language that support them" (Meyer, 2019, p. 47). Similarly, Livia and Hall (1997) use the term "queer" to refer to non-normative identity performances that may or may not fall into a particular category of sexual identity. In this study, queer refers to any sexual orientation or sexual/gender identity other than heterosexuality or cisgender.

2.3 Queering language education

2.3.1 The need for a queer approach

LGBTQ+ people must be represented in the language classroom as they are part of not only the language classroom but society (Güney, 2018). Moreover, Nelson (2002) notes that LGBTQ+ pupils' lives and experiences should not be excluded from the educational sphere as this exclusion jeopardizes these students' safety. Moreover, Tran-Than (2020) states that students should have the opportunity to use language as a means for expressing their sexual identities freely in the classroom. Nevertheless, teaching practices with a heteronormative perspective seem to be prevalent in the academic field (Liddicoat, 2009). Similarly, classroom discussion on

non-normative sexual and gender identities is usually restricted due to the heterosexual curriculum that remains unquestioned (Blackburn & Smith, 2010). In turn, queer theory invites us to reflect on our practices and evaluate the knowledge we exemplify and materialize (Coda, 2017), which is needed in language education.

2.3.2 Queer pedagogy

As a response to this need for aiding ELT educators to address LGBTQ+ issues in the classroom, queer pedagogy emerges as an approach to inclusive teaching practices (Neto, 2018). Queer pedagogy draws on queer theory to problematize and question our teaching practices that favor and normalize heterosexuality while excluding queerness. Furthermore, "queer pedagogy offers a critical view of the practices of exclusion that are naturalized in the classroom by a banal heteronormativity" (Neto, 2018, p. 591). In Armstrong's (2008) perspective, queer pedagogy "challenges us (teacher, students, and administrators) to embrace contradiction, to expand our knowledge of LGBT experiential, historical, and literary events" (p. 97). Likewise, Meyer (2019) urges teachers to consider queer pedagogy to reflect on their teaching practices and how they reinforce naturalized notions of heterosexuality and gender, as well as how cultural information is presented in their learning environment. This also requires educators to acknowledge the crucial role of sexual identities not only in society, but also in the classrooms as well as their influence in language learning (Paiz, 2019). Moreover, Moore (2016) highlights how a queer inquiry approach may help teachers critically reflect on their own practices so they can guide students to deal with their own and others' queer identities in an appropriate manner both linguistically and culturally.

To achieve all of this, the ELT filed then should be queered. Queering language education can be understood as setting spaces for critical and respectful discussion on all sexual and gender identities as well as their relevance in our society and culture (Nelson, 2006; Paiz, 2015, 2018,2019). Thus, as an attempt to integrate LGBTQ+ issues in the ELT classroom, Britzman (1995) introduces the notion of "pedagogies of inclusion," which seeks to incorporate authentic gay and lesbian content into the materials and curricula. Some advocate for this approach to explicitly integrate homosexual representation into class materials. Specifically, Merse (2014, as cited in Paiz, 2019), supports the explicit inclusion of queer texts like Parnell

and Richardson's (2005) illustrated children's book 'And Tango Makes Three', which portraits a same-sex penguin couple that is given an egg they must help hatch. However, Nelson (1999) finds the inclusion approach problematic as 1) it is confined to gay and lesbian identities, failing to cover the diverse array of sexual identities; 2) it requires material developers' and teacher's knowledge and ability to include these themes appropriately; and 3) it may unintentionally bolster the minority status of LGBTQ+ people.

Instead, Nelson (1999) proposes "pedagogies of inquiry" as an approach where pupils are guided to negotiate and (re)construct their understanding of all genders and sexual identities, which aligns with the definition of queering language education of Nelson (2006), and Paiz (2015, 2018, 2019). In this approach, for instance, educators may call for critical discussion on how heterosexuality is normalized in different contexts. Following this pedagogy of inquiry, Neto (2018) suggests discussing the grammatical and social meaning of gender in language classrooms. Similarly, Moita-Lopes (2006) suggests the employment of critical discourse analysis as an attempt to aid learners' understanding of how sexual identities are socially constructed. More importantly, it is necessary to acknowledge that employing an inquiry approach requires appropriate teacher training on how to engage with queer issues and inclusive practices (Pawelczyk, et al., 2014; Paiz, 2018, 2019).

Indeed, there is still work to be done regarding EFL teachers' training on modeling queer pedagogies and guiding them to queer their practice, so they create spaces to examine the discursive construction of all sexual identities respectfully and critically (Paiz, 2019). A queer approach to language education then results necessary to question and analyze our pedagogical praxis that not only may perpetuate and reinforce a heteronormative ideology, but also may inhibit queer learners' identity expression in the language classroom. This is a reflection that should aim to change these classroom practices. Consequently, examining how queerness is addressed within language education is worth investigating as it might be the first step to queering our teaching practice. The following section outlines studies that have addressed LGBTQ+ issues in ELT.

2.4 Contextualizing the study

2.4.1 Queer studies in English Language Teaching

Undoubtedly, since pupils construct their identities in schools, it is in this academic context where sexuality must be addressed explicitly across subjects, and not as isolated sex education classes (Schneider & Owens, 2000). In this regard, Nelson (1993) was one of the pioneers who highlighted and challenged the heteronormative view of the English language classroom where students and teachers were presumed to be straight until proven otherwise. Nelson (1999) also introduced the so-called "gay-friendly" pedagogies to address LGBTQ+ issues in language teaching, aiming to allow learners to gain the necessary linguistic competences to 1) express their sexual identities appropriately and meaningfully; 2) communicate with queer individuals in a respectful manner; and 3) analyze the queer identities they find in popular media.

Moreover, along the years, the analysis of LGBTQ+ content in coursebooks has been the predominant focus of numerous queer studies in ELT. These studies have shown that despite the increasing visibility of LGBTQ+ identities in our everyday life, ELT coursebooks reinforce dominant heteronormative discourses (Thornbury, 1999; Nelson, 2009; Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2015; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2015), fail to represent queer identities (Gray, 2013; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2015), and/or omit LGBTQ+ content due to commercial concerns (Goldstein, 2015, as cited in Güney, 2018). Furthermore, research on students' experiences with LGBTQ+ issues in the ESL field is also common, specifically on gay immigrant students' experiences (Kappra & Vandrick, 2006 as cited in Güney, 2018; Nelson, 2010). Kaiser (2017) also conducted a study with immigrant LGBT-identified students, but the researcher draws attention to how the perception of teachers as the authority in class may influence the discussion of queer issues in the classroom.

2.4.1.1 Queer studies in EFL contexts

As for the EFL context, the predominant theme of these studies is the experiences and attitudes of both teachers and students towards queer issues. Specifically, perceptions of EFL learners regarding LGBTQ+ issues were explored in Japan (Moore, 2016; Ó'Móchain, 2006), while English language teachers' attitudes towards the incorporation of gay-and-lesbian-related topics in the EFL classroom were investigated by Evripidou and Çavuşoğlu (2014). In contrast, Lauring

(2017) looked at emigrant EFL queer teachers' experiences dealing with queer issues in the South Korean classroom. In the Turkish context, Güney (2018) explored the perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers towards queer issues. As for teacher training, Barozzi and Ruiz (2020) are pioneers in providing training and pedagogical strategies to primary and secondary school pre-service EFL teachers to encounter LGBTQ+-phobia and heterosexism in Spain.

Nevertheless, most of the studies that focus on EFL teachers, are limited to their perceptions, beliefs, or attitudes regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ+-related content in the classroom. What is more, none of them have examined the teachers' knowledge nor their personal/professional experiences, which are aspects worth analyzing as they determine the action these teachers may take on such topics (Kolbert et al.). In contrast, Barozzi and Ojeda (2016) as well as Tran-Thanh (2020) have examined what others have omitted. Besides EFL teachers' attitudes towards including LGBTQ+-related content in the language classrooms, not only their familiarity with queer issues but also their personal and professional experiences dealing with these issues were investigated in Spain (Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016) and Vietnam (Tran-Thanh, 2020).

Nevertheless, both studies have formulated just some questions that were indirectly used to explore the elements that may influence the exclusion of queer issues, the leading one being the lack of teaching training and knowledge. Contrastingly, this research study aims to question the educators about the specific factors they believe may hinder/facilitate the inclusion/exclusion of queer issues, such as pupils' background, colleagues' reactions, and the English language curriculum. Although Tran-Thanh (2020) used a semi-structured interview as the tool for data collection, the data analysis was not done through a phenomenographic perspective but by employing thematic analysis. Differently from Tran-Thanh's (2020), a phenomenographic approach for the data analysis is adopted in this research study. This will lead to more exhaustive results to discuss as it affords a deeper understanding of how the phenomenon of queer issues inclusion/exclusion in an EFL classroom is qualitatively and collectively experienced.

Moreover, the assessment of teachers' knowledge of queer issues in both studies was limited to some terminology and concepts e.g., LGBT, heteronormativity, queer theory. By merely addressing the acronym LGBT, relevant terms such as transexual and nonbinary may be excluded from the examination of teachers' queer knowledge. To illustrate, the participants in Tran-Thanh's (2020) study were aware that there are "other" types of sexual/gender identities

aside from gay men and transgender people, but they did not elaborate on that. Although some queer studies claim to be working with LGBT identities, their focus is still on gay and lesbian issues, which contributes to the erasure of transgender lives in language education (Paiz, 2019). More importantly, gender nonconforming people in the EFL field remain invisible. Therefore, the data collection tool in this research study will be used to examine teachers' familiarity with the terms transexual, transgender, cisgender, and nonbinary.

2.4.2 Queer studies in Mexican Education

Concerning the Mexican educational context, there are a few queer studies. However, the predominant theme among the available queer studies in this context is students' perceptions of homophobia and homophobic bullying across levels. Specifically, there are studies addressing these themes mainly in higher education (Moral & Valle, 2011; Piña & Aguayo, 2015; List, 2016; Velázquez & Figueroa, 2017; Dorantes, et al., 2021), followed by middle education (Anzaldúa & Yuren, 2011; Linares, García & Martínez, 2019), and secondary schools (Preciado, 2013; Rodríguez, 2018).

In addition to homophobia, there are other themes addressed in higher education research. Educators' identities construction (Torres, 2012), as well as their perspectives of sexual diversity (Cruz, 2016; Larios, et al., 2016) were analyzed. Moreover, heteronormative practices and discourses have been explored in teachers' colleges in Mexico City (Cruz, 2020). Similarly, Bautista (2020) reflects on the construction of heteronormativity and violence based on sexual identity and orientation in the Mexican school setting. Lastly, queer students' attitudes towards LGBT+-inclusive/exclusive teaching practices have been recently explored (Espinoza and Rodríguez, 2020).

Overall, not only are most queer educational studies in the Mexican context mainly conducted in higher education but are also confined to homophobia and homophobic bullying; pupils and educators' sexual identities construction; and the teachers' perspectives regarding sexual diversity. Besides, most of them are focused on male and female homosexuality only. Just like most queer EFL studies, these Mexican studies were focused on attitudes, perspectives, and/or personal experiences of either teachers or students. Consequently, teachers' queer-related knowledge; personal/professional experiences dealing with these issues; and the factors they

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believe may hinder/facilitate the inclusion/exclusion of queer issues are also missing in the Mexican educational context. Therefore, moving from gay and lesbian issues only, research on how queer content is incorporated/excluded from the Mexican educational context along with its implications is necessary. Thus, the relevance of this queer research study in the EFL field lies in filling this epistemic gap.

CHAPTER 3. METHOD

The purpose of this research is twofold: to explore EFL teachers' conceptions and ideologies towards incorporating queer content into their classrooms, and to examine their knowledge in queer issues across levels and contexts. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What degree of LGBTQ+-related knowledge, as well as professional and personal experiences, do EFL teachers have?
2. What are EFL teachers' conceptions and ideologies towards including LGBTQ+-related content in EFL classrooms?
3. What factors do EFL teachers believe influence the inclusion/exclusion of LGBTQ+-related topics and materials into their teaching practice?

This chapter aims to describe the methodology employed in this study in four sections. First, the research design of the study will be presented in section 3.2. The following section (3.3) will describe in detail the context of the study, as well as the sampling procedures. Sections 3.4 and 3.4 will outline the techniques and procedures followed for the data collection and analysis, respectively. Lastly, section 3.5 will present the procedures followed to ensure trustworthiness in this study.

3.1 Research approach and design

It is evident that qualitative research has proliferated in recent studies focusing on queer themes in language education (Paiz, 2015; Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016; Coda, 2017; Rhodes & Coda, 2017; Lin, Trakulkasemsuk, & Zilli, 2020). Yet, there is no agreement in the literature as to what methodologies a queer study should adopt. Moreover, Plummer (2005) believes that a particular method should not confine queer theory, and states that "in its most general form, queer theory is

a refusal of all orthodox methods- a certain disloyalty to conventional disciplinary methods" (p. 366). Instead, methodologies can be "queered" as they are used to question normativity and the human subject's nature (Browne & Nash, 2010).

Thus, when making methodological choices, the queer perspective, the local context, and the objective of this research study were considered. As González-Ugalde (2014) suggests, when research seeks to understand the qualitative diverse ways in which a group of people experiences a phenomenon, the phenomenographic research design is convenient to use. Whereas phenomenography has been widely used in educational and language studies in diverse contexts (Johnston, Partridge, & Hughes, 2014; Chan, 2017; Norberg et al., 2018; Sandoval-Cruz et al., 2022), it has not been used to investigate queer issues in language education. Therefore, a qualitative design with a phenomenographic methodology was employed in this study to explore EFL teachers' conceptions towards incorporating queer content into their classrooms.

Phenomenography serves both as a theoretical perspective and a methodological approach for research. It was proposed as such by Marton in 1981. However, the roots of this research approach can be found in an earlier study conducted by Marton and Säljö in 1976, who wanted to investigate the relationship between students' diverse ways of approaching the task of reading a text, and their understanding of it. The final consolidation of phenomenography as a research method to investigate the relationship between pupils' learning outcomes and how they approach and conceive phenomena is attributable to diverse publications (Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Marton & Tsui, 2004; and Bowden & Green, 2005), and overall, an increasing interest in conducting phenomenographic research in the 90s and early 2000s (González-Ugalde, 2014).

As a qualitative research approach, phenomenology should not be confused with phenomenography. The former aims to describe the complete richness of individual experience, whereas phenomenography aims to identify and describe the qualitatively and collectively diverse ways phenomena are experienced, understood, and perceived (González-Ugalde, 2014). Indeed, the focus then is not on those who experience, nor on what is experienced, but on the relation between the subjects and the phenomenon, that is, how the phenomenon in question is experienced (Bowden, 2005). Moreover, the unit of analysis of phenomenography are conceptions, which can be defined as the minimal units of experience a person is conscious of

and can verbalize through discourse (Feldon & Tofel-Grehl, 2018). I understand conceptions as the self-conscious varied perceptions of a phenomenon.

According to Bowden and Green (2005), for any given phenomenon there will be a limited number of qualitatively different forms it can be experienced. Thus, as experiencing can be defined as the self-conscient act of discerning aspects of a phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997), the diverse ways of experiencing are attributable to the individual perception and comprehension of a given phenomenon (Dunkin, 2000). In this matter, Marton and Booth (1997) state that there are less and more complex ways of experiencing, where the more complex ones include more aspects of the phenomenon, resulting in a deeper understanding of it. Similarly, the more aspects of a phenomenon a person can discern, the more complete their experience will be (Marton & Trigwell, 2000).

The result of a phenomenographic study is called an outcome space, where these conceptions are hierarchically arranged and grouped into categories (Marton & Booth, 1997). In the outcome space, not only do these categories describe the varied ways a phenomenon is experienced (Åkerlind, 2005a), but themes are also added to describe what is perceived across categories (Marton & Booth, 1997). Moreover, the categories in the outcome space must meet the criteria of distinction, harmony, and hierarchy proposed by Marton and Booth (1997). That is, a small number of categories must represent the variation in the experience of the phenomenon being investigated, while each one of them describes a distinctive aspect of it, affording a hierarchical organization where the most complex categories encompass the simplest ones. González-Ugalde (2014) also suggests that, through the outcome space, it is possible to assist educators to improve their teaching, so students' learning is enhanced. In this study, the outcome space will be employed to identify needs in teacher training regarding how to approach queer issues in language classrooms, so a safe learning environment for LGBTQ+ pupils is promoted.

As for how to facilitate the analysis of experiences, their referential and structural aspects are differentiated (Marton & Booth, 1997). While the referential aspect can be understood as the assigned meaning given to a particular phenomenon, the structural aspect refers to how people approach an action (Marton & Booth, 1997). In terms of learning experiences, I concur with González-Ugalde (2014) and Sandoval-Cruz et al. (2022), who understand the referential aspect as the way the students understand the object of learning, and the structural aspect as both how

they approach the act of learning, and why they do it that way. Applying these terms to the context of this study, referential aspects relate to what EFL teachers know, understand, and teach about queer issues in the language classroom, while the structural aspect relates to how they approach the act of learning and teaching these issues, as well as the reasoning that underlies these acts.

3.2 Participants and context

This study was conducted at the Autonomous University of Quintana Roo (UQRoo), a public, urban university located in the south-eastern region of Mexico. As for the number of participants in phenomenographic studies, Trigwell (2000) recommends samples of 15 to 20 participants to ensure the opportunity to discover variation while having a manageable volume of data to analyze and process effectively. Therefore, 15 participants were selected as it complies with the minimum number of participants suggested by Trigwell (2000). Moreover, based on the objective of the phenomenographic research design, participants must represent a diversity of experiences (González-Ugalde, 2014).

To do so, some of the participants were EFL teachers who are currently teaching English either as a general subject taught in a Language Center, or as a compulsory subject as part of the bachelor's degree in English Language at UQRoo. The participants were also selected from different campuses of the university across the state of Quintana Roo. Moreover, they differed in sex, sexual orientation, years of teaching experience, and the level of English they are teaching, ranging from introductory to advanced level in both the morning and evening shifts.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Data sampling procedures

A fusion between convenient and purposive sampling procedures was adopted. It was purposive as it kept a balance between men and women, combining convenient sampling as the selected professors were the ones who were available and likely to participate willingly, as well as to provide genuine answers. The sample of EFL teachers was selected from the teaching staff of the Language Center courses and the English Language bachelor's degree program at the

Autonomous University of Quintana Roo. Thus, the only inclusion criterion was to be an active EFL teacher at a university level.

3.3.2 Instrument

As the interview is the quintessential instrument for data collection in phenomenographic research design (Bowden, 2000), a semi-structured interview was used to gather data. The objective of phenomenographic interviews was to elicit and explore the inherent understandings and conceptions of the aspects of the phenomenon being investigated (Åkerlind, 2012). Likewise, the interviewees were guided to a state of metacognition, so they became conscious of how they perceive the phenomenon through the reflection of their experiences (Marton & Booth, 1997; Trigwell, 2000). Likewise, the phenomenographic interview provided flexibility in probing for the participants to elaborate on their answers and get a deeper understanding of their experiences (Prosser, 2000; González-Ugalde, 2014).

To meet these criteria, not only was the interview protocol designed following the guidelines in Marton and Booth (1997), but it also included 'how' and 'why' questions as they are necessary for the analysis of the referential and structural aspects of the phenomenon in question (González-Ugalde, 2014). While I formulated some of the questions of the interview protocol (see Appendix A), others were adapted from different preexisting instruments (Dumas, 2010; Gray, 2013; Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016) according to the phenomenographic approach. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in Spanish, the EFL teachers' mother tongue. Lastly, to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the interview protocol, the questions of the interview were evaluated by UQRoo experts in qualitative research in education and foreign language teaching following the four-phase process to Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework provided by Castillo-Montoya (2016).

3.4 Data analysis

Åkerlind (2012) states that there is variation and communality in how phenomenographic analysis is conducted. First, categories may be either constructed or discovered (Walsh, 2000). When constructing categories, these are obtained from the application of pre-existing categories

or theories; differently from discovering categories where these emerge from the data (Walsh, 2000). This study adopted a discovery approach since this is the most accepted approach in most phenomenographic studies (Marton & Booth, 1997; Walsh, 2000; Åkerlind, 2012; González-Ugalde, 2014).

Second, there is variation in approaching phenomenographic data analysis as an individual or collaborative research process. Although phenomenography is commonly conducted by individual scholars (Åkerlind, 2005b), the relevance of a collaborative process for data analysis is highlighted to enhance reliability as the data is analyzed under different perspectives (Åkerlind, 2012; González-Ugalde, 2014). Therefore, I was working on my own and constantly collaborating with my thesis advisor, Dr. Perales-Escudero, who has experience with phenomenography, to conduct and validate the data analysis. These moments of individual and collaborative analysis comply with the suggestions for phenomenographic data analysis and codification (Walsh, 2000; Åkerlind, 2005a).

As for the features of phenomenographic data analysis, there is an agreement that it is an iterative and comparative process (Marton, 1986; Walsh, 2000; Åkerlind, 2005c; Bowden, 2005). Thus, the analysis involved a constant checking of the emerging categories against the data. Likewise, since a significant amount of data is usually obtained from phenomenographic interviews, I first started the analysis of a subset of interview transcripts, so I could generate a tentative set of categories before proceeding to analyze the remaining ones (González-Ugalde, 2014).

Lastly, there is a variation in the ways of presenting the outcome space. However, in the outcome space, the categories must represent the varied ways the phenomenon being investigated is experienced (Åkerlind, 2005c). In this study, the experiential categories were hierarchically arranged from the most complex ones to the least elaborate and complete ones. Moreover, to increase the trustworthiness of the results, a detailed description of the procedure for constructing the outcome space is provided below. This is a frequent practice in qualitative studies as it allows the reader to evaluate the quality of the analysis as well as the methodological choices taken to obtain the results (González-Ugalde, 2014).

The procedure that was followed for the data analysis is described in detail as follows:

1.   I transcribed all the interviews using Microsoft Word ©.

2. I randomly selected five transcripts to read meticulously, so I could generate an initial set of categories and codes. To achieve this, I used Microsoft Excel © to contrast the similarities and differences among the selected transcripts, so the conceptions that are alike were grouped into categories and themes (Åkerlind, 2005b).

3. As a phenomenographic validation, the initial set of categories were audited and validated by Dr. Perales-Escudero (Walsh, 2000). In this process, he applied the tentative codes I had generated to the uncoded transcripts to verify if he could find them in the same places. The initial categories were refined based on the results of the audit.

4. The resulting coding scheme and categories was applied to the remaining interview transcripts. As new categories emerged, the categories and themes were refined. This involved an iterative process where the new emerging categories and themes were constantly contrasted against the transcripts and existing codes (Marton, 1986; Walsh, 2000; Åkerlind, 2005c; Bowden, 2005). Then I made the necessary modifications.

5. The preliminary outcome space was also be audited and validated by Dr. Perales-Escudero as he applied it to a set of five interviews randomly selected (Walsh, 2000). No modifications were needed as he found it adequately descriptive.

6. After the phenomenographic analysis was done, I proceeded to identify teachers' ideologies from a discovery approach as they emerged from the interviewees' answers and using another column of the Excel © spreadsheet. Specifically, ideologies were identified through expressions of feelings and attitudes (Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010), and based on four basic categories to examine an ideological discourse proposed by Van Dijk (2005). In this case, I read the interview transcripts meticulously to examine references to the context and the adherence to a group, as well as the participants' stance regarding queer inclusion/exclusion based on the repetition of modals of obligation they employed to verbalize their ideological discourse (VanDijk, 2005; Despagne & Sánchez, 2021)

3.5 Trustworthiness, validity, and potential biases

Regardless of the research design, conducting research involves producing reliable and valid results that contribute to developing knowledge in a field of study. While validity refers to how well the results accurately reflect the data, reliability is concerned with the methodological procedures' trustworthiness, quality, and consistency (Noble & Smith, 2015). Hence, "trustworthiness", "authenticity" and "credibility" have been proposed as synonyms to describe the characteristics that ensure rigor to a research project (Levitt et al., 2018). What is more, validity and reliability are applied differently to qualitative from quantitative research (Noble & Smith, 2015).

In qualitative research, validity refers to how accurately the findings reflect the phenomenon being studied (Åkerlind, 2012). To achieve this, some validation strategies are found in the qualitative literature such as combining different data sources (data triangulation) and using feedback from the people studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). Nevertheless, these cannot be applied to phenomenographic research as interviews are typically used as the sole data source in phenomenography (Åkerlind, 2005a) and are only complemented with other sources like open questionnaires, for instance, when the number of participants is considerable so interviewing all of them is inviable (Ellis, Goodyear, Brillant & Prosser, 2008). Similarly, using participants' feedback is also considered as an inappropriate data validity check as interviewees' individual experience fails to capture the full range of experience of the phenomenon since their perception is partial (Åkerlind, 2012). In contrast, audits of coding were used to enhance validity as it complies with the leading type of phenomenographic validation (Walsh, 2000).

Furthermore, in qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the possible replicability of the results if other researchers were to repeat the original study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, reproducing results may be unfeasible in qualitative research since the social world is unsteady (Sin, 2010). In contrast, Morse (2006) argues that the purpose of replicability is not to get identical results, but to revisit a phenomenon attempting to make a new appraisal. In this sense, replicability relates to providing data and a detailed description of the steps that were followed to obtain the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) allowing the reader to reconstruct the entire process. Likewise, providing a detailed description of the outcome space construction is a common practice in phenomenography that ensures credibility and differentiates it from other types of qualitative research (Gonzales-Ugalde, 2014). Thus, this research study complies with

this criterion through the meticulous documentation of every methodological choice made regarding data collection and analysis, which can be found in sections 3.4 and 3.5 of this chapter.

In research, the potential influence of social context and norms over the participants' responses is also usually acknowledged as a major issue (Grim, 2010). This is known as social desirability bias, which can be defined as the tendency of providing answers that are aligned with what is perceived as socially acceptable and desirable (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). Minimizing this bias is imperative as it is prevalent in research that focuses on socially sensitive issues where there are established values, behaviors, or norms (Grimm, 2010). The influence of social desirability in studies that deal with queer inclusion/exclusion in language education is relevant as dealing with gender and sexuality issues in ELT is perceived as necessary among educators and scholars due to the critical turn in this field (Paiz, 2019).

In this study, socially desired responses are likely to be present during the interviews if I were to conduct them since I am gay, and some teachers are aware of my queer identity. Thus, this may cause interviewees to respond based on what they perceive will please me or will avoid offending me. In addition, there are other reasons that are likely to cause social desirability bias: 1) in the past few years, the need for queer inclusion has been widely promoted in the educational field (Cornejo, 2019; Barrientos et al., 2021; Morales-Rodríguez, 2021), 2) there is a culture of zero tolerance for gender-based violence, as well as for sexual assault and harassment fostered among the teaching staff and students at UQRoo (Universidad Autónoma de Quintana Roo, 2012).

Consequently, my thesis advisor served as the interviewer to gather the data attempting to minimize this bias. Likewise, the results in Bergen and Labonté (2021), suggest that with a clear and better understanding of the objectives of the study, participants' notion of the interview as an assessment of their performance may be dispelled. Thus, before the interviews start, the purpose of the research, the data analysis procedure, as well as the confidentiality and anonymity procedures were explained in detail. Then the interviewer proceeded to conduct and record the interviews through one-on-one video calls on the Microsoft Teams © platform, following Bergen and Labonté's (2021) suggestion of carrying out the interview in a private space and out of earshot of others.

Researcher bias is also likely to intrude when analyzing the data (Walsh, 2000); therefore, it was also be limited. A team process to refine the set of categories was used to

overcome this bias as suggested by Walsh (2000). Similarly, as I am a novice researcher, Dr. Perales' supervision as an experienced phenomenographer throughout the data analysis was of utmost importance to minimize this bias and for quality assurance (Sin, 2010). Moreover, to eschew unintended errors during the data analysis process attributable to my expectancies or preconceived beliefs, I acknowledged and explicitly deal with my subjectivity as a novice researcher, so it does not infiltrate the interpretation process. This is also known as researcher's interpretative awareness (Åkerlind, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to state my perception of English language learning as a salient liberating process through which pupils can express their queer identity appropriately and safely as they have access to sociocultural resources that allow them to (re)construct and embrace their identities. As my perception of English language learning could make me look for or highlight data that reinforce it, not only did I bracket my own conceptions and was mindful of their influence on my interpretations, but I analyzed the phenomenon from the respondents' experiences as much as possible (González-Ugalde, 2014). Moreover, different strategies to check and control this were employed including external audits and team coding for the construction of the categories of description and the outcome space.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the phenomenographic analysis are presented and discussed. I found 532 conceptions regarding the various ways the participants experienced queer inclusion/exclusion in the EFL context. These conceptions were hierarchically grouped into four experiential categories: heteronormative, nonchalant, activist, and critical. Table 1 below presents the main elements of the outcome space where the categories are found in the first column while the perceived themes are the labels of the second, third, and fourth column. There is variation in how the themes were conceived across the experiential categories, including the intention behind queer inclusion/exclusion, the involvement of educational authorities regarding educational policies, the provision of teaching training, and curriculum design, as well as the influence of how the participants perceive society and experience the lifeworld. The number of conceptions associated with a specific category can also be found under the name of each experiential category. Moreover, the last column presents the distribution of the participants across the experiential categories where their main and achieved categories are identified. While

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the main category refers to the one each participant has the highest number of conceptions associated with, the achieved category refers to the most sophisticated category for which a participant has expressed at least one conception. As shown in the table below, the conceptions of the same participant are not restricted to a specific category but distributed in more than one.

Table 1. The outcome space.

Themes → Categories ↓	Purpose	Agency of education authorities	Influence of society/lifeworld	Participants
Heteronormative (197 / 37%)	To conform to heteronormativity	Policies, teacher training, and teaching resources regarding inclusive education excluding queerness Heteronormative EFL curriculum/materials Academic freedom for queer exclusion	Perpetuation of heteronormativity Normalization of LGBTphobia Cancel culture	P1, P2*, P3*, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8*, P9*, P10*, P11, P12*, P13, P14*, P15
Nonchalant (132 / 24.8%)	To preserve the assumed normalization of queerness/queer conformity	Curriculum design where queer issues are irrelevant/incompatible with the learning goals Unintended/ambiguous policies and/or teaching resources for queer inclusion exclusively for academic purposes Academic freedom for queer inclusion if necessary	Postgay utopia	P2, P3, P4*, P5, P6, P7*, P8, P9, P10, P11*, P12, P13, P14, P15
Activist (173 / 32.5%)	To make queer people and other social groups part of the accepted reality	Policy of respect as part of the code of behavior Intended queer representation in the EFL curriculum/materials Academic freedom for queer inclusion	Social progress and a better understanding of queerness Resistance to homophobia The invisibility of other social groups	P1*, P2**, P3, P4**, P5*, P6*, P7**, P8**, P9**, P10, P11**, P12, P13***, P14, P15***

		Teacher training for queer inclusion		
Critical (30 / 5.6%)	To respectfully subvert established norms as a form of intersectional justice	Specific policies for queer inclusion (e.g., preferred pronouns)

Academic freedom for inclusion of diversity | Perpetuation of intersectional inequality | P1**, P3**, P5**, P6**, P7**, P10**, P12**, P14** |
| | To enable students to coexist peacefully with others | Teacher training for inclusive education | | |

*Main category
**Achieved category
***Both main and achieved category

Source: Own elaboration

The heteronormative category is the most prevalent one, yet the least complex. This category includes conceptions focused on either the perceived normalization of cisgender heterosexuality within the education system or its actual, un/intentional enforcement. Differently, the conceptions grouped in the nonchalant category accept and recognize queerness yet endorse queer conformity to the heteronormative educational environment. The third category is the activist one as it groups conceptions focused on the de-marginalization of queerness. The critical category is the most complex one and inclusive of the others. This category includes conceptions that are not confined to queerness and LGBTphobia but address diversity along with the reinforcement of intersectional inequality through the use of inclusive language. The outcome space in Table 1 along with specific examples is further discussed below.

4.1 Heteronormative conceptions

This category is labelled "heteronormative" since it groups conceptions that either encourage or perceive institutionalized practices that normalize cisgender heterosexuality and traditional

gender roles within school spaces. Heteronormativity may operate explicitly as it intentionally invalidates and represses anything that falls outside of the expected cisgender heterosexuality. P12 was the only one who expressed a repressing heteronormative conception of queer exclusion as illustrated in example 1 below.

(1) Como te vuelvo a reiterar mi postura de respeto a las personas sin importar el género o preferencias sexuales, yo considero que, a final de cuentas, no debemos promover ese tipo de familias, por así decirlo, que son pues con dos padres del mismo género, ya sean masculino o femenino. A mi punto de vista no es correcto normalizarlo o promoverlo. Más que normalizarlo, promoverlo… sabemos que muchas veces esas conductas o esas preferencias sexuales son a raíz de un abuso, a raíz de un evento desafortunado en diferentes etapas de la vida, a veces en la infancia, a veces en la pubertad, que es lo que encamina al sujeto a despertar ciertos intereses o preferencias sexuales. [P12]

Curiously, all the 15 participants who expressed or perceived a heteronormative resistance to queer inclusion in the educational system affirmed having somewhat positive orientations towards the LGBTQ+ community. This is illustrated in example 1 where P12 expresses tolerance for queer people despite treating homosexual family configuration as deviant. Simultaneously, example 2 shows how P12's perception of queer inclusion as unadvisable stems from an ill-informed understanding of queerness, which results in an empathic attitude towards queerness where LGBTQ+ students are positioned as pitiable (Clark and Blackburn, 2009).

(2) Entonces, esta persona no es culpable de lo que le pasó; sin embargo, tiene que vivir con las consecuencias, y esas consecuencias no deberían ser motivo para tacharlos o para etiquetarlos en la sociedad, pero tampoco debería ser motivo para promover ese tipo de familias o ese tipo de preferencias. Respetarlos, sí, pero no promoverlo. [P12]

Although this is not the case, the potential danger of this ill-informed understanding of queerness for LGBTQ+ people should be noted because, in other circumstances, homophobia may come into play and exacerbate this intentional repression. In this category, heteronormativity may also operate implicitly since it causes us to expect heterosexuality everywhere we look without realization. These subconscious heterosexual expectations may cause teachers (either straight or queer) to silence queer experiences and make them invisible. Often, this invisibility is not deliberate nor necessarily intertwined with homophobia. This is illustrated in example 3 where a student's lesbian experience is invisible to P11 as it falls outside of the heteronormative discourse.

(3) Entonces, por ejemplo, en las clases algunas veces alguna alumna me dice que: "Mi novia me regaló tal cosa", ¿no? Y yo corrijo: "Tu novio", y me dice: "No, no. Mi novia". Entonces ya. "¡Ah, sí!" Pues ya no corrijo ni nada. No es error de palabra sino de, o sea, no es error, digo, sino simplemente me están clarificando. Y ya también alguna cuestión así con los muchachos… Entonces, pero yo no pienso que (yo) sea homofóbica, ¿eh? Para nada… O sea, simplemente no lo había notado. [P11]

As stated before, this category is not constrained to the actual, un/intentional oppression of queerness within the school system as exemplified by P11 and P12, but it encompasses conceptions about the perceived normalization of heteronormativity as expressed by the rest of the participants. The next paragraphs turn attention to these conceptions found in each specific theme within the category. As for the involvement of education authorities, conceptions in this theme include references to how heterosexual expectations are promoted on campus (example 4), in the syllabi (examples 5 and 6), and even among language teachers (example 7).

(4) la representación que existe en la imagen institucional, ¿no? Que son estos pequeños frames que realmente empiezan a volverse parte de lo rutinario, ¿okay? Yo creo que, si bien no se ensalza la heterosexualidad, eso es lo habitual. [P6]
(5) Creo que los materiales educativos todavía tienen esta idea de masculino, femenino, y eso es todo. [P1]
(6) Pues, en los materiales solo está la familia tradicional. Si acaso, familia así de 1 mamá, o 1 abuela y el nieto, y así, pero LGBT, no. [P3]
(7) En el CEI existen profesores que pertenecen a la comunidad LGBT, yo siento, y es un sentir, que los fuerzan a una hetero imagen cuando están en una clase, ¿no? Y lo hacen porque quieren evitar el trabajo que conlleva hacer entender a las personas que no hay nada mal con una preferencia o con una identificación. O sea, ajá, este proceso que acabo de describir que parece complejo, realmente ya es un hábito, es parte del hábito. Y siento que, tal vez, algunos de ellos, inconsciente o, tal vez, como olla de presión, tengo que hacerlo así, ¿no? Y no, realmente es parte de una heteronormatividad. [P6]

Moreover, teacher training on queer inclusion is almost nonexistent. As shown in example 8, the teacher training some participants have received on inclusive education has been focused on students' differences and diversity excluding gender and sexual diversity. Only P2, P6, and P7 expressed receiving teacher training on queer issues which was provided by other educational institutions they work for but the university. However, they explained that this training was plain, and primarily focused on LGBTQ+ vocabulary or protocols for addressing homophobic bullying (examples 9, 10, and 11).

(8) Con respecto a este tema, no. De hecho, no nos ha, no he visto algún curso relacionado con este tema porque tratan, de los cursos que he visto sobre la inclusión, pues son de manera general. No específicamente sobre este grupo. [P4]

(9) Yo estoy colaborando con un colegio privado en la ciudad. Y entonces nos dieron un pequeño... No fue un taller, fue una serie de charlas sobre justamente todas estas, todas estas representaciones, ¿no? De preferencias. [P2]

(10) En la preparatoria donde yo trabajo, que usted sabe que es una preparatoria pública, nos mantenemos informados con artículos. Sí, tenemos un protocolo... Sí, en realidad no sólo es con el aspecto de la homofobia, sino comprender precisamente a la comunidad LGBT. Debo decir que muchas veces es lo mismo... Esa capacitación es lo mismo que puedo hacer yo buscando información en la red. [P6]

(11) Pero sí hemos tomado cursos relacionados a justamente la inclusión, en la preparatoria en la que yo trabajo. En sí, este curso fue relacionado con la sexualidad… Y nos dieron igual ciertos detallitos de cómo apoyar ese tipo de personas… Realmente lo que nosotros vimos realmente fue muy ligero. [P7]

In example 12, P6 expresses how teachers may also un/intentionally cloak their heteronormative conceptions by invoking the right to academic freedom so they can refuse to include queer issues and representation. Furthermore, this participant is concerned about a parental negative reaction to queer inclusion due to the lack of educational policies on the matter (example 13). Moreover, P14 conceives queer inclusion as an imprudent act since no legal backing justifies it (example 14).

(12) Si te incomoda el tema, yo creo que como profesor tú tienes la libertad de eliminar lo que tú consideres. [P6]

(13) Entonces, yo creo que, si yo contara con el respaldo institucional, que todo está documentado, informado y lo que sea, a este nivel educativo de nivel superior no tendría ningún problema de la cuestión de la intervención de los padres. [P6]

(14) Entonces, hasta este instante no hay nada regulado o no hay nada que hable acerca de esta comunidad dentro de las leyes, ¿no? Entonces, yo creo que ante ese punto y en el punto en que la sociedad todavía también es bastante cerrada a este respecto, yo creo que no sería prudente el incluir este tipo de material (queer). [P14]

In this category, the influence of society and lifeworld is regarded as a negative force that actively hinders the inclusion and visibility of sexual diversity in the educational sphere. Specifically, participants 10 and 11 experienced the prevalence of heteronormativity as well as the normalization of homophobic bullying in Mexican society as major suppressors of queerness in the language classroom (examples 15, 16, and 17).

(15) Pero aquí en México… no podemos ignorar que seguimos viviendo en una sociedad machista, en una sociedad heteronormada y con casos de homofobia, que se tiene que trabajar en ese aspecto. [P10]

(16) El sistema educativo es muy difícil porque (el acoso homofóbico) lo vemos como algo normal. No hay proceso, no hay protocolo para atender estos casos de discriminación, y en este caso particular, inclusive con el bullying. [P10]

(17) Primero tenemos que enseñarle a la sociedad, abrirles la mente a la sociedad para que puedan aceptarlos, si no… entonces seguirá habiendo burlas, violencias, y de más, bullying. ¿Por qué? Porque no entienden. Entonces, sí es importante que toda la comunidad estudiantil esté en el mismo canal. [P13]

These factors combined create an atmosphere where LGBTQ+ people are coerced to change and/or conceal their queer identities as they do not agree with the prescribed versions of gender and sexual identity as exemplified by P2 (example 18). Likewise, P9 explains that the same result is produced in schools as queer teachers actively choose to hide that part of their identity (example 19).

(18) Bueno, hay como que dos momentos en mi vida. El primero, cuando era muy joven, lo primero que sentí fue mucha vergüenza, mucha pena por el rechazo, ¿no? Me puse a llorar, ¿no? Recuerdo, en la calle, y me sentí así por dentro muy muy mal, como destrozada como... Y lo que hice a partir de eso fue como que tratar de cambiar ciertos comportamientos, ¿no? Por ejemplo, yo recuerdo que a partir de un episodio muy, muy fuerte en mi vida empecé, por ejemplo, a maquillarme, ¿no? Con tal de que tuviera yo una aceptación. Empecé a utilizar aretes, ¿no? [P2]

(19) Incluso maestras, puede haber que haya gente lesbiana. Entonces, sienten ese temor de que, si lo dicen, ¿no? Entonces van a ser juzgadas por toda la sociedad. [P9]

As explained by P9 and P8, cancel culture was also understood to play a major role in keeping the classroom environment heteronormative. Examples 20 and 21 illustrate how teachers may be "canceled" for including queer representation since this act might be perceived as unacceptable according to Mexican social norms and values.

(20) Podría incluso ser juzgado tú por implementar ese material (queer)… Tú lo puedes ver en las redes sociales, ¿no? Que, por ejemplo, si alguien piensa de alguna forma, ¿no? Que pueda haber una pareja homosexual que pueda adoptar, ¿no? La gente se te brinca, empiezan los comentarios, ¿no? De odio [P9]

(21) Igual el aspecto de las represalias… pues esto de que México todavía es un país conservador, que tenemos este yugo hasta cierto punto de que la religión dicta muchas normas sociales, y pues he visto muchas historias de gente que básicamente, pues ahora sí que el termino popular de "funar a la gente". [P8]

As shown paragraphs above, the purposes of this experiential category are varied. However, they all converge at the same point, to conform to heteronormativity. The reasons for complying with heterosexual expectations include, from most to least prevalent, avoiding conflict, following the (heteronormative) curriculum, so as not to hurt either homophobic or closeted students' sensitivities, avoiding misinforming, avoiding the hassle of challenging heteronormativity, and so as not to promote sexual deviation.

4.2 Nonchalant conceptions

This category encompasses conceptions of queer inclusion/exclusion as preserving LGBTQ+ students' conformity to the heteronormative school environment. This involves acknowledging students' gender and sexual diversity, yet conserving school spaces heteronormative. This is a key difference from the previous category where participants holding heteronormative conceptions perceived queer inclusion as unadvisable. In this category, participants are unconcerned with either the inclusion or exclusion of queer issues and visibility in the classrooms, hence the label 'nonchalant'. Moreover, they are not necessarily influenced by heteronormativity, rather, they downplay the effects of the heteronormative educational system on queer learners.

As for the influence of society/lifeworld, the increasing LGBTQ+ representation in mass media, as well as the introduction of more equitable rights for queer people worldwide may create the illusion of a postgay utopia where queer people are socially accepted, and homophobia is an issue of the past (Ghaziani, 2011). In this category, P4 perceived this utopian society, and therefore a school environment, where students' queer identities are acknowledged and respected. She illustrates how queer inclusion then becomes an unnecessary act since not only are all students already included in the classroom regardless of their gender and sexual orientation (example 22), but they also have positive orientations toward the LGBTQ+ community (example 23).

(22) Pues como te digo, pues el trato es básicamente el mismo. O sea, no hago distinción alguna de esas y pues tampoco ando viendo si es de este o no. Entonces, no, no hago alguna diferencia entre uno y otro grupo. [P4]
(23) Pues a lo mejor (no ha incluido discusiones sobre asuntos queer) porque tengo grupos bastante open-minded, entonces yo creo que son bastantes conscientes de este tema.

Furthermore, a postgay school environment may be underpinned by students' unconcern about queer inclusion since, as stated by P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, and P15, students have never requested queer representation in the teaching materials. Nevertheless, it should be noted that since heteronormativity socializes us to expect cisgender heterosexuality everywhere, LGBTQ+ students may simply conform to rather than agree with queer invisibility in the EFL materials. P4 expressed that this queer conformity may also be attributable to students' unawareness of the design of teaching materials.

Moreover, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, and P15 stated they have never witnessed homophobic bullying among students, which supports the illusion of a queer-affirmative school environment. However, P8 (example 24) explains that this lack of experience with homophobic bullying as well as teacher training on queer issues may contribute to teachers' inability to identify homophobic behavior.

(24) Al menos entre los estudiantes no lo he visto (bullying homofóbico). Y tal vez hasta eso, tal vez desconozco las características de cómo se vería pues ahora sí que una de estas discriminaciones, ¿no?

Therefore, in order to preserve this assumed normalization of queerness in school spaces, treating all students equally regardless of their gender and sexual identities is thus a strategy in this experiential category. It is noteworthy that this queer-inclusive practice inevitably encompasses a form of exclusion as it fails to challenge the existence of heteronormativity, and instead, it embraces the notion of a postgay utopian society. Adhering rigidly to the curriculum also becomes a queer-exclusive practice since the materials found in the syllabi happen to be heteronormative as discussed in the first experiential category. On the same issue, P15 (example 25) refers to queer exclusion as a justifiable act since they are incompatible and irrelevant to the learning goals of the English courses.

(25) Al final, la razón o, ajá, el objetivo de los textos de inglés es otro, es aprender un idioma, ¿no? No esos temas (queer)… Yo también considero que las personas que son miembros

de esta comunidad no deberían sentirse incómodas si no se representa en los libros de texto, ¿no? No veo por qué [P15]

Simultaneously, some participants were not only aware of the ambiguity of some EFL materials, but also unconcerned by the fact that this may be seen as LGBTQ+ representation (example 26). As for policies, participants showed awareness of their nebulous nature and how they can be implemented to include/exclude queer issues in the educational system (example 27). Furthermore, it was perceived as admissible for a professor to plead for academic freedom to implement queer, inclusive/exclusive practices (example 28).

(26) De repente sí ha habido, por ejemplo, en diálogos, me acuerdo cuando en el "Interchange", sí había diálogos, pero yo creo que tiene que ver con errores de redacción. No que esté mal redactado, sino que la manera en la que se redactó podría ser un poco ambigua, y alguien que está consciente de esas cosas pues dirá: "Ay, aquí puede haber algo así (queer)", pero no creo que haya sido intensional. [P3]
(27) Pues yo no creo que haya un reglamento, o sea, no creo que exista un mandato escrito o no escrito de temas que podemos tocar y no tocar. [P6]
(28) Ya va a ser decisión o, sí, decisión de cada maestro si decide incluir esos temas en su enseñanza. [P4]

4.3 Activist conceptions

This category groups conceptions focused on the need for inclusive practices regarding sexuality matters, which seek the de-marginalization of sexual diversity by queering the English language curriculum. Participants holding these conceptions advocate mainly for the visibility of the queer community, as well as other communities—black, indigenous, religious—in published EFL coursebooks and materials (example 29). The need for this representation is highlighted since the absence of these communities in these teaching resources has been confirmed by the participants. These conceptions are also corrective as they acknowledge the perpetuation of heteronormativity in the educational system and attempt to de-heterosexualize the EFL curriculum and resources.

(29) Sí, claramente es muy importante que haya representación, no sólo de las personas LGBTQ+ sino de todos los tipos de persona. No importa la raza, el género, ahora sí que la religión, etc., porque muchas veces eso es lo que hace falta, ¿no? O sea, realmente el hecho que no te puedas ver reflejado ya sea en, pues ahora sí que muchas veces se habla de películas y todo eso, pero al menos en este caso, en los materiales de algo que estas aprendiendo que se supone que te sirve para ti, pues ahora sí que hasta cierto punto diría

que te desajena un poquito, que te aleja, de que te dice: "Mira, esto es lo que las personas hacen con el idioma, pero pues son personas que no son como tú", ¿no? Lo cual, hasta cierto punto, yo diría que es algo erróneo que se tiene que corregir a un grado de que digas: "Mira, vamos a intentar incluir a la mayor cantidad de personas posible" [P8]

The advocacy of queer inclusion involves presenting pupils with LGBTQ+ content and individuals as part of the accepted reality in all times, cultures, and societies, and/or encouraging the educational community to engage with and respect them. For instance, P1 included a recorded interview with an LGBTQ+ activist as part of her teaching materials. P3 not only condemned disrespect/hate speech in the classroom but also promoted respect among the students as part of the code of behavior stated in the syllabi just like P7. Incorporating LGBTQ+ representation in the learning materials and promoting respect for non-heteronormative identities are thus strategies in this conception.

(30) Incluso, por ejemplo, yo traté de abordar en una, en una clase, tratamos de hablar de Lady Gaga, que es una embajadora de los derechos de las personas LGBT, y básicamente, bueno para todos era practicar la voz, reported speech, perdón. [P1]
(31) Bueno, te decía que siempre al inicio de mis clases, yo establezco las reglas de, pues de comportamiento, y siempre digo que en la clase se puede tolerar todo menos las faltas de respeto, y ahí siempre, siempre incluyo la parte de, pues yo creo que se podría llamar LGBTI+… Y que en mi clase nunca se va a permitir un discurso de odio hacia nadie. [P3]
(32) Pero como siempre, al menos al inicio de la clase, siempre se les lee el syllabus y el respeto, etc. [P7]

As for academic freedom, in this category, it was understood as an opportunity to incorporate LGBTQ+ teaching materials and inclusive practices in the EFL classroom without facing the potential dangers of being discriminated against or receiving unfavorable reactions from parents or society for doing so. Because of this institutional right, most participants showed a willingness to incorporate queer content deliberately; however, only P1 has done so. Despite holding activist conceptions, this reflects not only discouragement to take the first step to queer the EFL classroom, but also a lack of specialized training in dealing with queer issues. As stated before, only P2, P6, and P7 acknowledged being trained in queer issues focused merely on LGBTQ+ vocabulary or protocols for addressing homophobic bullying by other educational institutions but the university. Although this basic knowledge is useful to shape a safer classroom for all, it is imperative for teachers to receive further specialized training in the future.

More importantly, participants' behavior showed that being knowledgeable of LGBTQ+ issues and considering students' queer identities as a normal component of the language classroom does not necessarily mean being an active advocate of queer inclusion. This suggests they might overlap the notions of nondiscrimination and support since only one of them has intentionally added queer representation to the teaching materials while the others have simply promoted respect for all students—including queer ones. This may not only unintentionally perpetuate the social and educational invisibility of the LGBTQ+ community but also foster an unconscious reluctance to include queer-related content in the EFL curriculum.

Regarding the influence of society, it has a positive impact on the participants' understanding of queerness since they deem LGBTQ+ people as part of the reality of today's society. Moreover, the participants consider queer inclusion as an imperative act due to the progressive nature of, as well as a better understanding of sexual diversity in our current society and in the communities that the English language represents (example 33). Participants holding activist conceptions are also influenced by the increased visibility of the LGBTQ+ community on social media (example 34). Furthermore, examples 34 to 36 illustrate how P10 and P6 advocate for the normalization of queerness since they acknowledge the fact that the LGBTQ+ community along with other social groups have been silent and oppressed for decades.

(33) Bueno, realmente pues, ya vivimos en una sociedad diferente en el siglo XXI. Hay que comprender la diversidad que hay en la sociedad. [P10]

(34) Que hay una comunidad que vive entre nosotros que ha sido invisibilizada por muchos años, y actualmente, pues ya han más apertura en todas partes. Quizás no la apertura que desearíamos, pero ya hay más apertura en los medios de comunicación, en el internet, en las redes sociales donde estas comunidades tienen un espacio para manifestarse. [P10]

(35) Bueno, es que hay varias comunidades, por ejemplo, los afroamericanos, la cuestión de los pueblos indígenas, no son representados… Y creo que sí es muy importante que incluya a la comunidad lésbico/gay, pero también a otros sectores que han sido ignorados por muchos años. [P10]

(36) Yo creo que trabajamos con una comunidad viva que evoluciona con el tiempo y no podemos decir que lo que, durante muchísimos años, 2000 años más o menos, a partir del catolicismo implementado y el colonialismo o lo que sea, se normó, no creo en estos tiempos debamos estar cerrados a que existen diferentes formas de expresión… Yo creo que los gustos de, o las preferencias, o la identificación de género de las personas es algo muy personal, y yo siento que todos deberían de tener la libertad de... Así como yo tengo la libertad de venir y no preocuparme realmente por mi identidad sexual al momento que realizo mi trabajo, yo creo que eso es algo que todos deberían sentir, ¿no? [P6]

It is also noteworthy that social progress along with the participants' personal experiences with sexual diversity issues have had a transformative impact on their conceptions. As previously shown in example 18, P1 would hold heteronormative conceptions as she would conceal her queer identity to comply with heterosexual expectations. However, the experience of exploring a queer-accepting and sympathetic university environment while studying abroad caused her conceptions to change from heteronormative to activist ones (example 37). This was made possible through her training as a language teacher. Example 38 illustrates how the influence of society alongside the lifeworld is hence perceived as a driving force for resisting homophobic behavior.

(37) Y entonces, cuando salgo de la ciudad a estudiar a otro lado a la universidad, pues por supuesto mi forma de ver la vida cambia. Y se confirma, se abre más, se amplía cuando voy a otro país donde yo pensaba que, eso a mí se me hace muy interesante, yo antes de salir del país pensaba que sufriría peor el rechazo en otros país y fue todo lo contrario, ¿no? Ahí aprendí justamente estas cuestiones de auto valorarse, del respeto al otro, de la otredad…Y empecé a ver al individuo como eso, ¿no? Como un individuo del planeta antes de ser hombre o mujer… Sí, se lo atribuyo a eso, definitivamente (el cambio de perspectiva) [P2]

(38) Empiezo a tener, por supuesto, otros episodios homofóbicos, pero los manejo de otra manera, ¿no? Ya no me afectan… Simplemente recuerdo que en algún momento alguien hizo un comentario, yo volteé, me reí, y le dije pues "eres un tonto", ¿no? Bueno, dije otras cosas y ya. Hubo una disculpa, se rió después... Bueno, es decir, cambié en esa parte, ¿no? [P2]

As previously mentioned, the queer-inclusive practices in this experiential category are focused on representation and respect. The goals of these practices are multiple: to represent our (sexually diverse) reality, to raise students' awareness of sexual diversity as a social issue in order to strengthen human values like respect and sympathy, for all the students to be themselves freely and safely in the classroom regardless of their sexuality, to contribute to their language learning by making it more significant, and for the students to learn about the cultures associated with the English language. The different reasons for these strategies are aligned with the need to acknowledge the existence of queer individuals while weakening feelings of threat and aversion to sexual diversity among students, which otherwise may lead to homophobic and discriminatory behavior. As a result, a safer classroom for all students regardless of their gender and sexual orientation is promoted.

4.4 Critical conceptions

This category involves not only acknowledging but also subverting the social norms that perpetuate intersectional inequality verbalized through language. A key difference from the previous category is that participants' critical conceptions are not solely focused on discrimination because of sexual orientation, rather they address the convergence of multiple forms of oppression that play out in the classroom. Participants holding these conceptions showed awareness of the perpetuation of intersectional injustice due to the overlapping systems of power and oppression constructed around people's diverse identities (example 39).

(39) Bueno, es que hay varias comunidades, por ejemplo, los afroamericanos, la cuestión de los pueblos indígenas, no son representados, ¿no? Igual, los libros siempre hablan de lo "normal", lo de la cultura blanca, no hay estos espacios, y creo que sí es muy importante que incluya a la comunidad lésbico/gay, pero también a otros sectores que han sido ignorados por muchos años. [P10]

Moreover, the focus of this category moves from representation to promoting diversity. By attempting to broaden what is socially accepted as part of our reality, a focus on representation fails to undermine social norms as systems of oppression. Differently, the diversity focus of this category aims to subvert those norms as a form of intersectional justice. Questioning and reflecting on the ideologies that shape normativity and lead to different forms of discrimination are thus strategies in this category. As shown in examples 40 and 41, the goal of these strategies is to seek intersectional justice and help learners become critical thinkers.

(40) También hay casos que invitan a la reflexión, y creo que algo que queremos formar son pensantes críticos, ¿no? Hay casos de homofobia muy lamentables que han pasado. También rescatar alguna de estas situaciones y ponerlas en debate, o que los estudiantes reflexionen igual sobre esta situación…Tal vez diseñar un lesson donde se toque esta temática, bueno, con un objetivo en el idioma, el lenguaje, porque esa es la meta, ¿no? [P10]

(41) Y también lo veía con mis chicos de diseño curricular, diseño de programas de experiencia educativa. Qué tipo de información se agrega dentro de los syllabus que entregamos a los alumnos y la variedad de cosas que podemos incluir y, de hecho, dentro de la información que yo les pedí a los chicos que leyeran, estaba esa sección… Incluso, "por favor, si prefieres que te llamemos con algún pronombre en específico, hacerlo de conocimiento al profesor para no haber mal entendimientos y demás". Entonces me

decían los chicos, eso ya es un avance porque antes no lo traían. A nadie le interesaba como te hacía sentir si te llamaban de cierto pronombre o no. Entonces eso ya es un gran avance que siento que antes no se hacía, y a mí también me pareció muy muy interesante ese aspecto y también compartirlo con mis alumnos. [P1]

The focus of critical conceptions is also on language as participants showed awareness of its potential use to express discriminatory discourses, which reinforces inequality. Hence, participants appraised the inclusion of vocabulary that reflects diversity as contributing to students' language learning while enabling them to interact peacefully with diverse people. A strategy in this conception is thus providing learners with the necessary linguistic tools to coexist with others in a competent and respectful manner regardless of their diverse identities. Example 42 illustrates this.

(42) Y siento que, pues ahora sí que incluir estas temáticas ayudaría a los alumnos igual a saber, por ejemplo, términos, por ejemplo, correctos, por así decirlo, para referirse a la gente… De que, tal vez, investigar los términos correctos, apropiados de la comunidad para poder referirse a ellos, y que, pues ahora sí que poder transmitirles este conocimiento a los alumnos para que igual cuando tengan la oportunidad o tengan la necesidad de hacerlo, puedan expresarse de una manera correctamente y sin tener que recurrir, pues ahora sí que a, bueno, más bien llegar a este aspecto de decir algo, meter la pata, y ofender a alguien cuando no se quería hacer, ¿no? [P8]

Participants also expressed critical conceptions concerned with the celebration of diversity in educational policies and the EFL curriculum. They deemed their academic freedom as an instrument for developing learning environments respectful of pupils' identities and undermining norms that perpetuate inequality in those environments. This involves encouraging the pupils to re-examine the educational policies presented to them in the syllabi. This was exemplified by P1 and her students (example 41) who questioned the lack of specific policies regarding the employment of students' preferred pronouns.

As seen in example 43, the promotion of diversity in educational policies and the English curriculum was also perceived as part of the mandate of the educational authorities. There is a twofold reason for this. One conception is that educational authorities are morally accountable for promoting policies that lead to an inclusive learning environment for all students regardless of their diverse identities. Another conception is that the competency-based educational model of

the university is actually focused on meeting the needs of all learners while being respectful of their identities through holistic education. Participants also appraised teacher training on inclusive education as properly aiding educators to develop truly diverse learning spaces.

(43) Pues creo yo que sí es responsabilidad de la escuela, de la universidad incluirlo por lo mismo de que hoy en día debemos ser más inclusivos con todo tipo de personas en nuestro salón de clases. [P13]

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

This last chapter is divided into 4 sections. In section 5.1, the major findings of the study are outlined. Section 5.2 presents some pedagogical and policy implications for queering the English language classroom. Then, section 5.3 describes the limitations that emerged during this research. Finally, section 5.4 presents some recommendations for future research.

5.1 Overview of the study

In recent years, educational research addressing issues of sexuality have proliferated in the EFL context. For the most part, they focus on the need for creating safe school spaces for LGBTQ+ students due to the perpetuation of heteronormativity in these spaces. The creation of such spaces is influenced by various factors including teachers' knowledge and experiences with queer inclusion/exclusion. As for the Mexican context, specifically, there is no trace of research regarding EFL teachers' conceptions of queer inclusion/exclusion. As a result, not only the EFL field remains pervaded by heteronormativity, but queer Mexican studies with a phenomenographic approach are nonexistent. Therefore, I undertook this study to analyze how EFL teachers' experiences including/excluding queer issues influence the creation of safe learning spaces for all students. This analysis is vital to determine the future actions needed to foster an inclusive educational environment that is both welcoming and safe for all learners regardless of their sexual identities. Students are thus benefited both academically and emotionally.

The purpose of this thesis was twofold. The first objective was to explore EFL teachers' conceptions and ideologies toward incorporating/excluding queer issues in their classrooms. In

order to achieve this goal, I followed a phenomenographic methodology to conduct this study. This research method allowed me to analyze the qualitative diverse ways in which the participants experienced queer inclusion/exclusion in their classrooms and group them into experiential categories. Moreover, the examination of the conceptions revealed two opposing ideologies, heteronormative and queer. These were identified through expressions of feelings, references to the context and the ingroup, as well as modals of obligation. Thus, this goal was fully met since both participants' conceptions and ideologies were identified through the phenomenographic analysis of the gathered data.

The second objective was to examine EFL teachers' knowledge and ability to address queer issues across levels and contexts. To begin with, the data analysis revealed some referential aspects of participants' conceptions. That is, what the EFL teachers know, understand, and teach about queer issues. Thus, this analysis revealed three degrees of participants' knowledge of queer issues, which are limited, general, and accurate. Moreover, there was variation in the participants' context and the level of English they teach. Some EFL teachers were part of the teaching staff of the Language Center courses while others were part of the English Language bachelor's degree program. Likewise, the participants were selected from the different campuses of the UQRoo across the state of Quintana Roo. Each of these settings has diverse geographic and socioeconomic features. Participants also differed in the level of English they are teaching, ranging from introductory to advanced level. All in all, the second objective was fully met.

There are three research questions that guided this study. The first one enquired about the degree of LGBTQ+-related knowledge, as well as professional and personal experiences that the EFL teachers have. As stated above, the findings revealed that the participants possessed three different degrees of familiarity with queer issues—limited, basic, and accurate, such as heteronormativity, queer theory, and LGBTQ+ terminology. These range from a complete lack of understanding of these issues and/or training on how to implement queer-inclusive practices in their lessons, to a precise understanding, and training on these issues and queer-inclusive practices. Findings indicate that the teachers' accurate knowledge and general familiarity with queer-inclusive strategies stem from their relationship with queer people, their own queer identity, and/or their own upbringing open to sexual diversity. As for the participants' interaction with queer individuals, this may cause them to hold activist conceptions and reinforce their queer

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ideologies. This finding echoes that of Güney (2018) as well as Gelbal and Duyan (2016) on the influence of having social contact with queer people on their conceptions of queerness, hence queer inclusion.

Professionally, it seems that the EFL teachers who also teach at a high school level are more competent to address queer issues in the English language classroom than their peers who only teach at the university level. This difference might be due to the perceived irrelevance of addressing these issues in college. As participants stated, students seem to lack interest in these topics as they have never requested their incorporation or discussion in a lesson. This might also explain why the EFL teachers seem to be reluctant to seek further training on their own. Furthermore, differently from the university level, this perceived irrelevance might be because the need for dealing with sexuality issues seems to be more prevalent at a high school level due to the students' young age and immaturity. In parallel, the results revealed that the teachers would be comfortable addressing queer issues with their university students because they seem to be more mature and open-minded. This perceived facility to discuss these issues with university students resonates with Güney's (2018) finding that EFL teachers are more comfortable discussing these issues with adult learners because of their maturity.

Although there were some participants who demonstrated having accurate knowledge, it can be concluded that most of the EFL teachers possess scarce familiarity with queer issues. The results showed that their understanding is mostly limited to being aware of the acronym LGBTQ+ and the existence of other sexual orientations besides heterosexuality and homosexuality. Similarly, the majority of the teachers have never received specialized training on these issues nor have ever attempted to seek training on their own. This finding is in line with previous studies (Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016; Tran-Thanh, 2020) which state that teachers' inability to address queer issues and implement queer-inclusive practices stems mainly from their poor knowledge and professional training on the matter. The reproduction of this finding in different contexts implies that EFL teachers' lack of familiarity with queer issues is not solely influenced by sociocultural factors. Instead, this result reflects teachers' disinterest in these issues and lack of awareness of the negative effects of maintaining a heteronormative learning environment. As for this lack of awareness, it might stem from the influence of the subconscious heterosexual expectations reproduced across societies.

The second question enquired about the participants' conceptions of the inclusion/exclusion of queer issues and materials in the EFL classroom. The discussion of the outcome space in table 1 along with specific examples addresses this question. I grouped participants' conceptions into four experiential categories including heteronormative, nonchalant, activist, and critical. Research question two is also focused on the participants' ideologies. The results show that the participants reproduce both heteronormative and queer ideologies. As for the EFL teachers who held heteronormative ideologies, some of them appeared to be unaware of it. This is probably because heteronormativity may operate implicitly. Moreover, these ideologies seem to be internalized through the reproduction of a binary approach to gender and sexuality in mass media, EFL teaching materials, and Mexican society.

The results have also shown that the heteronormative category is not only the most prominent but also lacks a critical perspective of gender and sexuality. Thus, the abundance of heteronormative conceptions and the fact that participants displayed mostly these conceptions suggest that there is an uncritical approach to language teaching and learning. It appears that in this approach there is a lack of critical awareness of the various dominant discourses and practices, including heteronormative ones, that dictate normativity in learning spaces. Since language classrooms introduce students to different ideologies reproduced through language, it becomes crucial for EFL teachers to be critical and reflect on how dominant discourses and social forces shape the learning environment. Thus, this finding indicates that language teachers might unconsciously be perpetuating social inequality by allowing heteronormativity to pervade the EFL classroom.

Differently, participants who hold activist conceptions attempt to queer the EFL curriculum and pedagogical practices. Nonetheless, these attempts are merely focused on LGBTQ+ representation. Although holding these conceptions is advisable, action needs to be taken to promote changes from this conception to critical ones. Through the promotion of practices that encourage reflection and analysis of the dominant discourses that reinforce intersectional inequality, we can create more equitable and truly diverse language classrooms.

The third research question is focused on the factors that the EFL teachers believe influence queer inclusion/exclusion in their teaching. Differently from Barozzi and Ojeda's (2016) and Tran-Thanh's (2020), findings indicate there are various factors that influence the exclusion of queer issues in their lessons besides a lack of interest and awareness of these issues.

These include a dearth of LGBTQ+ materials, lack of institutional support, heteronormative Mexican culture, and perceived irrelevance. The most prevalent factor that hinders queer inclusion was the lack of materials and resources that include accurate LGBTQ+ representation and stimulate the discussion of queer issues.

As for the influence of the heteronormative Mexican culture, participants were not truly concerned about students' unfavorable responses but the negative reaction of society. Although they acknowledge the potential heteronormative culture of some of their students, they did not perceive this factor as a significant hindrance to including queer materials and discussions. Quite the opposite, the participants perceived their students to be either quite open to and accepting of queerness or mature enough to discuss topics they disagree with in a respectful manner. Thus, this perception seems to have a greater and rather positive effect on the teachers' conception of queer inclusion than the influence of the heteronormative Mexican society. Contrastingly, previous studies conducted in countries where the inclusion of queer issues in English language classrooms is also still sensitive have found that EFL teachers seem to have more concerns about negative parental reactions (Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016; Tran-Thanh, 2020) and the students' religious and cultural sensibilities (Güney, 2018). Perhaps this difference in findings is because all these studies involved EFL teachers from basic education levels including primary school, secondary school, and high school. These are teaching contexts where the students tend to be more immature, and their parents play an active role in their education.

Overall, the contributions of this research are related to EFL teachers' familiarity with LGBTQ+ issues, their queer-inclusive/exclusive practices, and their reasoning behind those practices. Moreover, this study casts light on the importance to raise language teachers' awareness about how their pedagogical practices and the dominant discourses in their classrooms may dictate normativity and reinforce intersectional inequality. Likewise, this research provides further information regarding the elements that influence queer inclusion/exclusion in higher education, which can be useful to develop specific strategies to address them. Findings also provide teachers and teacher educators with strategies to queer their pedagogy. The results also revealed that the English language curriculum is mostly based on mainstream EFL books with a heteronormative approach to gender and sexuality. This finding is in line with numerous studies that confirm the absence of non-heteronormative identities in mainstream EFL coursebooks, materials, and resources (Nelson, 2009; Gray, 2013; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2015, Paiz,

2015). This could be because curriculum designers do not follow a critical approach when selecting teaching materials and, overall, when creating English language educational programs. Lastly, parallel to this research, earlier studies have also found that EFL teachers are willing to incorporate queer materials and inclusive practices despite their scarce knowledge and professional training on this matter (Barozzi & Ojeda, 2016; Tran-Thanh, 2020; Güney, 2018).

5.2 Pedagogical and policy implications

The findings of this study present various implications for teacher education and educational policy development. Overall, the results call for the re-examination of the EFL curricula, teaching materials, and teacher education so as to implement queer pedagogies and policies that embrace diversity. Specifically, pre- and in-service teachers should be provided with general training regarding diversity and equality in the EFL environment alongside professional training on queer pedagogies and strategies to deal with homophobic bullying. More importantly, it is imperative that teacher education programs focused on language, like the English Language major offered at UQRoo, adopt a critical approach to language teaching and learning. That is, pre-service EFL teachers should be encouraged to become more critical regarding their teaching practices and how social forces and dominant ideologies may cause them to reproduce a hostile learning environment for their queer students.

Since publishers seem to be reluctant to incorporate queer representation in mainstream EFL coursebooks, participants should get involved in the creation of authentic queer materials. The dearth of these materials could also be mitigated with the support of literacy and advocacy centers for gender and sexual diversity. Thus, collaboration with these centers must become a priority for education authorities, curriculum designers, and administrative staff. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the task of creating LGBTQ+ teaching materials is not exclusive of teachers and school administrators. EFL coursebooks publishers must be held accountable for revising their policies of inappropriacy and developing materials that reflect and embrace diversity.

As for policymakers and education authorities, it is vital for them to enact school policies that are respectful of and celebrate gender and sexual diversity to build a safe education environment for all (students, teachers, administrative staff, school leaders). These policies should aim at improving the school climate by addressing practices that marginalize and

discriminate against queer students such as homophobic bullying. Furthermore, the results of this study show that the lives of trans and nonbinary people are excluded from the consciousness of most of the participants of this study, and hence made invisible in the language classroom. Therefore, educational policies must develop specific guidelines, not only a general policy of respect, that enable teachers and learners to interact with each other in a peaceful manner regardless of their diverse sexual identities. These may include the mandatory use of teachers' and students' preferred pronouns prescribed by the syllabi.

5.3 Limitations of the study

There are some limitations in this study that need to be acknowledged. The first two limitations are related to the sample and participants' profiles. On the one hand, the sample size was relatively small, limited to 15 in-service EFL teachers at UQRoo. Nonetheless, it complies with the minimum number of participants needed in phenomenographic studies like this one (Trigwell, 2000). On the other hand, the number of heterosexual and queer participants was disproportionate since only 2 of them identified themselves as homosexuals. Thus, there was a lack of variation among participants' sexual identities. Because of these two reasons, a wider sample of participants with different sexual identities might maximize the diversity of experiences.

Another limitation of this study is that I did not examine participants' conceptions of queer inclusion/exclusion through their actual classroom practices. That is, participants' positive orientations toward the LGBTQ+ community and alleged incorporation/exclusion of queer content into their teaching materials were merely self-reported. Lastly, the literature and data on queer issues in Mexican EFL education are scarce and focused mainly on heteronormativity and homophobia. Above all, phenomenographic research on teachers' conceptions of queer inclusion/exclusion in Mexico is nonexistent. This prevented me from drawing comparisons with other phenomenographic studies.

5.4 Recommendations for further research

The fact most participants identified themselves as heterosexual suggests that a different study with LGBTQ+ participants alone might generate a different outcome space. Including their

conceptions might afford a deeper understanding of the phenomenon addressed in this study. Moreover, future research should include stakeholders' conceptions in the field of education such as teacher educators, policymakers, curriculum designers, and EFL textbook publishers. It is also advisable to conduct a comparative analysis between participants' conceptions of queer inclusion/exclusion, their actual teaching practices, and students' experiences. This analysis might provide a more accurate and complete picture of queer inclusion/exclusion in language education and the factors involved in the process. The outcomes and applicability of participants' queer-inclusive practices presented in this study are also worth investigating.

Lastly, this study not only casts light on Mexican EFL teachers' perception of the need for queer inclusion/exclusion but also encourages further investigation concerning the development and application of queer pedagogy in EFL education. Rather than highlighting the homophobic and heteronormative state of Mexican education, we should reorient the objectives of future research to developing and applying strategies to queer teaching practice. Thus, it is imperative to start conducting research concerning queering language education as well as the implementation of queer theory in teacher education programs. I believe the outcomes of this, and future critical studies may serve as an instrument to foster social equality in school spaces. Not only that but queering our pedagogy may also allow us to create safe learning environments that celebrate students' diverse sexual identities respectfully.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview questions

Research question #1. What degree of LGBTQ+-related knowledge, as well as professional and personal experiences do EFL teachers have?

1. Do you keep yourself informed about issues related to the inclusion/exclusion of LGBTQ+ content and students? Why? If yes, how do you do so?
2. Do you know what the acronym "LGBTQ+" stands for?
3. Could you describe what the difference between transexual, transgender, cisgender, and nonbinary is?
4. Do you know what 'queer' (as in queer theory) means?
5. Is it easy to tell if someone identifies themselves as straight/gay/lesbian in Mexico, in Chetumal? Why?
6. Do you know what heteronormativity is?
7. Do you know what homophobia is?
8. Have you ever experienced/witnessed any case of discrimination because of sexual orientation? If yes, could you describe that experience? What did you do about it? Why?
9. Have you ever experienced/witnessed any case of homophobic bullying at school (in an educational environment)? If yes, could you describe that experience? What did you do about it? Why?
10. Have you ever received any kind of training on how to deal with homophobia at school? If yes, where, and how? If not, have you sought training on your own? Why or why not?
11. Have you ever received training from either the university you work for or the English academy on how to address LGBTQ+-related issues from a language teaching perspective? If yes, could you describe that experience? What is the most significant thing you learned?
12. Have you ever discussed queer issues in a class, with an individual student, or with your colleagues? If not, why not? If yes, in what circumstances? What was discussed? Who brought those issues up? How did you approach it? How comfortable were you in dealing with them? Why?

13. Do you know strategies to deal with issues of sexual diversity and gender identity in your classroom? If not, why? If yes, what are they? How did you learn them? What motivated you to learn them?

Research question #2. What are EFL teachers' conceptions and ideologies towards including LGBTQ+-related content into EFL classrooms?

1. Have you seen LGBTQ+ characters included in EFL textbooks or other materials? If they are not included, why do you think that is?
2. How is 'family' usually represented in an EFL textbook? Which vocabulary do students learn? Which don't?
3. Do you think it is important that there is LGBTQ+ representation in ELT material? Why or why not?
4. What do you think is the effect of LGBTQ+ invisibility in ELT materials on teachers/teacher educators who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community – and on those who don't?
5. What do you think is the effect of LGBTQ+ invisibility in ELT materials on students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community – and on those who don't?
6. Why is or is not discussing queer issues in EFL education important?
7. Would you integrate queer themes and discussions into the existing curriculum for the English language program? If yes, how would you do it? If not, why?

Research question #3. What factors do EFL teachers believe influence the inclusion/exclusion of LGBTQ+-related topics and materials into their teaching practice?

1. Do you see any problems regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion as an English language teacher? If yes, what are those? If not, why?
2. Based on your teaching experience, what factors do you think may hinder the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics in the language classroom? Why do you think so? On the contrary, what factors do you think may facilitate it? Why?
3. Do you see any problems with regard to incorporating LGBTQ+ representation in ELT materials? If yes, what are those problems? If not, why?
4. Do you think it is easy to discuss sexual identity issues with adult learners? Why?

5. Would you be concerned about students' background (as in their religion, race, culture, gender) if you were to incorporate LGBTQ+ topics in your classroom? why?

6. Would you worry about parental reaction if you considered addressing queer issues?

7. Would you be concerned about your colleagues' reaction if you were to discuss LGBTQ+ topics in the classroom? Why? What about the reaction of the university or the English academy you work for? Why?

8. Do you think the incorporation of queer issues into the curriculum of the English language program is outside the mandate of the English academy/English Language bachelor's degree program? Why?

9. How prepared do you think you are to deal with issues of sexual diversity in your classroom? Why? What do you need to be fully prepared?