QUEER EFL INSTRUCTORS' EXPERIENCES COMBATTING CISHETERONORMATIVITY IN HAZIRLIK CLASSROOMS

by © Jennifer Elizabeth Thorson

(she/her)

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Abstract

Exclusion and erasure of LGBTQI+ identities from English Language Teaching materials are documented problems, and the field thereby perpetuates the oppressive attitude that cisgender and heterosexual identities are preferred norms. Existing proposals for combatting this cisheteronormativity primarily focus on teaching higher-level learners in queer-friendly liberal Western countries; little information exists on doing so in unwelcoming contexts or with low-level learners. This critical qualitative study therefore explores ways that queer EFL teachers in university preparatory programs in Istanbul, Türkiye, challenge cisheteronormativity, and how this less-welcoming environment impacts their approaches. Using a queer theory lens, I apply both thematic and structural narrative analysis to counternarratives collected from three queer EFL instructors through semi-structured interviews and autoethnographic reflection. Findings from 10 classroom incidents—five planned and five unplanned—of challenging cisheteronormativity show that despite fears relating to the sociopolitical environment, the participant instructors challenge cisheteronormativity both overtly and discreetly, through visual representation, gender-neutral language, and critical questioning of normative assumptions. Key factors impacting their approaches include student level, class rapport, perceived need, and institutional support. This study proposes that it is possible to apply a queer pedagogy approach to the EFL classroom in context and level appropriate ways, even in unwelcoming environments.

Keywords: ELT, EFL, queer, queer pedagogy, gender, inclusive education, narrative analysis, counternarratives

General Summary

The field of English Language Teaching generally ignores the existence of LGBTQI+ individuals, thereby indirectly supporting the transphobic and homophobic idea that cisgender, heterosexual identities are preferable to queer identities. Most advice for including LGBTQI+ identities in ELT comes from liberal Western countries and might not be safe or practical for teachers working in countries hostile to LGBTQI+ identities. This study therefore explores how three queer English teachers working in the less-welcoming environment of Turkish universities address LGBTQI+ issues in their classrooms, and how that relatively unfriendly environment affects their choices. I use two types of narrative analysis to explore 10 accounts of planned and unplanned classroom incidents. Results show that although they fear possible negative outcomes given the environment, the participating teachers use visuals and gender-neutral language to represent queer identities, and also ask questions to challenge stereotypes, while student level, classroom atmosphere, and institutional support influence their strategies.

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Jennifer Thorson

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List of Acronyms

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, aka Justice and Development Party
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CİMER	Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Merkezi, aka Presidency Communication Centre
ELT	English Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
IB	International Baccalaureate
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and others
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and others
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and others

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the Spring of 2019, a fellow English teacher in Istanbul, Türkiye (formerly Turkey), invited me to attend a meeting of local university English instructors who were either queer or queer allies. The founders of this group envisioned creating a toolkit of materials and suggestions to help local university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers make their classrooms more queer-friendly. Unfortunately, the group's efforts were interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but in early meetings I noticed that the articles we read together on the topic of queering English Language Teaching (ELT) seemed to originate primarily from liberal Western countries very different from our local context of Türkiye. I also came to realize that queer instructors ourselves have a wealth of relevant practical knowledge on the topic of creating queer-friendly classrooms. It occurred to me that queer teachers' experiential knowledge of queering our own EFL classrooms may be useful knowledge. Further reading of existing literature established a knowledge gap on the subject of actual classroom practice of queering ELT, especially in teaching contexts less welcoming of queer identities, and this study began to take shape in my mind.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The exclusion of queerness in ELT is well-documented (Gray, 2013; Hampson, 2020; Paiz, 2015). The field often relies on simplification to express recognizable meaning, which perpetuates cisnormative and heteronormative concepts and representation in materials and classroom practice. In so doing, ELT can reinforce harmful stereotypes and erase the existence of minority groups. The exclusion and erasure of queer identities in English classrooms not only impacts queer students themselves but also serves to bolster homophobia and transphobia in wider society. For queer students in particular, though, the exclusion of queerness can cause psychological and social harm (DesRoches & Sweet, 2007; Yep, 2002)

as well as negative academic outcomes (Evripidou, 2020; Kappra & Vandrick, 2006; Liddicoat, 2009; Moore, 2016).

Suggestions have been made for ways to combat cisheteronormativity in ELT through alternative materials (Hampson, 2020; Scott, 2020; Seburn, 2019) and critical questioning (Curran, 2006; Nelson, 1999; Paiz, 2019). Broadly speaking, these proposed strategies focus either on inclusion, referring to increasing representation of sexual and gender minorities in classroom materials, or on challenging normative concepts of gender and sexual identity in the first place. However, these remedies were proposed and constructed in the context of liberal, Western democracies that recognize LGBTQ+ rights, and they may not be appropriate in contexts which are hostile toward queer identities, or where direct discussion of such topics may be more taboo. There has been little exploration of how to subvert or combat cisheteronormativity in EFL classes in environments such as Türkiye, where queerness is not criminalized but has been labeled by members of the government as aberrant and against local social values and where queer events are frequently banned. Although it is less acceptable to speak openly about queerness in schools and universities in such environments, queer students continue to need the support of their teachers in combatting rather than perpetuating homophobia and transphobia.

Indeed, in overviews of the current state of queering ELT, both Paiz (2019) and Merse (2022) have called for further research on classroom practice of queer inclusion in EFL in contexts that are less welcoming of queer identities. Considering that queer English instructors in particular have experiential knowledge of both the effects of cisheteronormativity and the practice of EFL, exploring the classroom practices of queer teachers working in an environment such as Türkiye may offer valuable information on this subject.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore how queer EFL teachers subvert and counter the cisheteronormativity of EFL in our own classrooms in environments which are unwelcoming to queer identities. This study intends to discover strategies and approaches used by queer teachers in English preparatory programs at Turkish universities. By analyzing the narrative interviews and reflections of three queer EFL instructors in *hazırlık* [English preparatory year] programs at Turkish universities, this study aims to investigate the following questions:

1. Do participant queer EFL teachers in Turkish university preparatory programs address cisheteronormativity in their classrooms, whether directly or indirectly?
2. Do they introduce queer issues or representation into their classrooms, whether overtly or discreetly?
3. How do they navigate instances of cisheteronormative attitudes, homophobia, or transphobia when these arise spontaneously?
4. How does the teaching environment impact their approaches and experiences?

1.2 Context of the Study

With regard to queer issues, Türkiye can be considered a less-than-welcoming environment. Although minority sexualities and gender identities are not outright criminalized, they are also not protected within the scope of nondiscrimination laws, and the queer community often faces social and legal hostility (Arat & Nuňez, 2017; Bakacak & Öktem, 2014; Engin, 2015; Özbay & Öktem, 2021). ILGA-Europe (2022), a regional branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, ranks Türkiye second-last among European countries in their Rainbow Index report on human rights protections for queer and intersex people, and the country's rating has steadily decreased since 2015 (Bianet, 2021). The queer community is often referred to as "immoral, sick, dangerous, and abnormal" (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014, p. 830) and as contrary to traditional

Turkish values (Birdal, 2015). This type of rhetoric is even used by sitting politicians. The interior minister has publicly spoken against the queer community several times, including in online posts sanctioned by the social media platform Twitter (now known as X) as hate speech in 2021 (Küçükgöçmen, 2021).

A number of Turkish scholars propose that antipathy toward queerness can be traced to the founding of the country. Özbay and Öktem (2021) assert that "The history of the Turkish Republic is also a history of attempted homogeneity in all spheres of life" (p. 118). After the republic was founded in 1923, a series of cultural, political, and economic reforms were undertaken to modernize and secularize the country, and to create a "common sense of Turkish national identity" (Engin, 2015, p. 840). These reforms included banning religious garments, granting women the right to vote, creating a Latin-based alphabet, and establishing Turkish as the country's official language. Certain ethnic, linguistic, and minority groups were excluded from this Turkification process (Özbay & Öktem, 2021). According to Bakacak and Öktem (2014), this process also ascribed strict gender roles to men and women in the home and the public sphere, making gender hierarchy and the nuclear family key components of the national identity.

In contemporary times, Türkiye has been governed since 2002 by the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP, or Justice and Development Party in English), which has been described as a populist neoliberal Islamist Party (Birdal, 2015; Savcı, 2021). According to Özbay and Öktem (2021), a goal of accession to the European Union led to legal reforms and democratization policies early in this period, but that goal was later abandoned. Birdal (2015) similarly notes that "after a period of liberal democratic reforms the AKP turned increasingly to a conservative discourse" (p. 128). Therefore, the past two decades have seen the simultaneous expansion of queer visibility and activism alongside increasing social conservatism and morality politics (Savcı, 2021).

Several scholars have noted the wide-scale street protests in 2013 as a turning point for the visibility of the Turkish queer community, after which two major opposition political parties incorporated queer rights into their political agendas (Bayramoğlu, 2021; Birdal, 2015; Engin, 2015). Another important event for queer visibility and solidarity was Istanbul's annual Pride March; prior to 2015 it was often labeled the largest in a majority-Muslim country, and in 2014 it was attended by up to 100,000 people (Sansal, 2021). It is worth noting that Istanbul's Pride March has always been political rather than commercial in tone (Savcı, 2016). However, the march has been banned since 2015, as have Pride marches and events in many other cities around Türkiye. In 2017, the capital city of Ankara banned all queer-themed events (Bayramoğlu, 2021). The explanations for these bans often refer to "the need to protect 'public security' or respect 'public sensitivities'" (Bayramoğlu, 2021, p. 175). At the same time, the legal system frequently imposes minimal punishments for crimes committed against queer people (Arat & Nuñez, 2017; Engin, 2015).

Universities have also been impacted by the growing animosity toward queer issues. Students who participated in a Pride march at a major public university in the capital city of Ankara in 2019 had their state scholarships revoked (Tar, 2019). Even the concept of gender equality was deemed contrary to Turkish values by the country's Higher Education Council (Bianet, 2019). The council instructed that women's studies courses should focus on family and Turkish values (Duvar, 2019).

Also relevant to this study is the climate for academic freedom within Turkish universities. In surveys conducted in 2018, Taştan et al. (2020) found that one in three Turkish academics feel pressured and avoid "sensitive or objectionable issues" (p. 31) in their courses, and one in ten has been reported to the authorities by students (p. 36). These taboo issues include feminism, militarism, religion, queer issues, the country's Kurdish and Armenian minorities, and anything criticizing the government (Taştan et al., 2020, p. 57). To further

understand this climate, we can consider the example of a petition signed by Turkish academics in early 2016 calling for a return to the peace process between the government and Kurdish separatists (Baser et al., 2017; Biner, 2019; Özatalay, 2020). When academics associated with the failed coup d'état of July 2016 were removed from their positions and blacklisted, many petition signatories unaffiliated with the putschists were also dismissed (Baser et al., 2017; Biner, 2019; Özatalay, 2020). Hundreds of signatories were investigated and charged under counter-terrorism laws (Baser et al., 2017; Biner, 2019). In the wake of these events, many academics today feel concern for their job security and academic freedom (Baser et al., 2017; Taştan et al., 2020). This thesis has been difficult for me to write due to similar fears. These fears and the ethics surrounding this study are explored further in later chapters.

1.3 Methodology

This study was designed as critical qualitative research aiming to learn from the subjective experiences of queer EFL teacher participants who have experiential knowledge of the field as well as experience of and familiarity with the oppressive power structures of cisheteronormativity. These instructors' accounts provide counternarratives to standard cisheteronormative approaches to EFL teaching.

The participants for this study were recruited using the purposive sampling strategies of critical case sampling and convenience sampling. The participants are three self-identified queer EFL instructors, including myself, who work in English preparatory programs at three universities in Istanbul, Türkiye, and who have expressed interest in and experience of addressing cisheteronormativity in their classrooms. These criteria were selected to recruit participants with useful personal experience from which to gain insight. The setting of English preparatory programs in Istanbul was chosen for three main reasons: because Türkiye qualifies as a context relatively unwelcoming to queer identities; because many Turkish universities

teach in English and therefore offer English preparatory programs to ensure students' language proficiency prior to faculty study; and because it is my own teaching context.

I collected both narrative and autoethnographic data on specific incidents of combatting cisheteronormativity in the classroom, in both planned and spontaneous instances. Participant data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted over Zoom. Autoethnographic data were collected in the form of written responses to the same interview guide questions used with the interview participants.

The participants, including myself, were asked to recall and narrate critical incidents in which we acted to subvert cisheteronormativity in our classrooms during lessons. Both planned and unplanned incidents were requested, with each participant providing one or two of each for a total of 10 incidents. In each case, the respondents were asked to describe the event in detail, including their choices and the students' actions and reactions. Additionally, I utilized two of Tripp's (2011) approaches to Critical Incident Analysis (Ayers, 2017; Mohammed, 2016), namely The *Why?* Challenge and Dilemma Identification, to gather more information on the reasons the instructors made the choices and reacted in the ways they did, rather than taking alternative possible actions.

Following transcription of interview data and member checks, the textual data were analyzed in two ways following Riessman's (2008) frameworks for thematic and structural narrative analysis. Two forms of analysis were conducted in order to deepen my analysis of the data and as a means of within-method triangulation (Casey & Murphy, 2009; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). I first conducted a thematic narrative analysis of each incident. The transcripts for each incident were condensed and reorganized into block narratives, which were then inductively coded for relevant themes broadly grouped as approaches and motivations. Themes were compared across participants.

Subsequently, I also conducted structural analysis on each participant's transcript using Labov's well-known model for structural analysis of narratives. Each incident was deductively coded using Labov's six categories describing the structure of narrative storytelling: Abstract or overview of the story; Orientation, referring to setting and characters; Complicating Actions, which are plot events; Resolution or outcomes; Coda, meaning the conclusion of the story; and Evaluation, which refers to narrator commentary (Labov, 2013; Parcell & Baker, 2017; Riessman, 2008; Wells, 2011). The complicating actions, orientation, and evaluation codes in particular provided useful information relating to teachers' classroom approaches and the impact of the teaching context.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

I have approached this study from a viewpoint based in queer theory. Queer theory challenges the notion that gender or sexual orientation are essential or self-evident traits. It proposes instead that these characteristics are socially constructed categories that are created and upheld through discourse and performativity, meaning the language we use to discuss them and the behaviours we assign to them (Butler, 1990; Nelson, 2002). Queer theory further argues that these categories are constructed as oppositional binaries that privilege one identity over its subjugated inverse, such as heterosexual over homosexual or cisgender over transgender (Nelson, 2002; Sedgwick, 2008). It is this privileging that creates the phenomenon of cisheteronormativity. Queer theory therefore also functions as a means of challenging the oppression of those whose identities are subjugated by these hegemonic constructed binaries. As such, simultaneous to its questioning of these categories, queer theory also aims to center the voices and experiences of queer individuals—those with minority sexuality and gender identities (Britzman, 1995; Nelson, 2002).

This study applies both of these aspects of queer theory. I have centered the voices and experiences of those subjugated by cisheteronormativity by specifically recruiting queer

instructors and presenting their experiences in their own words. In addition, I consider whether and how queer theory is applied in the strategies participant instructors use to address cisheteronormativity in our preparatory English classrooms.

With regard to classroom practice, a queer theory framework questions what kind of activities and approaches best challenge cisheteronormativity. Does simply including representations of queer individuals in classroom materials confront the binaries that create and uphold cisheteronormativity, or should teachers actively and critically question these categories and the assumptions we hold about gender and sexuality? Furthermore, how can queer theory be operationalized in a language classroom, wherein the students have limited linguistic skills to discuss such topics?

1.5 Significance

If one understands the marginalization of queerness as a product of the social construction of asymmetrical binaries that are upheld through behaviour and language, the language classroom becomes an important site wherein we can either perpetuate or challenge the norms around gender and sexual orientation. However, the existing literature on queering ELT is often suppositional, with few empirical studies on classroom practice. Furthermore, the majority of the existing literature situates itself within socially liberal contexts largely accepting of queerness. This study provides data on actual classroom practice in a context less welcoming of queer identities, as called for by Merse (2022) and Paiz (2019).

In addition, much of the existing literature discusses practices used with or applicable to learners with higher levels of English proficiency, who are better able to comprehend and communicate about abstract subjects like gender and sexual identity. This study includes data on several incidents involving elementary level learners and discusses ways to queer the ELT classroom with learners at lower skill levels. Moreover, as an act of scholarly activism, this study also considers the classroom practices of the participant teachers in light of queer

pedagogy, asking whether and to what extent their strategies address the roots of cisheteronormativity, and in particular, how queer pedagogy can be operationalized with low-level learners.

1.6 Outline of the Chapters

The next chapter of this paper is the literature review, in which I discuss some of the relevant literature on cisheteronormativity, the theoretical framework of queer theory and its offshoot queer pedagogy, and the problem of cisheteronormativity in ELT along with its consequences. I also review some of the existing studies on and proposals for bringing queer issues into the ELT classroom, including a few such studies in the Turkish context.

Following the literature review is the methodology chapter. In this chapter I provide more details on how this study was planned and conducted. It includes detailed discussion of my choices of critical qualitative research as a research paradigm and narrative research as a design. It provides additional information on my sampling strategy and data collection methods. It also discusses how I have addressed issues of validity and research ethics in planning and conducting this study, as well as addressing my reflexivity as a participant researcher.

Two subsequent chapters present the findings from the interview participants and the autoethnographic data, respectively. The analysis is further divided by participant and incident. Each participant is introduced separately, followed by the condensed narratives of that teacher's incidents, after which I present first the thematic findings and then the structural findings for each incident.

The final chapter offers discussion and evaluation of these findings. I address what this study has discovered in relation to my research questions and the applicability of queer theory to addressing cisheteronormativity in EFL in an unwelcoming context such as Türkiye. I also offer an evaluation of my work and this study's contributions and limitations, before offering some key takeaways I hope to impart to the reader.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Purpose of the Chapter

English Language Teaching (ELT) functions within a highly normative and standardized environment and simultaneously acts as a powerfully normalizing force (Bhatt, 2010; Dewey, 2015; Pawelczyk et al., 2014). The field relies heavily on stereotypes to ensure shared understanding of linguistic meaning, thereby often perpetuating oppressive power structures, such as cisheteronormativity, to the detriment of all students. It is therefore important to explore how we can and do challenge cisheteronormativity in English language classrooms.

This chapter will introduce a selection of literature relevant to this study's exploration of the lived experiences and approaches of queer teachers of English working to counter cisheteronormativity in our own classrooms in Turkish universities. This review of some of the relevant literature will first look at theories of social identity as they relate to gender and sexuality, and at queer theory in particular. Next, this chapter will discuss the problem of cisheteronormativity in ELT, as well as suggested and attempted approaches to queering ELT classrooms. Finally, we will turn to the specific context of Türkiye and explore some existing literature on cisheteronormativity in the Turkish context and addressing queer topics in the Turkish classroom.

This study will use the word "queer" in two ways. First, as an adjective, queer may refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, or similar sexuality- and gender-minority identities. Secondly, the word is used as a verb within queer theory to mean forwarding outsider/queer subjects while simultaneously rejecting the norms that create insider/outsider binaries (Britzman, 1995; Nelson, 2002).

Also relevant to this study is the distinction between two types of English language teaching. English as a Second Language (ESL) refers to the study of English in countries

where it is a majority or native language, whereas English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to English taught in environments where English is not typically spoken. Türkiye is an example of the latter. Contextual differences between these two types of English teaching may produce differences in relevance and practicability of certain teaching approaches and interventions.

2.2 Gender Norms and Compulsory Heterosexuality

Central to discussions about sexual and gender identity is the distinction between physical sex and gender. This differentiation was explained by Ann Oakley in 1972, but likely draws on earlier work by Simone De Beauvoir (McCann & Monaghan, 2020, p. 58). In 1980, second-wave lesbian feminist Adrienne Rich (1980) discussed the issue of "compulsory heterosexuality", which suggests that societally-imposed and policed gender norms present heterosexuality as the normal and natural way of being, and punish people for failure to conform.

From these viewpoints grew the concept of "heteronormativity" (Warner, 1991), a term coined by Michael Warner in 1991 to describe "the pervasive and largely invisible heterosexual norms that underpin society" (McCann & Monaghan, 2020, p. 11). Cameron and Kulick (2003) provide one definition of heteronormativity, as "those structures, institutions, relations and actions that promote and produce heterosexuality as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged, and necessary" (p. 55).

Similar structures exist to normalize and privilege cisgender over transgender identity, leading to the expansion of the terminology to include cisnormativity as well. As García and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) explain, cisnormativity reinforces heterosexuality and heteronormativity reinforces binary gender norms. In much of the existing literature, authors focus specifically on heteronormativity, perhaps subsuming cisnormativity as an aspect thereof. This paper uses the inclusive term "cisheteronormativity" to refer to the delineation

of particular gender and sexuality norms and the privileging of cisgender and heterosexual identities through presumption that these are normal and good, therein implying that minority sexuality and gender identities are unusual or aberrant.

These hegemonic norms show up in ELT classrooms through course materials and teacher behaviours, and have a detrimental impact on students and learning. Many discussions on sexuality and gender in ELT focus either on inclusion and representation of queer identities or on critical questioning of such identity categories, corresponding to perspectives based in social identity theory or queer theory, respectively. The next section will explore these conceptualizations of identity.

2.3 Theories of Social Identity

Scholars have been discussing the relevance of identity in second language acquisition since at least the 1990s. Peirce (1995) proposes a theory of social identity in language learning that situates language learners within "larger, and frequently inequitable social structures" (p. 13) and recognizes that social identities are structured using language (p. 15). Peirce's (1995) conceptualization of social identity in language learning follows poststructural theory in viewing identity as subjective, multiple and contradictory, and dynamic.

In response to Peirce, McNamara (1997) discusses Tajfel's earlier framework of social identity, which suggests that individuals use particular social cues to categorize themselves and others into distinct social groups. This framework proposes that people seek to compare and differentiate their in-group from other groups, which McNamara (1997) acknowledges can lead to "negative evaluations of one's social identity by the out-group" (p. 563), such as homophobia. Although McNamara (1997) notes that social identities can be multiple and their value contextual (p. 564), this framework suggests a more essentialist and divisive view of identities as naturally-occurring and fixed.

The nature of identity is an important consideration in discussions of identity-based oppression and how those oppressions can be most effectively challenged. McNamara's (1997) more essentialist view of identity as dependent on membership in a particular social group necessitates differentiating one's own group from others, often resulting in negative beliefs and prejudices against groups other than one's own. For example, a straight-identifying person may contrast themself against people identified as gay and come to consider their own identity as good and right, and the identity of gay as bad or errant, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of homophobia and transphobia. In this case, an inclusion-based approach to challenging oppression could be considered an appropriate way to promote more positive views of other social groups.

However, when viewing social identities as malleable phenomena created within inequitable social structures and maintained by language, the concepts of gay and straight are both socially-created categories that limit people within each category in terms of behaviour and structural access to privilege. In this case, mere representation of these identity categories will impact neither the oppressive social structures in which they exist nor the linguistic limitations of the categories themselves. Instead, directly challenging those structures and the categories themselves would be necessary to address the root of the oppression. This is the approach promoted by queer theory, as described below.

2.4 Queer Theory

The term "queer theory" was first used in an academic context by Teresa de Lauretis in 1990; it was coined to challenge and resist the supposedly stable and potentially limiting identity categories of gay and lesbian and allow people more freedom to transgress those categories (Jagose, 2009; McCann & Monaghan, 2020). This attitude reflects a poststructuralist approach to identity as discursive, performative, and socially constructed (Nelson, 2002). That is to say, queer theory posits that the ideas of gender and sexuality are not related to essential

biological characteristics; rather, ideas about gender and sexuality are created within society and delineated and upheld through regimes of language and expected behaviour.

That gender and sexuality are socially constructed means that these concepts are not self-evident or naturally occurring; they only have meaning insofar as society shares an understanding of them. Social constructionism is an ontological belief that reality is not objective and separate from those who experience it, but rather that people construct meaning through shared beliefs and assumptions. Discourse and performativity are the ways in which society creates and reproduces these concepts.

The notion that gender is performative means that it is upheld by rituals of behaviour. For example, what it means to "be" a man is neither self-evident nor dependent on biology, but rather created and maintained by the existing social norms and expectations around how men behave. It is for this reason that men not conforming to the expectations of manhood, such as those men who behave in ways described as effeminate, may be derided as insufficiently "manly" in some way. These norms and ideas are also upheld by the language we use to discuss these categories, such as the word "effeminate" in the previous sentence; this is a feature of the discursive nature of identity.

That gender and sexuality are discursive suggests that we understand these phenomena by the language we use to describe them. We use language to both construct and represent our ideas, thereby creating regimes of thought that facilitate, maintain, and demarcate our way of understanding these concepts. This gives the language and rhetoric about any given subject the power to both create and limit our understanding of reality.

This view is reflected by queer theory pioneer Judith Butler's (1990) description of a Heterosexual Matrix, which asserts that sex, gender, and sexuality are not implicitly or naturally connected but are instead normatively linked and culturally reproduced, and that gender categories themselves are unstable constructions dependent on social regulation and behavioural

ritual. To illustrate, a baby is assigned the physical sex of "female" by the delivering physician and is therefore taught to behave and perform gender in ways contemporary society considers "feminine", which includes an expectation of heterosexual attraction. However, the existence of masculine, same-sex-attracted women shows that the categories of physical sex, sexuality, and gender are not naturally linked and can instead occur in various combinations.

Furthermore, queer theory asserts that binaries, such as the gender binary of male or female, are not symmetrical but instead always involve one being subordinated to the other, with the privileged identity being reliant on the exclusion of the subordinated identity (Nelson, 2002; Sedgwick, 2008). While this idea somewhat recalls the notion of in-group versus out-group, queer theory takes the position that identity does not reflect something people essentially are, but rather what they do (Butler, 1990; Nelson, 2002). As a broader example of the queer theory perspective, the concept of homosexual as an identity did not exist until the language was created to categorize certain behaviours into contradictory categories of homosexual and heterosexual, wherein heterosexual is the preferred and privileged category, and now those behaviours determine which category a person falls into (Jagose, 1996; Kemp, 2009).

However, queer theory also holds an inherent contradiction insofar as it aims to center the experiences of queer people and outsider subjects while simultaneously rejecting the norms that create insider/outsider binaries (Britzman, 1995). As Nelson (2002) explains, "the paradoxical tension between the two meanings of queer—on the one hand including all minority sexual identities and on the other protesting the very notion of sexual identity—is central to queer theory" (p. 47).

The contradiction between centering and deconstructing identity categories becomes relevant to the discussion of whether teachers seeking to queer their classrooms should focus on representation or deconstruction of queer identities. This is especially relevant in the language classroom, as the ways we talk about queerness can either perpetuate or challenge the

constructed norms around gender performance and sexual orientation. An inclusion-based approach to queering the classroom is not necessarily antithetical to queer theory. However, teachers must be careful that their representations of and language around queerness do not reinforce normative and subordinating ideas of gender and sexuality. The following sections will first examine the relationship between queer theory and education, and then explore the applicability of queer theory to language teaching in particular.

2.4.1 Queer Theory in Education

Britzman (1995) suggests that queer theory's approach of studying limits, ignorance, and perception enables educators to challenge hegemonic ideas and critique the notion of normalcy, and states that because normalcy requires a subjugated 'other' to contrast itself against, "curricula that purport to be inclusive may actually work to produce new forms of exclusivity" (p. 160). Instead of promoting representation, queer pedagogy focuses on examining how heterosexuality becomes normalized as natural, and attempts to deconstruct binary categories that suggest normalcy and deviance.

García and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) note that in failing to challenge binaries such as male versus female and normal versus deviant, teachers "collude with the dynamics and relations of power that rule all of our social institutions" (p. 249). Lovaas et al. (2002) similarly relate queering the classroom with the liberatory and transformative aims of critical pedagogy, suggesting that a queer pedagogy can "[recognize] paradoxes and troubles of socially constructed...identities and [critique] hegemonic notions of normativity and deviance" (p. 182).

2.4.1.1 Queer Theory in Language Teaching.

In agreement with Britzman, Nelson (1999, 2002) proposes that a queer theory framework is more pedagogically beneficial to ELT than an identity framework because it shifts the focus from inclusion to inquiry, as well as being more cross-culturally relevant and

accessible to teachers unfamiliar with queer identity issues. She also concurs with Britzman that interrogating sexual identity in general is more inclusive than "simply validating subordinate sexual identities" (Nelson, 2002, p. 48), and suggests it may be more practicable for teachers. Nelson (2006) also argues that "sociosexual meanings infuse language, social interactions, and public discourses" (p. 4) and language learners need to develop the fluency to engage with contemporary topics. Nelson's scholarship is broadly referenced throughout other literature on the subject of queering ELT (see Cahnmann-Taylor et al., 2021; Gray, 2016; Merse, 2022; Moore, 2016; O'Mochain, 2006; Paiz, 2015, 2019; Pawelczyk et al., 2014; Selvi & Kocaman, 2021).

Additionally, Cahnmann-Taylor et al. (2021) argue that a queer pedagogy approach in a foreign language classroom improves student engagement. Their case studies on learners of Chinese suggest that disruptions of heteronormativity in romance stories create more imaginative and memorable lessons, and that queering foreign language learning leads to deeper understanding of the power of language and imagining more equitable environments. However, they also caution that the critical discussion suggested by Britzman and Nelson would be "too advanced for novice [language] learners" (Cahnmann-Taylor et al., 2021, p. 14). While this study involved learners of Chinese rather than English, the authors' concern regarding the ability of low-level language learners to engage in critical discussions of norms and identities is an important one, and equally relevant to low-level learners of English.

While as a researcher I agree with the transformative and liberatory aims of queer pedagogy, the question remains whether a queer pedagogy approach is feasible and applicable in EFL contexts, and indeed whether it is actually applied by teachers in the field. The following section explores cisheteronormativity and queer pedagogy in the specific context of ELT. An overview of some ways the field reinforces cisheteronormativity is followed by a

consideration of some of the academic and psychological consequences students face as a result.

2.5 Queering English Language Teaching

2.5.1 Cisheteronormativity in ELT

Thornbury's (1999) claim in the late 1990s that minority sexual identities were entirely excluded from EFL textbooks was later corroborated by Gray's 2013 review of 10 textbooks from five popular coursebook series produced in the UK for global markets. These textbooks reflected exclusively heterosexual representation of families and romantic partnerships, contextually clarified the heterosexuality of potentially ambiguous characters, erased the sexuality of famous queer individuals, and reinforced gender-essentialist representations of men and women (Gray, 2013).

These findings are further supported by Paiz's 2015 multi-modal textual analysis of romantic relationships and family structures in 45 ELT texts and textbooks. Paiz (2015) found that most textbooks avoided queer identities altogether, while even those that used more inclusive language maintain heteronormative contexts. A pilot study by Hampson (2020) using word frequency tests to evaluate heteronormativity and queerness in a small sample of ELT textbooks designed for the global market also found no reference to queer identities.

As Hampson (2020) notes, the exclusion of queer identities in global ELT coursebooks is important, as coursebooks act as a source of authority on English as an international language representing a neutral international norm [4:25]. Lesbian and gay English instructors interviewed by Gray (2013) stated a preference for increased queer visibility in ELT textbooks. They argued that positive queer representation in official materials is necessary to make queer students feel comfortable, to take the pressure off queer instructors and avoid them personalizing the issue, and to create dialogue around the topic of queerness (Gray, 2013).

Alongside textbooks, teachers' own assumptions also shape the content of lessons, and heteronormative assumptions can impede students' language acquisition. Liddicoat's (2009) analysis of beginner-level university foreign-language classroom interactions shows how teachers' presumptions about students' sexuality can cause communication breakdowns. In each example, the teacher asked about a student's assumed heterosexual partner, and when the student responded with accurately gendered responses, attempted to correct what they perceived as a grammatical error.

Kappra and Vandrick (2006) expose "the crucial role of teachers in creating—or not creating—an environment in which queer students feel accepted, safe, supported, and empowered" (p. 142). Their interviews with queer university-level ESL students in San Francisco revealed that teachers ignoring queer issues and homophobic comments leaves them feeling unsafe. However, even in classes with supportive instructors, some respondents self-censored their responses to personal questions like those in Liddicoat's (2009) excerpts by discussing an imaginary different-sex partner or avoiding the questions (Kappra & Vandrick, 2006). The authors argue that teacher neutrality on issues of sexual identity is insufficient for the safety of their learners (Kappra & Vandrick, 2006).

2.5.1.1 Consequences.

While the students in Liddicoat's (2009) study insisted upon the accurate gender of their same-sex partners, many ELT students express that cisheteronormative classroom environments impede their participation, motivation, and even feelings of safety. One of those interviewed by Kappra and Vandrick (2006) refrained from speaking about her own life and instead only produced sentences about an imaginary heterosexual life.

The queer Japanese learners of English who participated in Moore's (2016) case study expressed discomfort with personal questions like those in Liddicoat's excerpts; they preferred not to disclose their sexual identities but lacked language to discuss the topic

without doing so. Two respondents ultimately quit their English courses for such reasons (Moore, 2016). These findings suggest that students need language to navigate queer issues, reinforcing similar assertions made by Nelson (2006).

Interviews conducted by Evripidou (2020) with gay Cypriot English-learners similarly found that heteronormative EFL classroom environments alienated and demotivated them, as classroom bullying and teacher censorship of queer issues resulted in limiting these students' participation. Evripidou (2020) notes that heteronormativity results not only in queer students feeling "under constant threat" (p. 1027), but also in limiting the free expression of all students.

Nevertheless, the impact of cisheteronormativity on queer students is especially profound. DesRoches and Sweet (2007) equate heteronormativity to cloaked homophobic bullying. They propose that many anti-bullying campaigns that focus on models of influential queer people and challenges to overt homophobic jokes fundamentally fail to challenge heteronormativity and thereby reinforce a dichotomy of heterosexual/other that further marginalizes queer identities (DesRoches & Sweet, 2007), as earlier described by Britzman (1995).

Yep (2002) describes heteronormativity as "a foundational source of human oppression" (p. 167) and "a form of violence deeply embedded in our individual and group psyches, social relations, identities, social institutions, and cultural landscape" (p. 168). He posits that in addition to the overt homophobic violence queer people face, compulsory heterosexual norms can be considered psychological attacks on queer individuals' selfhood.

These studies provide evidence of the pervasiveness of cisheteronormativity in ELT and its dire impact. There is a clear and urgent need for classroom practice that reaffirms queer students and combats gender- and sexuality-based oppression and marginalization. The

following section explores literature on various suggested and attempted approaches to queering the English language classroom.

2.5.2 Approaches to Queering the ELT Classroom

The urgent academic and personal impacts of cisheteronormativity reinforce the need for queered approaches to language teaching, and many suggestions exist for ways to do so. Nelson's (1999) discussion of a conversation on identities in a community college ESL class in the United States provides an early example of a queer inquiry approach. The teacher led a discussion around an image of two women holding hands, about their possible relationship, the origins of students' beliefs, and cross-cultural exploration of homosocial behaviour in students' home cultures. This activity seems well suited to a heterogenous ESL classroom in a relatively liberal context. Nelson (1999) also provides a list of critical questions on the social construction and performance of sexual identities (p. 378) that could be utilized in or adapted for other classroom activities.

Curran's (2006) reflexive study of his ESL classroom in Australia proposes that Nelson's (1999) approach would have benefitted his learners more than the identity-based activity he actually conducted. Curran (2006) explains how a reading and subsequent question and answer session that centered the teacher and relied on his personal knowledge failed to engage his students or challenge their normative assumptions. In reflection, he suggests instead reframing the students' questions to deconstruct their underlying beliefs, thereby decentering the teacher and shifting the focus to the structure that others, rather than the others themselves (Curran, 2006).

Zimman (2017) discusses how language upholds cisnormativity and offers strategies for trans-affirming inclusive language. His advice includes replacing gendered language for job and family vocabulary, such as 'fireman' or 'mother and father', with gender-neutral terminology, such as 'firefighter' or 'parents', where possible. He also recommends teaching

gender-neutral pronouns, adopting gender neutrality where gender is irrelevant, and addressing gender without essentializing or generalizing when it is relevant. Adopting these approaches in the language classroom would provide students such as those in Moore's (2016) study the necessary vocabulary for navigating queer topics and managing levels of disclosure.

Paiz (2018) notes the difficulty of operationalizing the concept of queering the ELT classroom, and proposes that teachers first reflexively consider their own biases and learn to interrogate the social construction of all identity categories in order to guide students in doing the same. He also suggests critically questioning the identity representations in textbooks, such as by asking students to imagine non-traditional families and compare them to those found in textbooks, or discussing why a text about a famous queer person focuses on or omits their sexuality.

Similarly, Scott (2020) proposes teaching family vocabulary using supplementary family trees displaying a wider variety of relationships, including same-sex couples, single parents, and adoptees, as well as discussing the pronouns of characters in texts and textbooks. He advises adding supplementary questions to skills and systems lessons asking how the topic or grammar could apply differently to various minoritized groups such as queer or disabled people. He also proposes designing supplementary activities around more overtly queer topics such as ballroom culture or images such as pride parades, as well as queer-coded images that could potentially, but not universally, be read as queer in order to create space for various identities. Seburn's (2019) sample textbook chapter executes similar ideas; his activities include characters of various intersectional identities engaged in daily life situations, including straight and same-sex couples, an immigrant woman, and a drag performer.

It is important to consider that both Nelson (1999) and Curran's (2006) studies take place in ESL contexts in relatively queer-friendly environments. The question remains

whether the critical-inquiry approach they recommend is equally applicable in EFL contexts. Including various groups in images or questioning practices, as proposed by Paiz (2018), Scott (2020), and Seburn (2019), incorporates intersectionality and aims to both explore and usualize difference without essentializing any particular minority group. Usualizing refers to affirming an identity as usual and unremarkable without othering or reinforcing the binary of normal and abnormal (The Classroom, n.d.). However, as Nelson (1999) cautioned, inclusion-based approaches may not translate across cultures, and some EFL contexts may even be unwelcoming or hostile to overt queer representation in the classroom. Paiz (2019) refers to these as "frigid environments" (p. 272).

The context of a religious women's college in Japan could qualify as one such unwelcoming environment. O'Mochain (2006) worried that focusing on queer issues in his cultural studies classes could risk his job security (p. 52), so he incorporated local queer voices into an activity with a linguistic focus. His reflexive account describes exploiting previously recorded interviews with queer and straight Japanese individuals to study interaction language while simultaneously discussing gender and sexual identity. The use of local narratives counters the notion of queerness as Western and makes activities more culturally relevant (O'Mochain, 2006).

This activity was designed for high-level English users in a cultural studies course, and one may question its applicability to general English-language courses or lower-level language learners. However, local materials, if accessible, could be adapted to various levels and EFL contexts, as suggested by Moore (2019). O'Mochain's (2006) activity provides an example of using a queer-pedagogy strategy of critical questioning in an environment perceived as unwelcoming.

The studies and proposals discussed in this section offer a range of activities and interventions aimed at challenging cisheteronormativity in the language classroom. Some of

them utilize an inclusion-based approach while others focus more on a queer-pedagogy approach of critical questioning. It is useful to consider the approaches and interventions being applied and suggested in other English-learning contexts, and to question whether those approaches are applicable, practicable, and indeed being attempted in the Turkish context.

2.5.3 Queering the Turkish ELT Classroom

While many ESL environments are welcoming of queer identities, many EFL environments are less so, including my teaching setting of Türkiye. While queerness is not prohibited in Türkiye, the category is also not protected under human rights laws, and limits are imposed on queer expression citing concerns about morality (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014). According to Bakacak and Öktem (2014), traditional cisheteronormative roles are considered elements of national identity and negative attitudes toward homosexuality widely persist.

Correspondingly, Selvi and Kocaman's (2021) mixed-methods content analysis of in-house EFL materials produced by a large state university in Türkiye found the materials highly heteronormative, mirroring Gray (2013), Paiz (2015), and Hampson's (2020) findings. The locally-produced materials excluded queer identities while including many stereotypes of binary gender and gender-essentializing pseudoscientific texts about innate gender-based personality traits (Selvi & Kocaman, 2021).

However, Michell (2009) and Tekin (2011) both show that Turkish EFL students are willing to discuss queer issues. Michell (2009) recounts a lesson he conducted with Turkish EFL students at an IB high school that involved a presentation of images of same-sex couples and homophobic hate crimes, quotes from Turkish queer people on homophobia, and a discussion of homophobia. Tekin's (2011) action research study with a university-level EFL class involved a pre- and post-activity questionnaire on students' attitudes toward queerness, surrounding an intervention that included showing images of gay symbols, considering "contradictory views" (p. 219) on homosexuality, and reading about local queer culture.

Following the lesson, students reported feeling more comfortable with the topic (Tekin, 2011). While both these lessons utilized local context for relevance and evinced that queer issues can be discussed in Turkish classrooms, both also focused on queer people as victims and others, potentially reinforcing marginalization and failing to challenge heteronormativity in any meaningful way.

2.6 Conclusions

From this selective literature review, we see that ELT classrooms routinely reinforce cisheteronormative oppression through both lack of queer representation and reliance on normative gender and sexuality stereotypes, and that this fact creates a hostile environment for students with potentially dire social and academic consequences. As a queer English language instructor myself, I take the position that ELT must do more to challenge rather than replicate oppressive cisheteronormative attitudes.

This chapter has explored two main approaches to queering the language classroom: increasing inclusion and representation of queer identities on the one hand, and the critical questioning of gender and sexuality identities on the other. Critical questioning of identities corresponds with a queer theory approach, reflecting the belief that identities are discursive and socially constructed, and therefore best challenged by questioning the oppressive social conditions that create them. While the inclusion approach may reflect a more essentialist approach to identity, the inherent contradiction of queer theory is that queer identities are promoted at the same time they are challenged, and representation may retain expedient uses even when addressed through a queer theory lens.

While Nelson expresses a clear preference for queer critical questioning and warns of the risks of an inclusion approach to queering the classroom, many other writers in the field propose a combination of inclusion and questioning. However, much of the existing literature on queering ELT classrooms is suppositional rather than empirical, and is primarily based in

socially liberal ESL contexts. Several studies involve high-level language learners or those in content-based courses rather than general English courses. This raises questions as to which approaches are relevant and practicable in EFL contexts or with lower-level learners.

I found few real-life accounts of challenging cisheteronormativity in EFL classrooms, especially in less-welcoming environments. Merse (2022) notes the need for further research on actual classroom practice, especially in contexts that censor queer identities, and Paiz (2019) states that "even in frigid environments, we must seek out ways to challenge discourses that marginalize student populations" (p. 272).

Existing accounts of lessons on queer issues in Türkiye fail to challenge hegemonic cisheteronormative discourses. To the best of my knowledge, no research has yet been done on queering EFL in Türkiye. My study aims to address that gap by exploring accounts of queer EFL teachers' lived experiences of challenging cisheteronormative discourses in our classrooms. What strategies and approaches are actually used by queer teachers in English preparatory programs at Turkish universities, and why?

Chapter 3: Methodology

English Language Teaching (ELT) relies on normative tropes to express clear meaning, often resulting in the perpetuation of harmful oppressive structures like cisheteronormativity. As seen in the previous chapter, much of the existing literature on the subject of challenging cisheteronormativity in ELT is either hypothetical or focused on ESL classrooms in environments accepting of queer identities. Researchers in the field have called for further research both on actual classroom practice (Merse, 2022) and practice in less welcoming environments (Paiz, 2019). The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies and approaches used by queer teachers in English preparatory programs at Turkish universities to combat cisheteronormativity in their EFL classrooms and the reasoning behind those strategies, using a queer theory lens. This study aims to investigate the following questions:

1. Do participant queer EFL teachers in Turkish university preparatory programs address cisheteronormativity in their classrooms, whether directly or indirectly?
2. Do they introduce queer issues or representation into their classrooms, whether overtly or discreetly?
3. How do they navigate instances of cisheteronormative attitudes, homophobia, or transphobia when these arise spontaneously?
4. How does the teaching environment impact their approaches and experiences?

This chapter will examine how this study has been organized. I first discuss the research paradigm and genre for this study, followed by the research setting and sampling strategy. I then explain my procedures for data collection and analysis, and discuss relevant issues of ethics and validity. Finally, I provide an overview of how my findings will be presented in the following chapters.

3.1 Paradigm and Genre

3.1.1 Critical Qualitative Research

My study is situated within a critical qualitative research paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2018a) note that research within the qualitative paradigm is vast and varied, but united by an interpretive approach to knowledge (p. 17). They suggest that qualitative inquiry is currently evolving to become more aligned with social justice efforts and critical frameworks.

My aim to explore particular teachers' classroom practices within a particular setting alongside their own understanding of their approaches reflects a belief that individual experiences provide valuable knowledge about the world. Qualitative inquiry assumes subjective, socially constructed realities and focuses on understanding and interpreting subjective experiences; this is in contrast to quantitative research, which assumes an objective, separate reality and seeks to determine cause and effect or predict outcomes in controlled settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The qualitative paradigm rests on the belief that objective truth does not exist, but rather that "all truths are partial and incomplete" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018b, p. 210). Therefore, qualitative researchers construct knowledge and understanding from naturally occurring settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This study's dual focus on combatting cisheteronormative classroom practice and examining whether and how contextual power structures may impact teachers' practices reflects a critical approach to research. Critical research assumes that knowledge is mediated by unjust power structures surrounding race, class, gender, and socioeconomic status; therefore, the goal of critical research is not only to understand phenomena but also to confront injustice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Critical researchers take an open stance against these systems of oppression and domination, seeking to empower the disempowered and contribute to a more just world.

Queer theory, itself situated in a poststructuralist worldview, also reflects the belief that experience is mediated by power structures, and the view that truth is socially constructed and partial. Queer theory has a dual focus of destabilizing the binaries that lead to the marginalization of subordinated identities while also centering and forwarding the voices of members of those marginalized groups, as discussed in the previous chapter. This study will utilize both of these aspects of the queer theory lens by focusing on the narratives of queer instructors and their personal experiences combatting cisheteronormativity.

3.1.2 Narrative Research

From the standpoint that knowledge is partial and subjective, narrative accounts of personal experiences contribute to deeper understanding of the world and of particular phenomena. Storytelling allows people to make meaning of their actions, experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and to communicate their subjective truth to others (Chase, 2018). As Riessman (2008) notes, narratives recount a past experience while also providing a means for the speaker to make sense of that experience (p. 8). Furthermore, narratives can also reflect the storyteller's "interpersonal, cultural, institutional, and historical contexts" (Chase, 2018, p. 947), allowing for consideration of the impact of those factors.

Narrative research is particularly applicable for investigating both lived experience and power structures, as it can empower marginalized people to communicate their own points of view as the protagonist of their own stories (Chase, 2018). Counternarratives, those narratives that focus on the knowledge of marginalized people, challenge the often unquestioned primary or official narratives that uphold hegemonic power structures (Given, 2008). As a methodological approach, counterstorytelling developed from critical race theory with the intention of giving voice to those made invisible by dominant narratives, and is therefore applicable to cisheteronormativity's erasure of queer people (Wagaman et al., 2018).

Queer narrative research uplifts queer voices and promotes understanding by "describ[ing] direct actions informed and enacted in the intersection of the personal, the political and the pedagogical" (Grace & Benson, 2000, p. 89).

Stories are also a powerful way to collect detailed data (Torres, 2021). Narrative inquiry can provide detailed accounts of lived experiences and the meaning the narrators give to those experiences. While researchers and disciplines differ in their definitions of narrative, this study will define a narrative as a bounded segment of discourse about a discrete incident that occurred in the past (Riessman, 2008, 2012), allowing me to gather richly detailed data about classroom events wherein cisheteronormativity was addressed or avoided. I also draw on Chase's (2018) definition of a personal narrative as "a way of understanding one's own or others' actions; [and] of organizing events, objects, feelings, or thoughts in relation to each other" (p. 951).

Due to sampling constraints described below, my study will combine narrative inquiry and autoethnography, exploring my own stories alongside those of other participants. This paper defines autoethnographic research as an autobiographical type of narrative (Torres, 2021) that can be applied critically "to analyze how structures of power inherent in culture inform some aspect of [the researcher's] own story" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 60). Manning (2017) notes that autoethnography is increasingly utilized as a queer research method because, like queer theory, it assumes multiple subjectivities and forms of knowledge and recognizes the transformative potential of research (p. 6). Similarly, Adams and Jones (2011) note several analogues between autoethnography and queer theory, such as shared aims to "disrupt traditional and dominant ideas" (p. 110) about research and social norms, respectively.

As this study focuses on a specific type of classroom incident, the challenging of cisheteronormativity, using a narrative approach allows for gathering targeted data that would

be difficult to obtain through ethnographic observation of all classroom activities. While a phenomenological approach could also shed light on teachers' experiences, this study aims to focus on teachers' practical approaches to combatting cisheteronormativity as well as their reasoning. Narrative accounts of discrete events allow for a focus on each incident as a whole (Chase, 2018), providing insight on what actions took place alongside how they were experienced. Furthermore, although a fully autoethnographic approach could provide in-depth data of my own classroom experiences, incorporating the voices of other participants provides a wider range of experience within the setting and allows for comparison across multiple cases (Wells, 2011).

3.2 Setting and Sampling

3.2.1 Setting

This study is being conducted among English language instructors teaching at universities in Türkiye. I have chosen this setting for both its practicality as my own teaching context and its relevance as a "frigid environment" as described by Paiz (2019).

Many Turkish universities require incoming students to either pass an English proficiency exam or complete an English preparatory program, known in Turkish as *hazırlık*. The students in these English preparatory programs are first-year university students, typically between 17 and 20 years of age. Most of the students are Turkish nationals, though some programs will also see enrollment by international students. Programs may use internationally produced texts and materials and/or produce their own, and may focus on English for Academic Purposes as well as general English skills and systems. These programs exist at both public and private universities across the country.

As discussed in the introduction, Türkiye can be considered a relatively unwelcoming environment for queer individuals. While queerness is not outright criminalized, queer identities are not considered a protected category, queer events are often banned, and social

messages against queer people are very visible in society and media, including from people in positions of significant power (Arat & Nuňez, 2017; Bakacak & Öktem, 2014; Bayramoğlu, 2021; Engin, 2015; Küçükgöçmen, 2021; Özbay & Öktem, 2021). At the same time, a culture of fear within academia has been cultivated since 2016 (Baser et al., 2017; Taştan et al., 2020). Discussions of queerness, therefore, can be challenging even in academic contexts.

3.2.2 Sampling

This study aims to learn from queer EFL teachers who have experiential knowledge of ELT as well as lived experience of the oppressive power structures of cisheteronormativity. In keeping with the aims of critical research and queer theory, I particularly sought queer teachers with an active interest in challenging cisheteronormativity in EFL, in order to learn from their experience of and personal dedication to addressing the problem.

Qualitative research uses purposive sampling techniques, or the careful selection of participants for their ability to provide useful data (Farrugia, 2018), in contrast to the representative or probabilistic sampling techniques of quantitative research. According to Cleary et al. (2014), "participants should be likely to generate rich, dense, focused information on the research question" (p. 473). However, Nelson (2006) notes the difficulties of conducting research on the topic of queerness in particular, stating that the threat of negative consequences and homophobic backlash can limit people's willingness to participate in studies related to queerness, and that the subject can be challenging to discuss and interpret. She suggests that self-reflexive accounts are therefore a relevant method to use in queer research (Nelson, 2006, p. 4).

For these reasons, this study will utilize critical case sampling combined with convenience sampling. Critical case sampling involves selecting participants that will provide highly applicable critical information (Farrugia, 2018, p. 70), while convenience sampling involves recruiting easily accessible participants. I chose to recruit two instructors from my

existing professional network who have already displayed active interest in disrupting cisheteronormativity in EFL, and to also include myself as a participant. According to McGrath et al. (2019) it can be easier for a researcher to establish rapport with respondents whom they already know prior to the study (p. 1003). Moreover, my positionality as a queer activist researcher and study co-participant also helps me better understand my co-participants and creates a degree of symmetry between us. Researcher participation additionally serves to destabilize the insider/outsider dichotomy of non-participant research, which presents both benefits and challenges described further below.

While the subject of this study is relevant to many different stakeholders in education, my focus is on teachers' experiences. The perspectives and experiences of queer students are very important, and have been explored in other contexts in other studies (Evripidou, 2020; Kappra & Vandrick, 2006; King, 2008; Moore, 2016, 2019). Administrators, such as preparatory English department directors, also have a key role to play in challenging cisheteronormativity in EFL. However, I have not sought the perspectives of students or administrators in this study, as I am interested in exploring teachers' actual classroom practices and the reasons for their decisions. The perspectives of queer English learners in Türkiye and preparatory English department administrators would be valuable topics for further study.

3.3 Methods and Procedures

3.3.1 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

As this study involves both autoethnographic and participant narratives, data have been collected in two ways. In this section I will first discuss participant data followed by autoethnographic data.

I collected narrative data from my co-participants through semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a common means of collecting narrative data (Kartch, 2017). Qualitative

interviews can "give voice to minorities and groups in society that may not be heard elsewhere" (McGrath et al., 2019, p. 1002), as suits counternarratives. Semi-structured interviews include only a few predetermined questions and allow flexibility to explore participant responses (McGrath et al., 2019). In semi-structured interviews, the participant is empowered to lead the conversation and include details they consider meaningful, disrupting the traditional power relations between interviewer and interviewee (Riessman, 2008, p. 24). Allowing for extended answers in this way also encourages the interviewees to provide more detail and go into more depth regarding their experiences (Riessman, 2008, p. 26).

Each participant was given the option of holding their interview on Zoom or in person; both chose Zoom. Prior to their interview, each participant was given a description of my study's aims and procedures, as well as my background, both to establish informed consent and to build rapport and trust (McGrath et al., 2019). Following the collection of basic demographic information, I asked the participants to recall and describe incidents, both planned and unplanned, in which they acted to subvert cisheteronormativity in their classrooms. Respondents were asked to describe in detail both planned and unplanned incidents, minimally one and ideally two of each, including their choices and students' actions and reactions.

I also sought deeper understanding of these events by utilizing two of David Tripp's (2011) approaches to Critical Incident Analysis: The *Why?* Challenge and Dilemma Identification. The *Why?* Challenge involves asking respondents to elaborate on the reasons behind their actions until they reach normative assumptions informing their behaviour (Tripp, 2011) or endpoints beyond their control (Ayres, 2017) to reveal the power structures involved. Dilemma Identification asks the narrator to identify difficult decisions/choices made during their incidents and consider why they decided against alternative possible actions (Ayres, 2017; Mohammed, 2016; Tripp, 2011).

This interview approach was designed to not only collect subjects' descriptions of events but also to allow for their self-discovery (Dilley, 2004, p. 130). Interview questions were also informed by existing literature on the subject, which suggests that social and professional pressures in frigid environments can sometimes influence EFL teachers' approaches to addressing queer issues in their classrooms (O'Mochain, 2006).

The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes and were recorded. Recording was necessary to ensure accurate transcription of the interviews into text form for data analysis. As both interviews were conducted via Zoom, they were both audio and video recorded due to the limitations of the platform, but only audio recordings were used in the analysis.

I then transcribed the interviews, replacing all names with pseudonyms and removing any details that could identify anyone in the stories to maintain confidentiality. Participants were sent a copy of their transcripts for member checking to ensure their accuracy and allow for any corrections (McGrath et al., 2019; Whitt, 1991). For data analysis purposes explained below, I then condensed each incident into block narratives that reconstitute the story chronologically while maintaining the speakers' own words.

The autoethnographic data took the form of my own written responses to the same questions posed in interviews. I described the events of my own planned and unplanned incidents along with reflexive answers to the Critical Incident Analysis prompts, and I subsequently reconstituted my own responses as condensed narratives.

Crawley (2012) describes autoethnography as "a kind of self-interview" (p. 144) and "an extension of the active interview approach" (p. 153). Similarly, Poerwandari (2021) describes autoethnography as a narrative analysis of the researcher's own experience (p. 312). The autoethnographic data were collected prior to the participant interviews, as this helped separate my own thoughts from those of my participants, as described in more detail below. It

also functioned similarly to a pilot interview, allowing me to refine my data-collection criteria (Chang, 2007, p. 212).

Both the interview data and the autoethnographic data comprised recounted memories of classroom interactions alongside perceptions and current reflections on those memories. Memory is both fallible and subjective, and the incidents recounted may have been perceived or may be remembered differently by other people present during them; however, this study aims to explore and understand the queer instructors' own experiences and perceptions of the events. Data in the form of personal memory allows insight into personal lived experience of the phenomenon being studied, while the perceptions and reflections on those experiences affords deeper insight into the participants' thoughts and feelings surrounding those experiences (see Chang, 2007, for more on memory).

I did not collect physical data such as supplementary classroom materials, as this study aims to interrogate the power relations at play in addition to exploring classroom practice. Furthermore, this study also aims to consider both planned and unplanned instances of cisheteronormativity in the classroom. Focusing on interview data maintains parity across each narrative instance and allows for the possibility that materials may not have been used.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

Both the autoethnographic and interview data were analyzed in two phases following Riessman's frameworks for thematic and structural narrative analysis. First, I analyzed each narrative for themes. Thematic analysis is applied in many types of qualitative research. However, thematic narrative analysis involves keeping stories intact and interpreting each incident as a whole, rather than breaking them down into segments as in other genres of qualitative analysis (Chase, 2018; Riessman, 2008). According to Parcell and Baker (2017), thematic narrative analysis "helps researchers determine what moments of personal experience the narrator has determined are noteworthy and meaningful" (p. 1071).

The focus in thematic analysis is on the content of the story rather than its form (Holstein, 2018; Riessman, 2008), so I analyzed each discrete incident as a separate narrative using the condensed block format stories developed from the transcripts. These block narratives use the participants' original words rearranged by the researcher for chronology, clarity, and conciseness. Using a queer theory lens focused on the critique of power and power relations (Manning, 2017), each incident was inductively coded to explore how cisheteronormativity was addressed and navigated, as well as to discover the relationships between the participants' beliefs and assumptions and the actions they took. Themes were subsequently compared across participants to establish whether they are shared or unique (Parcell & Baker, 2017).

I then also conducted a structural analysis of each narrative. Structural analysis considers the narrative form and rhetorical devices used in the narration of a story (Riessman, 2008) and can illuminate how the narrator makes sense of their experience, as well as their own assessment of their story (Parcell & Baker, 2017; Patterson, 2013; Wells, 2011). Each transcript or text response was broken down into independent and subordinate clauses, which were then deductively coded using Labov's six element model for structural narrative analysis (Labov, 2013), a foundational approach to narrative research (Patterson, 2013; Riessman, 2008). The six elements are: Abstract (what the story is about), Orientation (setting and characters), Complicating Actions (plot events), Resolution (the outcome), Coda (the conclusion of the story), and Evaluation (narrator commentary) (Labov, 2013, Parcell & Baker, 2017; Riessman, 2008; Wells, 2011). While Labovian analysis may also examine the temporal organization of a story (Labov, 2013), in keeping with the purposes of this study, my analysis focused on the categorization of each clause. I then examined each category in detail within each individual story and each participant's responses to uncover insights relevant my research questions.

Both structural and thematic narrative analyses approach narratives as a textual representation of events, while some other types of narrative analysis treat narratives as performance or social interaction (Parcell & Baker, 2017; Patterson, 2013; Riessman, 2008). I chose the textual approach for this study for both practical and methodological reasons. Methodologically, viewing narrative accounts as "social product, not as social process" (Holstein, 2018, p. 703) facilitates exploration of the actions and decisions the participant teachers took in their classrooms and why. Furthermore, while the narratives of the external participants were collected through interviews involving interpersonal dialogue, data collection for the autoethnographic portion of this study took the form of self-reflective written text with no dialogic component, precluding it from dialogic analysis. Analyzing all narratives from a textual perspective better maintains parity among all the participants.

Riessman (2008) notes that structural analysis can be combined with thematic analysis to deepen and broaden interpretation of narrative data. Structural analysis may either reinforce or complicate the thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). Additionally, using two types of analysis allows for within-method triangulation (Casey & Murphy, 2009; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007), as detailed below, which can strengthen the credibility of the analysis. This two-pronged approach to data analysis has helped me explore my research questions in more depth by uncovering not only how participants address and navigate cisheteronormativity in their classrooms, but also what role the teaching environment and existing power structures play in their decisions.

3.4 Validity Checks and Research Ethics

As qualitative research does not aim to represent any objective, generalizable, or replicable truth, there is some debate about what constitutes validity in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting a study ethically and rigorously, in a way that instills

confidence in readers and other researchers (pp. 237–238). This section will discuss my efforts to establish credibility and trustworthiness, as well as ethical considerations pertinent to this study.

3.4.1 Procedural Checks

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), validity and reliability can be approached throughout all steps of a study, from its conceptualization to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation (p. 238). This chapter lays out in detail how this study has been conceptualized and planned, and reflects that this study has been designed and conducted according to established research norms and standards, while the following chapters will clearly explain my coding decisions and interpretations.

Riessman (2008) notes that narrative studies involve two layers of validity—that of the story told by the participant and that of the researcher's interpretations (p. 184). For the former, member checks are a means of establishing data credibility. As mentioned earlier, each participant was asked to confirm the accuracy of their transcript to ensure that it correctly reflects their experience and perspective (Burnard et al., 2008; McGrath et al., 2019; Whitt, 1991). To address the latter layer, I employed within-method triangulation, or conducting two different types of analysis on the same data. This approach was chosen to increase the academic rigor of my analysis and enhance the inferences I draw from the data (Casey & Murphy, 2009; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). While another researcher with a different interpretive lens may derive different findings from the same data, detailed explanation of my analysis and direct quotes from participants in the following chapter reflect how my interpretations are rooted in the data.

3.4.2 Transferability

This study seeks to fill a gap in the knowledge on actual classroom practice of challenging cisheteronormativity in EFL classrooms in less welcoming environments (Merse,

2022; Paiz, 2019) by exploring the experiences and perspectives of a small number of queer activist teachers in university preparatory programs in Istanbul, Türkiye, whose insider knowledge of the problem and personal dedication to addressing it may provide useful insights. While this study makes no claims of generalizability, findings may be relevant to challenging cisheteronormativity in EFL in other similar contexts. The detailed description of the historical, sociopolitical, and academic context of this study provided in this report's introduction can help readers to determine whether the findings are relevant in their own context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 256–257).

3.4.3 Reflexivity/Subjectivity

In the context of qualitative research, explicit discussion of the researcher's own role and relationships with participants, as well as open discussion of any interpretive biases, can also lend credibility to a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). "Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (Lincoln et al., 2018, p. 246). It involves the researcher interrogating how their own subjective identities influence their choice of research problem, interactions with participants, analysis, and writing (Lincoln et al., 2018, pp. 246–247). It serves to clarify the researcher's own biases and how their views may impact their research.

Interpretation is a subjective endeavour, informed by the researcher's positionality and beliefs. Within a qualitative research paradigm, researcher subjectivity is recognized as inevitable and is used as an interpretive advantage (Kilbourn, 2006), while critical research takes an openly activist stance against oppression and marginalization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By employing a queer theory perspective for my analysis, I aim to empower queer voices while simultaneously challenging and critiquing the assumptions and institutions that categorize and marginalize them. This critical lens has informed my research questions and participant selection criteria. I am purposefully and

openly seeking to determine whether and how the sociocultural teaching context impacts teachers' approaches to challenging cisheteronormativity. I am purposefully seeking the input of queer teachers who share my beliefs around the importance of challenging the social structures that maintain cisheteronormative oppression.

This study has been inspired by my own experiences as a queer EFL teacher trying to challenge the cisheteronormativity of EFL while balancing safety and job security concerns in highly cisheteronormative teaching contexts. I have been teaching English for over 17 years in several international environments, all of which might be considered frigid to varying degrees, and have lived and worked in Türkiye for more than a decade. My lived experience as an English teacher affords me in-depth familiarity with the field of EFL, and my status as a so-called "native speaker" is largely privileged within the field. My existing knowledge as a queer activist researcher and co-participant in the study affords me a familiarity with terminology, concepts, and concerns relevant to the queer community that will provide me with valuable insight and aid my interpretations.

My positionality in this study also requires a great deal of self-awareness, and my own understandings have also been tested and expanded through this study. While my motivation for this research is openly personal and activist in nature, I recognize the importance of my analysis remaining clearly rooted in the data and of avoiding researcher confirmation bias. My position as researcher has involved designing the study, determining whose voices to include, and interpreting their narratives. In addition to member checks and dual analysis, I have kept a research journal throughout the study to document my own changing perspectives and question my own assumptions, separate my own thoughts from those of other participants, and consider the impact of my position and identities—especially as a cisgender, able-bodied, white US citizen and native speaker of English—on my analysis and vis-à-vis the other participants (Milner, 2007).

It is also important to note that while I have lived for many years in Türkiye, I was born and raised in the United States and have been educated in North American schools and universities. While my international experience has expanded my worldview, I nonetheless bring a North American perspective to this study. Furthermore, my involvement with the Istanbul queer community has been somewhat limited. I have actively engaged with groups and events that take place in English or offer translation, but many community events are held exclusively in Turkish or other local languages in which I am not proficient. My knowledge of the local community is partial, like all knowledge, and derives from a combination of personal experience, popular media, and academic study.

3.4.4 Ethical Considerations

Heggen and Guillemin (2012) identify the key ethical principles of research involving humans as "respect for human beings and research integrity, beneficence, and justice" (p. 466). Prior to commencing my research, I sought and obtained ethical approval for this study through Memorial University of Newfoundland's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research. While all researchers must attend to research ethics, this study involves a vulnerable population "pervasively experiencing discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization" (Price et al. 2020, p. 215) and requiring especially careful ethical consideration. Additionally, narrative and autoethnographic research methods involve particular ethical concerns regarding disclosure for not only the narrators but also other individuals present in their stories.

As previously mentioned, participants in a study about queer issues may face homophobic backlash (Nelson, 2006). Such potential backlash could result in not only social and psychological consequences, but potentially also economic effects such as the limitation of future job opportunities. Even if my respondents publicly align themselves as queer

activists, it is important to protect their privacy as study participants (see Heggen & Guillemin, 2012, for an account of a participant seeking publication of their real name). Therefore, informed consent was obtained and confirmed prior to data collection. I ensured the participants understood the nature and purpose of my study, how the data would be used, the potential risks of participation, how their privacy would be maintained during and after the study, and the limitations to anonymity within a small social group such as queer EFL teachers in Istanbul. In the following chapters, I will refer to participants by pseudonyms and remove identifying details. Information regarding my participants' nationality, gender and sexual identity, age range, and years of teaching experience, however, may impact their experiences and are therefore included. Workplaces mentioned in the narratives are described only as small, mid-sized, or large private or public universities in Türkiye.

The narratives collected in this study center around classroom experiences, thereby including characters beyond the narrators themselves, whose privacy rights must also be considered (Chang, 2007; Crawley, 2012; Tolich, 2010; Tullis, 2021). Other individuals that appear in my own or my participants' incidents have been de-identified and referred to generally as students, with no names given. I do not consider these individuals to be study participants, however, as they are not the focus of the narratives and they are not identifiable (Tullis, 2021, p. 104). Because the data collected in this study involve past experiences, it is possible that I and the other teacher-participants may not even remember the real names of the students present in a particular event, nor be in contact with them.

3.4.4.1 Ethical Considerations in Autoethnography.

While the use of pseudonyms and removal of identifying characteristics is a standard practice for protecting anonymity in research with human participants (Heggen & Guillemin, 2012; Tullis, 2021), the autoethnographic portion of this study cannot be anonymized in the same way. By including autoethnographic data in this study, I open myself up to the same

risks I warn my participants of. By sharing details of my own life in a public, non-retractable manuscript, I invite potential critique, prejudice, and barriers to future employment (Tullis, 2021). Tolich (2010) likens autoethnographic research to a permanent tattoo, and notes that "[a]nticipating this type of vulnerability to self is a foundational guideline for autoethnographers" (p. 1606).

In fact, this invitation to risk and vulnerability has deeply impacted me in the planning of this study, slowing my progress and making me second-guess my choices. I worry that this project could leave me personally and professionally vulnerable. I fear the potential outcomes of exposing my queerness in so public and permanent a document, especially insofar as it may limit my future employment opportunities in some locations where EFL teaching jobs are generally available. As noted in the introduction, I have also worried about undertaking this project in my current location. However, I believe in the value of this study and therefore choose, as both an educator and a proud member of the queer community, to accept the risks, however hesitantly.

3.5 Data Presentation

The following chapter will present the findings from the interview data, while the findings from the autoethnographic data will be presented in the subsequent chapter. First, a summary of findings from both the thematic and structural analyses of all data is provided. Then each participant's narrative incidents are presented and discussed individually. Presentation of more detailed findings is organized according to participant, with thematic results for all incidents presented first, followed by structural results. In each section, planned incidents are discussed prior to unplanned incidents. This organization strategy was adopted to facilitate exploration of the research questions across incident, participant, and analysis type, as well as to help the reader follow the information.

My interpretations are explained thoroughly and evidence from the data is provided to help readers determine how I reached particular understandings and provide insight into my thought process. Direct quotations from participants' interviews and additional details from my autoethnographic reflections are also presented to support my interpretations. Quotations also serve to represent the participants in their own words. Within the thematic analysis sections, quotations are drawn from the block narratives created from the transcripts. To support my structural analysis, I provide examples from the coded transcripts, which include additional biographical and contextual data not specific to any particular incident. Following the presentation of findings, an additional discussion chapter will explore the findings' relationships to one another and to existing literature.

Chapter 4: Findings – Interviews

In its attempt to express clear meaning, English Language Teaching (ELT) often relies on and perpetuates stereotypes and normative expectations around gender and sexuality, among other identities. As discussed in the previous chapter, this study was designed to explore the lived experiences of queer English teachers challenging cisheteronormativity in their classrooms at university preparatory programs in Istanbul, Türkiye.

This study aims to investigate whether and how directly participant teachers address cisheteronormativity in their classrooms; whether they introduce queer issues or representation, either overtly or discreetly; how they navigate instances of homophobia, transphobia, and cisheteronormative attitudes; and how the teaching environment impacts their strategies and experiences. To explore these questions, both autoethnographic and interview data were collected on planned and unplanned instances of challenging cisheteronormativity in the classroom. Interviews were conducted with two participants whom I will refer to by the pseudonyms Serra and Amanda, while autoethnographic data were collected in the form of my own written responses to the interview questions. These data were analyzed both thematically and structurally, in the interest of within-method triangulation (Casey & Murphy, 2009; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). This chapter will present data collected from interview participants, while autoethnographic findings will be presented in the following chapter.

The findings start with an overview of themes followed by an overview of the structural findings for all participants, including references to the autoethnographic findings. I then present the full block narratives of each interview participant's incidents, condensed and sometimes reorganized from the original transcripts; these are provided in full in order to thoroughly honor the participants' voices and provide context for the reader to understand the analysis. The block narratives are followed by my findings from the thematic and structural

analyses of each of that participant's stories. While each story was analyzed separately following narrative analysis protocols, the detailed presentation of results will be grouped by participant, as this will be easier for readers to follow. I provide basic biographical details of each participant before presenting first the thematic and then the structural findings of that participant's stories, with detailed evidentiary excerpts from the condensed narratives and transcripts to support my interpretations.

4.1 Overview of Findings

4.1.1 Overview of Thematic Findings

The data collected in this study comprises 10 stories told by three different queer teacher narrators, including the autoethnographic data. Each individual story was condensed into a block narrative and inductively coded for themes to explore both the actions taken and approaches employed toward challenging cisheteronormativity, in relation to research questions 1–3, as well as for the narrator's contextual reasons for those approaches, in relation to research question 4. Table 1 presents an overview of themes grouped according to those two broad categories of what and why, and broken down according to the frequency of each theme across individual stories as well as participants. Evidence of these themes in the interview participants' stories will be presented in the following sections, grouped according to each participant and story, while evidence from autoethnographic data will be presented in the following chapter.

Table 1. Summary of Themes Across All Study Participants

All data	Theme	Number of stories	Number of participants
Approaches and Techniques RQ 1, 2, 3	Visual representation	2	2
	Queer language	5	3
	Queer celebrities	5	3
	Challenging assumptions	5	3
	Affirming identities	7	3
Contextual Factors RQ 4	Student level	3	2
	Comfort level	4	2
	Fear	5	3
	Need	8	3

With regard to research questions 1–3, which are focused on the introduction and navigation of queer topics in the preparatory English classroom and broadly grouped as approaches and techniques, the data revealed five major themes. Four of these are shared across all three participants, and three of them appear in half or more of the individual stories. Two participants made use of visual representations of queer individuals in their lessons, while all three participants introduced queer issues using relevant language, such as vocabulary or grammar. Queer celebrities were made a resource by all participants, across five different stories, both planned and unplanned. All three participants actively challenged student assumptions and stereotypes regarding gender norms and sexuality, across five planned and unplanned stories. Similarly, all participants also made a point of openly affirming queer identities, by usualizing or providing information, across seven of the ten stories.

With regard to research question 4, on the topic of how the teaching environment impacts each teacher's approaches and experiences and labeled in the table as contextual factors, I discovered four main themes. Two teachers were influenced by the level of their students, and two mentioned the level of comfort they had with their class as an important factor in their approaches. All three teachers also referred to fear of negative consequences, whether in terms of institution support and job security, or student reactions, as influencing how they address queer issues in the classroom. The perceived need for the students to be exposed to these issues and learn relevant language was the most frequent theme, appearing in eight of the ten stories across all three participants. This perceived need took many forms, from recognition that official materials fail to include queer topics, to students' lack of awareness around topics or language related to queer identities, to a feeling of responsibility for educating students about queer issues.

4.1.2 Overview of Structural Findings

Interview transcripts and the autoethnographic written response were deductively coded according to Labov's six categories of narrative function as described in the previous chapter. The codes as used in the excerpts are: Ab for Abstract, Or for Orientation, CA for Complicating Actions, Rs for Resolution, Co for Coda, and Ev for Evaluation. Clauses coded as CA are especially relevant to research questions 1–3 regarding strategies and approaches, while those coded as Or and Ev provide information especially relevant to research question 4 on the impact of the teaching environment on teachers' approaches and experiences. An aggregate summary is provided in the table below reflecting the data provided by all three participants across their stories. Each individual narrative will be presented in more detail below.

Table 2. Structural Metanarrative for All Study Participants

Category	Planned Incidents	Unplanned Incidents
Abstract (Ab)	Participants plan and lead activities challenging cisheteronormativity in their language classrooms.	Participants navigate unplanned instances of cisheteronormativity and homophobia in the classroom.
Orientation (Or)	Participants all identify as queer. They are teaching at both public and private universities in Istanbul in the late 2010s and early 2020s, and mention teaching students with varying backgrounds. They all mention the cisheteronormative and queer-antagonistic sociocultural and political context.	
Complicating Actions (CA)	Participants conduct vocabulary, writing, and speaking activities that incorporate queer language or images, or alter materials to incorporate queer representation.	Participants question and challenge cisheteronormative assumptions and respond to overtly homophobic comments.
Resolution (Rs)	Students are exposed to gender-neutral language, non-normative gender presentation, and same-sex relationships.	Cisheteronormative assumptions are discredited and sometimes dismissed; student allies support and defend queerness.
Coda (Co)	Participants recognize the academic and social benefits of their interventions.	
Evaluation (Ev)	Participants are motivated by their personal experiences as queer people, recognition of students' limited awareness of queer issues, relevance of students' level of comprehension and production, feelings of responsibility, the academic and social justice relevance of queer inclusion, frustration with official materials, lack of or uncertainty about institutional support, fear of student complaints, and concern for job security.	

This table shows that teachers acted to challenge cisheteronormativity in their classrooms through planned and adapted vocabulary, writing, and speaking activities involving queer language and images, as well as challenging cisheteronormative assumptions and homophobic comments through questioning and challenging of stereotypes. Relevant factors regarding the setting include the teachers' own queer identities, the public or private nature of an institution, the time frame and sociopolitical climate in which the events took place, and the cisheteronormative local culture. Common factors addressed in the teachers' evaluations of the events included their own personal histories as queer teachers and learners, the students' limited awareness of queer issues, the students' levels of English, academic need and concerns regarding social justice, frustration with official curriculum and materials, and fears of student complaints and potential job loss.

While each narrative incident was coded separately, each participant also shared information about setting and motivation that is applicable to all of their incidents. These data are presented separately prior to the findings for each individual incident. Following that, transcript excerpts with Labov's code categories are presented for each incident and their related critical reflection responses. Due to the focus of this study, the sequential numbering of the complicating actions common to Labovian analysis is not presented; the numbers in the excerpts below refer to each clause's position in the transcript.

4.2 Interview Participant 1: Serra

Interview participant one is a queer, bisexual, cisgender woman with over 10 years of teaching experience who speaks Turkish as a first language. She will be referred to as Serra. Serra has taught in Türkiye and elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, primarily at university level, at both private and public institutions. She has worked primarily with higher-level English learners at B1 and B1+ levels on the CEFR[1] scale (broadly corresponding to

[1] The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a scale for describing language skill level.

intermediate and upper-intermediate). She expressed an interest in both feminist pedagogy and queer pedagogy. She is a member of a large LGBTQ+ civil organization in Türkiye. However, despite her voluntary work with that organization, she does not claim the label of activist because she feels it is too big a word for her to claim (Serra).

Three stories shared by Serra, of two planned incidents and one unplanned incident, are presented. All three stories took place at a large public university in the late 2010s and early 2020s. The planned incidents occurred in a face-to-face environment, and the unplanned incident happened in an online classroom. The block narratives of all three incidents compiled from Serra's interview are presented below, followed by thematic findings and structural findings from each incident.

4.2.1 Serra: Block Narratives

4.2.1.1 Planned Incident 1: He vs. They.

I was always interested in English being a gendered language while, grammatically at least, Turkish is not, so I always struggled with that aspect of English. Like if I'm making a general statement about a person whose gender is unknown, in Turkish we have [the gender-neutral third person singular pronoun] 'o', but in English I have to say 'he or she'. And I remember—this was 6th grade, so more than 20 years ago—I asked this question to my teacher and she said, "If the gender is unknown you have to use 'he'". But when I came to university, of course I started questioning it a bit more, and by that time the suggestions given by professors sort of varied. We had a very old, very old-school professor who suggested using the generic 'he' for example, and this was around 2008–2009, but then we had another professor who suggested using 'she' instead. But there was no discussion at the time of using singular 'they'.

But by 2019, the APA had recognized singular 'they' and Merriam Webster had made it the word of the year. Still, in writing, students have different strategies. They either do 'he'

slash ‘she’ (he/she) or only use the generic ‘he,’ and the one I hate the most is they do an ‘s’ and then a slash and then ‘he’ (s/he).

And what I do usually for any kind of error detection, I usually use samples from their own writing, of course anonymously. And then I distribute those papers so they can see each others’ writing, rather than seeing a sample essay written by a teacher or a writer, and I ask them to give feedback to each other or try to detect the issues. And it can be anything. It can be grammar; it can be related to organization or just content. So, what I did for that particular lesson [with a B1 level group] was I focused only on the use of ‘he’, because purely by coincidence I saw several students use the generic ‘he’ in their writing. That sort of gave me the idea like, ‘that could be a teaching moment.’ And there’s a practical reason to it as well, because we don’t really see that anymore nowadays. When they go out into the world, they’re gonna be warned about it or it’s gonna look very outdated and weird if they continue to use the generic ‘he’.

So, I [gave the students] those student samples and then I asked them again to read the essays [with the generic ‘he’]. I didn’t really say anything in particular, and then none of them really pointed it out. So, I took out the sample passages [of singular ‘they’] that I’d found on the internet, authentic written material in English, and I asked them to compare them. I had to ask them if ‘they’ referred to a group of people or a single person in the authentic material. But most of these students will study [STEM subjects], so we don’t have social-sciences-minded students. And that’s imprinted in the whole institution […] so it’s very difficult to open up that space where you can talk about social issues.

So […] with this group of students, in this culture, what they ask is, “*Hocam* [teacher], if we do this in the exam are we gonna get a lower score?” That was one of the first questions. And it’s super frustrating to hear this. And of course, the answer is no, I can’t really do that. And I don’t know how I feel about it. I only told them, “No, but this is how the language

evolved. This is how people use English now in writing and in speaking," so I feel like it's my responsibility to talk about the recent trends and updated information in class. And because I just hate the weird stuff they do to avoid saying 'they', I sort of suggest[ed] they use at least plural […] when they try to give an example of a general [person].

But to be honest, the singular 'they'—there are two sides of it. Using the generic 'he', now people don't do that anymore, and that's one side of it […]. But then there's this other side of it that there are people who purposefully use 'they/them' as their pronouns because 'he' or 'she' doesn't match with their gender identity. So basically, this singular 'they' class just as a writing convention, it's [also] sort of like an introduction to the singular 'they' that nonbinary people use. And I do mention celebrities later on that they may know of who use 'they/them' pronouns, and that that's also a thing. So, it's both keeping them informed and also trying to create at least some kind of awareness that there are people who do not position themselves at the two ends of the spectrum only. That's more nerve-wracking to be honest, that's why I need this introductory thing. Because you never know, especially in a public university […] There are students who come from very small places and very different socioeconomic backgrounds, so I can never know what the reaction would be. I've never had an incident where a student was especially confrontational, angry, or reactionary or anything, but you also don't know. And it's risky because if they say something super offensive, I also have to be prepared to deal with that comment.

Anyway, after this activity, there were a couple who tried to use [singular 'they']. There were a couple who used the plural form. And there was one […] he started using the generic 'he' and he hadn't used it before! One thing about this type of activity is that it sort of depends on student writing. If I don't receive a sample that contains the use of generic 'he', then [we can't do this activity]. But I think it would be helpful to sort of integrate it into the course material itself, rather than me bringing my own stuff on my own. So, I wish, and this is

something to do with the school and the admin and the curriculum office and whatever, but I think it should be an integral part of especially writing.

4.2.1.2 Planned Incident 2: Jane and Sheila.

So, I think it was […] the first semester that I taught [at this large public university]. And it's always a bit scary when you start in a new institution, and this being a state school, a public school, it's even—I dunno, I felt weird about it. In public universities, as you must be aware, there is very close inspection and policing […] and there is this self-censorship thing […] I'm super mindful of what I say, and when I say something that might be considered controversial, whatever, I always have something at the back of my head thinking, "Oh, is this going to end up in CİMER[2]"?

So, this was a B1 class, I think. I think it was an activity introducing modal verbs. And again, it's frustrating because I think it was in the book or one of the packs that they give us. These dialogues that model the language point that we're teaching, if it's between a couple it's usually a woman's name and a man's name. So [something] I do is I change those. I either make them very unambiguously two women's names or two men's names, and I wait for students to point out there was "a mistake". I've been doing this for a while. I feel like this is an easy way, like it's both practical from a lesson preparation point of view and it's also good to subvert [cisheteronormativity] in a very quick way.

So, it's paper waste, but I retyped it, and I changed the names to Jane and Sheila, and I brought it in. [One student] looked happy to be able to detect a mistake. Like, "*Hocam* [teacher], what's going on here?" And then I ask[ed], "why do you think it's a mistake?" And [this student replied], "This conversation looks like a conversation between a married couple…why are there two women's names?" And that's good because it sort of opens up space to talk about it. Because there's something, I don't know if it's called peripheral

[2] CİMER is an online system for reporting complaints to the office of the President of Türkiye.

learning, I don't know if there's terminology for it, but like 'being exposed'. Because the main objective of that lesson was present modals, but there's all these other things in the context that we don't really pay attention to. But those things also matter in my opinion.

And I started asking questions. It's always good in my opinion to start with a question rather than preaching. Because I don't know. I don't know where these kids are from. Maybe they have never been asked that question, like "is a relationship always between a man and a woman". And even if it's somewhere in their vicinity, this kind of thing, because they're exposed to so much media where there's more opportunity for them to see queer couples or queer people in general, it's always something different when they see it exist in a teaching material in a public university in Turkey.

So, then I ask[ed] them whether all romantic relationships or marriages are between a man and a woman. And in that class, it was a girl—and it's frustrating that it's always a girl—who's like, "oh yes *hocam*, *işte falan filan* [teacher, sure, okay]". And I think she turned to [the student who'd called it a mistake] and said something like "*geri kafalı* [backward thinking]", like it's such an outdated thing to say or something. I sort of confirmed what she said […] I said, "It's not a mistake, this is a relationship between two women."

And the guy, I don't remember him objecting to it that much. I think he just caught a mistake at that moment. I don't think it was from a homophobic place, it was just trying to test whether the teacher is providing the correct information or something, or they're working on good material or not. I think it's because they're not really used to seeing this kind of thing in a teaching material. But even so, it says something when they perceive something as a mistake or something as wrong.

4.2.1.3 Unplanned Incident 1: Single-Gender Schools.

So, this was again for writing, with an online B1 level class, and the topic that the school gave us was […] "Should parents send their children to single-gender schools". So [the

students] had to take a side and write about the advantages of sending children to mixed-gender schools or single-gender schools. And I, of course, anticipated some sort of—because it's such an old sort of mentality, of course I'm aware that people in the past thought that students concentrated better because there wouldn't be any romantic drama because everyone was attracted to the "opposite" gender, in quotation marks.

So of course […] I expected it, but I hadn't prepared anything for it. Because what we do [with a writing topic] is we brainstorm together and then we write an outline together categorizing those things that they just spelled out. We were using the Google Jamboard so I asked them to write stuff on it, and of course one of [the students wrote that] they would be able to concentrate better because there wouldn't be boys around or girls around, so they'd all be friendly and no relationship drama. Then I circled [that contribution] and I said, "Do you really believe that? Do you really think there's no romantic drama in a single-gender school?"

And I remember one of them said, "Yeah, because the opposite gender isn't there". And I asked, "So romance only happens between people who are 'opposite' gender?" and then there was silence, I think. I mean, it's lazy, in my opinion! Because of course they know that that's not a thing.

Then I think one of the women said that […] lesbian relationships in [girls' high schools] is something that is super common. And it's interesting that they don't say it about […] boys' schools. It's so weird because it's like there's this sexualization of all-girls schools. And then I said, "Yeah, we can't really assume there wouldn't be any sexual tension in an all-girls school or an all-boys school." And then I added, "Also, we can't really be sure if people in those schools are the gender that they are assigned," and I think that was a brain-freeze moment.

So, I switched to Turkish—I always feel like I'm heard better when I speak in Turkish—and I gave the example of [actor] Elliot Page. They know about him, because he

was super famous before he transitioned, so they were “huh, okay”. And there was one girl who apparently is a fan of him, so she was super excited that I gave that example. She actually unmuted herself and said that he wrote a book or something. It’s always helpful when there’s one student who knows what’s up. And when I said, “Had he been in a place where girls’ schools are a thing, maybe his family would have sent him to one of those. We don’t know.” So […] thank god for queer celebrities!

I said, “This topic is super outdated in my opinion, but we will have to write about it. But let’s not make this one of our arguments because we know it’s not true. We know there are all kinds of people in the world that are attracted to each other.” And then I think there was silence, and we didn’t really include it in the outline.

If it was up to me, I probably wouldn’t even include it as a topic. Or even if I did, I would have introduced it in a more critical sort of lens. [Sometimes there’s this attitude that] it’s just the topic, or it’s not important the ideas that we put forward or the topics that we give to students. It’s sometimes frustrating that we don’t even care as long as it’s proper English or fits the requirements. So, I wish there was more thought going into these things before we have to deal with it in the classroom.

But [overall] I feel happy about these interventions. I feel like it’s an opportunity for conversation. And those conversations, because of those reasons that I mentioned, because this is Turkey, because of many, many things, they are not the easiest conversations to have. But at the end, what I feel with this kind of incident is, “Okay, it’s good that I said something, it’s good that they had the opportunity to have this conversation, in this classroom where it’s safe”. […] At least it didn’t go unsaid; it didn’t go unchallenged.

4.2.2 Serra: Thematic Analysis

An overview of the themes found in these three incidents is presented in Table 3. Serra’s narratives did not include the themes of visual representation, student level, or level of

comfort with the class. All of her incidents involved affirming queer identities and perceived need. Her planned incidents involved queer language points, and the theme of fear was present in both of them. The theme of challenging assumptions was present in two of her incidents, and her unplanned incident also incorporated the theme of queer celebrities. Each event is discussed in further detail below.

Table 3. Serra—Narrative Themes

Interview 1 Data	Theme	Planned Incident 1	Planned Incident 2	Unplanned Incident 1
Approaches and Techniques RQ 1, 2, 3	Visual Representation			
	Queer Language	×	×	
	Queer Celebrities			×
	Challenging Assumptions		×	×
	Affirming Identities	×	×	×
Contextual Factors RQ 4	Student Level			
	Comfort Level			
	Fear	×	×	
	Need	×	×	×

4.2.2.1 Planned Incident 1: He vs. They.

Serra's first planned incident of challenging cisheteronormativity in the classroom took a language-based approach and also reflected affirmation of queer identities. The activity involved challenging the use of generic 'he' or binary 'he/she' constructions when referring to generic individuals in written English. The teacher explained:

> They either do 'he' slash 'she' (he/she) or only use the generic 'he,' and the one I hate the most is they do an 's' and then a slash and then 'he' (s/he). […] I saw several students use the generic 'he' in their writing. That sort of gave me the idea like, 'that could be a teaching moment.' […] So, I took out the sample passages [of singular they] that I'd found on the internet, authentic written material in English, and I asked

them to compare them. I had to ask them if 'they' referred to a group of people or a single person in the authentic material. (Serra)

The teacher also mentioned affirming the existence of nonbinary identities:

> [T]here are people who purposefully use 'they/them' as their pronouns because 'he' or 'she' doesn't match with their gender identity. […] So, it's both keeping them informed and also trying to create at least some kind of awareness that there are people who do not position themselves at the two ends of the spectrum only. (Serra)

In terms of contextual factors influencing this approach, the teacher mentioned a perceived need for the language as well as fear of negative outcomes. Each of these themes is presented in multiple ways. The theme of perceived need first arises in the practical concern for contemporary language use:

> When they go out into the world, they're gonna be warned about it or it's gonna look very outdated and weird if they continue to use the generic 'he'. […] This is how people use English now in writing and in speaking, so I feel like it's my responsibility to talk about the recent trends and updated information in class. […] Using the generic 'he', now people don't do that anymore. (Serra)

Perceived need also presented in the teacher's assessment that the official materials at her institution failed to cover the singular application of the pronoun 'they'.

> I think it would be helpful to sort of integrate [singular 'they'] into the course material itself, rather than me bringing my own stuff on my own. So, I wish, and this is something to do with the school and the admin and the curriculum office and whatever, but I think it should be an integral part of especially writing. (Serra)

Further to this, the teacher commented on the nature of the institution where the incident took place creating a particular need for discussion of queer issues: "most of these students will study [STEM subjects], so we don't have social-sciences-minded students. And that's

imprinted in the whole institution […], so it's very difficult to open up that space where you can talk about social issues" (Serra).

A fear of negative repercussions also influenced the way the teacher planned and approached this incident. She described introducing singular 'they' for generic subjects as an introduction to the nonbinary use of singular 'they', because the latter is "more nerve-wracking to be honest" (Serra). She mentioned fears of possible student reactions:.

> Because you never know, especially in a public university […] I can never know what the reaction would be. I've never had an incident where a student was especially confrontational, angry, or reactionary or anything, but you also don't know. And it's risky because if they say something super offensive, I also have to be prepared to deal with that comment. (Serra)

4.2.2.2 Planned Incident 2: Jane and Sheila.

The second planned incident Serra described took the approach of using language, in the form of names, to challenge assumptions about sexual orientation and affirm queer identities. She described altering a coursebook activity to present a same-sex couple:

> These dialogues that model the language point that we're teaching, if it's between a couple it's usually a woman's name and a man's name. So [something] I do is I change those. […] I re-typed it and I changed the names to Jane and Sheila. (Serra)

She then described challenging the students' assumption that a couple should be heterosexual and simultaneously affirming the existence of same-sex couples.

> [One student] looked happy to be able to detect a mistake. […] And then I ask[ed], "why do you think it's a mistake?" And [this student replied], "This conversation looks like a conversation between a married couple […] why are there two women's names?" […] So, then I ask[ed] them whether all romantic relationships or marriages

> are between a man and a woman. […] I said, "It's not a mistake, this is a relationship between two women." (Serra)

Contextual factors present in this incident once again comprised need and fear. The teacher spoke to need in terms of the perceived need for students to be exposed to the existence of queer people, and the official materials' lack of such representation. On the latter point, the instructor said:

> I think it was in the book or one of the packs that they give us. These dialogues that model the language point that we're teaching, if it's between a couple it's usually a woman's name and a man's name. (Serra)

She commented about the need for exposure:

> Because there's something, I don't know if it's called peripheral learning, I don't know if there's terminology for it, but like 'being exposed'. […] I don't know where these kids are from. Maybe they have never been asked that question, like "is a relationship always between a man and a woman". And even if it's somewhere in their vicinity, […] it's always something different when they see it exist in a teaching material in a public university in Turkey. (Serra)

The theme of fear also presented in this narrative. The instructor described the time and place where this incident occurred as follows:

> [I]t's always a bit scary when you start in a new institution, and this being a state school, a public school, it's even—I dunno, I felt weird about it. In public universities, as you must be aware, there is very close inspection and policing […] and there is this self-censorship thing. […] I'm super mindful of what I say, and when I say something that might be considered controversial. (Serra)

The extent to which this fear impacted the approach to the lesson was not mentioned.

4.2.2.3 Unplanned Incident 1: Single-Gender Schools.

Serra narrated one unplanned incident which evidenced navigational themes of challenging assumptions and referencing queer celebrities. She described a student implying that romantic relationships are only heterosexual, and responding by directly challenging that idea:

> [O]ne of [the students wrote that in single-gender schools, students] would be able to concentrate better because there wouldn't be boys around or girls around so they'd all be friendly and no relationship drama. Then I circled [that contribution] and I said, "Do you really believe that? Do you really think there's no romantic drama in a single-gender school?" And I remember one of them said, "Yeah, because the opposite gender isn't there". And I asked, "So romance only happens between people who are 'opposite' gender?" (Serra)

The question led to another student mentioning the possibility of same-sex relationships, which the teacher confirmed, in an affirmation of same-sex attracted people: "And then I said, 'Yeah, we can't really assume there wouldn't be any sexual tension in an all-girls school or an all-boys school'" (Serra). The teacher then also challenged the assumption that assigned or assumed gender is necessarily correct: "And then I added, 'Also, we can't really be sure if people in those schools are the gender that they are assigned'" (Serra).

In support of that point, the teacher made reference to a transgender celebrity known to the students. She reported: "I gave the example of Elliot Page. They know about him, because he was super famous before he transitioned, so they were 'huh, okay'. […] So, thank god for queer celebrities!" (Serra).

The main contextual theme in this story is perceived need, which again presented in the teacher's reference to cisheteronormative official materials and the need to introduce

students to queer topics. The teacher expressed frustration with the official course materials perpetuating cisheteronormative assumptions:

> So, this was again for writing […] and the topic that the school gave us was […] "should parents send their children to single-gender schools". If it was up to me, I probably wouldn't even include it as a topic. Or even if I did, I would have introduced it in a more critical sort of lens. [Sometimes there's this attitude that] it's just the topic, or it's not important the ideas that we put forward or the topics that we give to students. […] I wish there was more thought going into these things before we have to deal with it in the classroom. (Serra)

She also referenced the need to challenge cisheteronormative assumptions and discuss queer issues in the classroom:

> I feel like it's an opportunity for conversation. And those conversations, because of those reasons that I mentioned, because this is Turkey, because of many, many things, they are not the easiest conversations to have. But at the end, what I feel with this kind of incident is, "Okay, it's good that I said something, it's good that they had the opportunity to have this conversation, in this classroom where it's safe". […] At least it didn't go unsaid, it didn't go unchallenged. (Serra)

4.2.3 Serra: Structural Analysis

The structural analysis of interview 1 revealed CAs that involved introducing singular 'they', representing a same-sex couple in a written dialogue, and asking questions to challenge student assumptions about sexual attraction and gender. Or and Ev clauses note the impact of working at a public university, frustration with materials, recognition that Turkish students are not often exposed to queer issues in educational institutions, and a concern for peripheral learning, as well as the instructor's own history as a queer learner and organizer.

Excerpts are presented below for each incident and the participant's overall orientation and evaluation.

4.2.3.1 Participant Orientation and Evaluation

Serra identified her own queerness as a relevant factor in her approach to challenging cisheteronormativity in the classroom, along with interests in feminist and queer pedagogy, her history of working with a queer civil society organization, and her longstanding interest in the gendered nature of the English language. Other Or and Ev clauses reveal that working in a public university, which she describes as unsupportive and more heavily policed than private universities, impacts her approach to challenging cisheteronormativity in her classes, as well as what she identifies as an increase in censorship and oppression over time.

Table 4. Serra—Participant Orientation and Evaluation

Position	Code	Excerpt
27	Or	I'm queer myself,
33	Or	I did some voluntary work in probably the major LGBT organization in Istanbul.
34	Or	So, before queer pedagogy I was initially interested in feminist pedagogy,
36	Or	So, I was always interested in this English being a gendered language
20	Or	and now I teach at a [large] public university.
688	Or	And state schools are more closely policed, I wanna say.
689	Or	The administrators in private universities, it depends.
690	Or, Ev	so, private universities, even though I cannot say this 100%, but they have more autonomy.
695	Or, Ev	But in public universities, as you must be aware, there is very close inspection and policing,
703	Or	and there is this self-censorship thing.
705	Ev	I'm super mindful of what I say,
706	Ev, Or	and when I say something that might be considered controversial, whatever,
707	Or	I always have something at the back of my head thinking,
708	Or, Ev	"Oh, is this going to end up in CİMER?"
722	Ev	And like I said, I didn't feel as restricted or as nervous about it prior to starting working at a public university.
723	Ev	That might be because over the years the censorship and the oppression, it increased.
724	Ev	So, it might be because it gets worse and worse over the years,
725	Ev	but it's also I think because I now work at a university where I know that my administrator wouldn't stand behind me.

4.2.3.2 Planned Incident 1: He vs. They.

Serra's first planned incident is shown, in its Ab and CA clauses, to involve introducing singular 'they' for generic subjects as an error correction activity by asking students to compare their own written texts using generic 'he' with authentic materials from the internet using singular 'they'. The Or clauses reveal that the incident occurred with intermediate or upper-intermediate students at a university focused on technology and natural sciences, with students who come from a variety of backgrounds. Serra notes that the nature of the university makes discussing social issues difficult. She also mentions having struggled with generic singular third-person pronouns as an English learner herself in the past.

The Ev clauses show that the teacher perceives a twofold motivation for this activity—keeping students' language production up to date with current usage trends, and introducing the topic of singular 'they' to later discuss its use as a nonbinary pronoun. She calls this "nerve-wracking" and says, "There's always the risk of being *accused* of being a feminist" (Serra, emphasis mine). She expresses a wish that the official curriculum would cover singular 'they' rather than her having to create her own lesson for it.

Table 5. Serra—Structural Analysis of Planned Incident 1

Position	Code	Excerpt
47	Ab	I think I first started with the introduction of singular 'they';
48	Ab	that was the first thing I did that can be considered challenging cisheteronormativity in the classroom.
103	Ab	So, what I did for that particular lesson was I focused only on the use of 'he',
104	Or	because purely by coincidence I saw several students use the generic 'he' in their writing.
74	Or	because in writing students have different strategies.
75	Or	They either do 'he' slash 'she' (he/she)
76	Or	or only use the generic 'he,'
77	Or, Ev	and the one I hate the most is they do an 's' and then a slash and then 'he' (s/he)
49	Or, Ev	One reason for that was again the fact that English is a gendered language and Turkish is not,
50	Or	and I struggled with that as a student learning English.

90	Or	Since 2015 I've been teaching B1 or B1+ students.
139	Or	So, this is a technical university
143	Or	so we don’t have social-sciences-minded students.
148	Or, Ev	so it’s very difficult to open up that space where you can talk about social issues.
79	CA	So, I brought in some materials and some authentic pieces of writing,
80	CA	and I asked them to detect the use of ‘they’.
81	CA	and I asked them, “are they referring to a group of people here
82	CA	or are they referring to just one person?”.
116	CA	So, I took out the sample passages [of singular ‘they’] that I'd found on the internet, authentic written material in English,
117	CA	and I asked them to compare them.
136	Or, CA	I had to ask them if ‘they’ referred to a group of people or a single person in the authentic material.
151		So, what happens is that with this group of students, in this culture, what they ask is,
152	CA	“*Hocam* [teacher], if we do this in the exam are we gonna get a lower score?”
154	Ev	And it’s super frustrating to hear this.
155	Ev, Or	and of course, the answer is no, I can’t really do that.
157	CA	I only told them, “No, but this is how the language evolved.
158	CA	This is how people use English now in writing and in speaking”
181	Rs	There were a couple who tried to use it.
182	Rs	There were a couple who used the plural form.
220	Co	so basically, this singular ‘they’ class just as a writing convention,
221	Co	it’s sort of like an introduction to the singular ‘they’ that nonbinary people use.
224	Ev, Co	So, it’s both keeping them informed
225	Ev, Co	and also trying to create at least some kind of awareness
227	Ev	That’s more nerve-wracking to be honest,
238	Or, Ev	especially in a public university, because they come from various backgrounds,
106	Ev	and there’s a practical reason to it as well,
107	Ev	because we don’t really see that anymore nowadays.
109	Ev	they’re gonna be warned about it
110	Ev	or it’s gonna look very outdated and weird
111	Ev	if they continue to use the generic ‘he’.
159	Ev	so I feel like it's my responsibility to talk about the recent trends and updated information in class.
175	Ev	There’s always the risk of being accused of being a feminist.
178	Or	That's the environment they grow up in,

179	Ev	so our job is exponentially harder in my opinion, compared to some other places where this is not happening.
275	Ev	But I think it would be helpful to sort of integrate it into the course material itself, rather than me bringing my own stuff on my own.
276	Ev	So, I wish, and this is something to do with the school and the admin and the curriculum office and whatever,
277	Ev	but I think it should be an integral part of especially writing.

4.2.3.3 Planned Incident 2: Jane and Sheila.

Serra's second planned incident describes, in its CA clauses, the teacher recreating a dialogue in a textbook between a different-sex couple to instead present a same-sex couple, and then challenging a student's assumption that the names were a mistake by asking questions.

The Or clauses show that the incident took place with a B1 class during Serra's first semester teaching at a public university. The Ev clauses reveal that that the timing and location of the incident influenced her experience of the event, but that she considers the activity a quick and easy subversion. Further Ev clauses describe a concern for peripheral learning and the content of the teaching materials being used, a recognition that the students may never have been exposed to same-sex couples or asked questions challenging cisheteronormative assumptions, and a belief that seeing these issues reflected in teaching material in Türkiye is different than seeing them on social media.

Table 6. Serra—Structural Analysis of Planned Incident 2

Position	Code	Excerpt
490	Ab	So, this is something that I do
491	Ab	and this is more related to grammar.
492	Or	So, these dialogues that model the language point that we're teaching,
493	Or	if it's between a couple it's usually a woman's name and a man's name.
495	Or	I either make them very unambiguously two women's names or two men's names,
532	Or	So, I think it was, I was teaching in person, so it has to be [year] maybe,
533	Or	and it was the first semester that I taught here.
534	Ev	And it's always a bit scary when you start in a new institution,

535	Or, Ev	and this being a state school, a public school, it's even—
536	Ev	I dunno, I felt weird about it.
537	Or	So, this was a B1 class I think;
524	Or	I think it was an activity introducing modal verbs.
525	Ev	And again, it's frustrating
526	Or	because I think it was in the book or one of the packs that they give us.
527	Ev	So, it's paper waste
528	CA	but I retyped it and I changed it,
529	CA	and I brought it in.
539	Ev	And they looked happy to be able to detect a mistake.
540	CA	[laughs] Like "*Hocam* [teacher], what's going on here".
541	CA	And I started asking questions.
542	CA	I said, "It's not a mistake,
551	CA	And then I ask them whether all romantic relationships or marriages are between a man and a woman,
552	CA	and there's usually, I think in that class it was a girl as well
555	CA	And I think she turned to him,
607	CA	[and] she sort of intervened
634	Rs	and then I said,
635	Rs	"These types of dialogues can be between anyone
636	Rs	so don't assume it's a mistake. This is not a grammar mistake."
521	Co	So, I do those small things.
499	Ev	I feel like this is an easy way, like it's both practical from a lesson preparation point of view
500	Ev	and it's also good to subvert it in a very quick way.
569	Ev	And also, I think it's because they're not really used to seeing this kind of thing in a teaching material.
615	Ev	I don't know if it's called peripheral learning, I don't know if there's terminology for it,
616	Ev	but like 'being exposed'.
618	Ev	there's all these other things in the context that we don't really pay attention to.
619	Ev	But those things also matter in my opinion.
620	Ev	Like the characters in the dialogues, or if we're doing reading, about whom are we reading.
649	Ev	it's just that it's a good idea to ask this question.
650	Ev	Because I don't know. I don't know where these kids are from.
654	Ev	it's always something different when they see it exist in a teaching material in a public university in Turkey.

4.2.3.4 Unplanned Incident 1: Single-Gender Schools.

The CA clauses in Serra's unplanned incident describe a circumstance wherein a student made a cisheteronormative suggestion during a writing brainstorming activity, and Serra responded by challenging the assumptions behind the suggestion through questioning. The Or clauses reveal that the writing topic itself was a normative one surrounding gender-segregated schools. In the Ev clauses, Serra reveals a frustration with the uncritical nature of the topic itself, as well as with a general institutional attitude or focusing only on form, function, and accuracy of topics and materials while ignoring issues of social justice. She also mentions the value of raising queer topics in the safe space of her classroom.

Table 7. Serra—Structural Analysis of Unplanned Incident 1

Position	Code	Excerpt
305	Or	It was an opinion essay topic,
306	Or	and the question was "Should parents send their children to single-gender schools".
307	Or	So, they had to take a side
308	Or	and write about the advantages of sending children to mixed-gender schools or single-gender schools.
316	Or	because what we do is: we brainstorm together
317	Or	and then we write an outline together categorizing those things that they just spelled out.
318	CA	And of course, one of them said, "They would be able to concentrate better
319	CA	because there wouldn't be boys around or girls around
320	CA	so they'd all be friendly and no relationship drama."
328	CA	and I said, "Do you really believe that?
329	CA, Ev	Do you really think there's no romantic drama in a single gender school?" [tone of incredulity].
330	CA	And then, I remember one of them said,
331	CA	"Yeah because the opposite gender isn't there".
332	CA	And then I said, "So romance only happens between people who are 'opposite' gender?"
334	CA	And then I think one of the women said that there could be,
335	CA	that lesbian relationships in *kız okulları* [girls' schools], *kız lisesi* [girls' high schools], is something that is super common.
343	CA	And then I said, "Yeah, we can't really assume there wouldn't be any sexual tension in an all-girls school or an all-boys school."
344	CA	And then I added, "Also we can't really be sure if people in those schools are the gender that they are assigned"
358	CA	I gave the example of Elliot Page,
352	Rs	and then I think there was silence,
353	Rs	and we didn't really include it in the outline.
354	Co	So that was one thing that I did.

445	Co	it was kind of an intervention thing.
378	Ev	I mean, it's a little bit… it's lazy in my opinion!
379	Ev	Because of course they know that that's not a thing.
380	Ev	And the weird part about all this is that,
381	Or	should they write that as an argument if this was an exam question and they included this in their writing,
382	Or	none of the teachers grading that paper would problematize that,
383	Ev	but it's just wrong.
388	Ev	So, it's a little bit frustrating to hear that kind of an argument, even if it's just a practice essay.
422	Ev	So, it's frustrating that the content of it all,
423	Ev	especially from these points of view, social justice points of view, no one cares.
428	Ev	So, it's hard, it's sometimes frustrating that we don't even care as long as it's proper English or fits the requirements.
451	Ev	because if it was up to me, I probably wouldn't even include it as a topic.
452		Or even if I did,
453	Ev	I would have introduced it in a more critical sort of lens.
474	Ev	But at the end, what I feel with this kind of incident is,
475	Ev	"Okay it's good that I said something,
476	Ev	it's good that they had the opportunity to have this conversation, in this classroom where it's safe".

4.3 Interview Participant 2: Amanda

Interview participant two is a queer cisgender woman with over 15 years of teaching experience, who speaks English as a first language. She will be referred to as Amanda. Amanda has taught preparatory English at various private universities in Türkiye for a decade and has also taught elsewhere in Asia. She works with learners at a range of ability levels from A1 to B1+ (elementary to upper-intermediate). Amanda comes from an activist background and has a long personal history of activism regarding various causes, including both queer and environmental activism. She has volunteered with an LGBTI+ civil organization in Istanbul and considers herself to be an academic activist (Amanda).

Three stories from Amanda are presented—one planned and two unplanned incidents. All three stories took place in face-to-face classrooms at a large private university in the late 2010s. This section will first present Amanda's block narratives, followed by the thematic and structural findings from these three incidents.

4.3.1 Amanda: Block Narratives

4.3.1.1 Planned Incident 1: Challenging Assumptions.

I have a lesson I did with a group of B1 level students where we were looking at assumptions and impressions. This was a group I felt really comfortable to do this with; it was also a smaller group than usual. These are students who go through a special program that we have. They're the top scoring students in the country [on the university entrance exam], so they come in with a higher level of English. And they've all placed for medicine [faculties]. We separate them into a separate class.

So, they'd already had a lesson from a main course book on first impressions and the assumptions we make about people [based on visual cues], so I prepared as an additional lesson to this a series of photographs of people, some well-known public figures, some semi-public figures, and then some photographs from my private collection of individuals. So, they're all portraits. And I'd definitely chosen some that I thought would send them off in the wrong direction, coz I wanted it to be a conversation. Because [they were medical students] who are going to encounter a lot of diverse people, it's important to me that they don't automatically rely on stereotypes of what they see.

I randomly assigned these photographs to the students in pairs and asked them to make some assumptions based purely on what they could see about these people. So, their nationality, what they thought of their gender, their marital status, their sexuality and so on. These were the factors we'd looked at in our book, so they had the language to talk about those. I gave them 5 or 10 minutes, and then I asked them in pairs to give their feedback. So, I projected the photograph that each pair was talking about one by one, and said tell us what your thoughts are, what were your predictions and guesses. And then I would briefly ask the rest of the class "Do you agree? Do you want to add anything? You've just seen this person." And then I revealed to them some biographical information about this person. For some of

them their guesses were very accurate, but I found that for the either queer or gender non-conforming people I'd chosen, that they were completely inaccurate because the students all acted on really cisheteronormative perceptions.

So, for example I'd chosen a photo of [author] James Baldwin at a teahouse in Istanbul, so they had some local context to it. But they decided that he was married to a nice woman because he looked like a very respectable gentleman. And apparently a respectable gentleman of a certain age must have a wife. When I told them that he was gay, they just said, "So not married then, teacher".

I also presented them with a photo of [author and activist] Leslie Feinberg and they decided zie[3] was a man based purely on visuals, so then we had an interesting conversation about how presentation is not gender and [about] neopronouns at the same time. I introduced this through biographical text through hir website, and I actually drew their attention [to the zie/hir pronouns]. "What does this say?" because there were some that said "typo?", and I said, "No no, this is actually a new word that we have". And I said, "These things we call neopronouns, you know, pronouns like 'I', 'you', 'we', 'he', etc. There are these alternatives that some people use if they think those other ones don't fit with them."

One of the women in my class was quite fascinated by the idea of neopronouns, purely because it was something she'd never heard before. "There are more words?" "He, she, and…". So that was nice. They felt like they'd learnt an interesting thing that was more of a fun thing in language rather than a thing they needed to study, actually. So, they kind of liked learning an interesting bit of language.

So that was a really interesting way to provoke their critical thinking around what we see and perceive and what might actually be someone's real identity. And the students really

[3] Zie/hir are a set of third-person singular neopronouns used as gender-neutral alternatives to he/him and she/her.

enjoyed the lesson actually. They had a lot of thoughts and some surprises but yeah, it was a good lesson.

4.3.1.2 Unplanned Incident 1: A Student Response.

A few years ago, I was teaching another B1 level class. It was another class I had a really good atmosphere with. Not a special program class, just they were at that point in their education with us. And again, because they were a higher-level group, they were a little bit smaller than our usual class size; I think I had about 20 on the list for this group. And we were talking about something to do with identity and lifestyle. Maybe we were talking about lifestyle or about changing circumstances? Maybe someone had said something about making things more liberal.

One of the men in my classroom, it came up, was very antigay. In a way that he knew I would object to, as well. It was a very quick incident. I don't remember his exact words, but it was this very clear [attitude of] "No, not okay with the gays". You know when someone says something very subtle? Because I tried to draw him out. I said like, "What? What? You're not okay with this? Do you want to explain?" And [he said] "No, no I don't want to talk about it." So, we didn't.

And I felt really disappointed in this student actually, because this is a student that I'd perceived as bright and intelligent and quite socially adept. I wouldn't have expected this kind of idea. It was definitely a shock to the system. I know I was never comfortable with this student thereafter. And I [thought], "Okay, now we're definitely not going to talk about so many liberal topics" because I didn't know where that came from and I didn't know how deep that attitude went, and what the student might do. Because it's a very conservative institution that I work at, so depending on who that student would complain to, I know I maybe might not have a job.

Regardless of what prompted that attitude in this student, I think pretty much every member of that class noticed it and heard it. Interestingly, that class had a story project after this incident, and one of the women in the class created a gay character in her story, which was delightful. She created this character that had to flee to another planet to be able to find peace because he couldn't be accepted on Earth. She mentioned, "He's gay and it's really hard for him to live here because of people being unkind to him," and she was like, "We might not understand that but it's totally normal." So, she was just very well aware of the attitude of A) people in the classroom and B) wider Turkish society [and] I think she was trying to also make a point. The students enjoyed her story [and] she got a lovely round of applause.

4.3.1.3 Unplanned Incident 2: An Impromptu Debate.

Another unplanned thing [happened] with a group [with whom] I taught most of them for the full year, which is very unusual. They'd have been doing the B1 book [at this point]; some of them might've still been nearer to A2 in level though. So, I'd known them since they were A1, and I had a lot of very boisterous boys in this class. They're the kind of men you would call 'lads', in British English. They like the girls, they like the football, they like their drinking. Most of which was generally discussed in the classroom, and we'd usually end up off-topic. But I'd also had conversations with some of these guys the [quarter] before about [journalist and food writer] Jack Monroe, a non-binary person who is in one of the books we were teaching at the time.

I had them on a Monday at one point, and we were talking about our weekends, and asking, "Oh, did you do anything" while we were waiting for people to filter in and get settled. And one of them said to me, "Oh, teacher, what did you do?" And I'd actually been to one of the museums here in town to see a film at the weekend with a colleague that they also

knew really well. So, I was like, “I went to see this film with so-and-so *hoca* [teacher],” and [they asked,] “Oh, what was it about?” and so I told them.

But it happened to be a series of coming-out stories that we’d seen in the film. And obviously I felt comfortable enough to tell them that I went to see this really gay film with a teacher that you also know. So, it was really nice to be able to open up that discussion. And some of them were asking, “Teacher, how was it?” and some were like, “Teacher, what is a coming-out story?” And I said, “It’s when people tell their friends and family that they’re gay.” And some of them were like, “Oh, teacher, that’s really interesting.”

And some of my lads went, “Teacher, no, that’s not normal.” Some of my, mainly, women in the class were like, “What is wrong with you? It’s perfectly normal.” And then these students set up their own little debate unprompted and decided to try to argue this point out between themselves. [It was] completely organic. They just got into this natural back and forth. [And] I just gave them space to talk. [And because] they also knew each other well enough, I think they were really good at reading each other’s signals. They didn’t even talk over each other. They definitely expanded some arguments, like, “You can love whoever you want to love”, like, “It doesn’t matter.” One of them was like, “What business is it of yours; why do you even care?” Which I think is a great point. And one of my girls was just like, “Why? Why are you saying this?” She was really annoyed.

And [the lads] actually couldn't find a reason why they objected to it. They just couldn’t wrap their heads around it. They were very cishet [normatively cisgender, heterosexual] boys who like their pretty girls and think, you know, “Real men take care of everything.” I mean, it’s just so culturally ingrained in them. They did make the point that “Men are meant to date women”, which is what they’re raised to believe in this culture. Regardless of whether the rest of us know that that’s not quite right, that is what they’re socialized into and it’s very heavily prescribed here. Because they’re still so young they

haven't necessarily had much exposure to alternatives and different ideas, I can see why maybe they're stuck on the point that they've always been told, even if they can't articulate why they've been told that. Although they were like, "No, teacher, no", it wasn't an aggressive no or a "we hate gay people" kind of no.

I don't think there ended up being a resolution and nobody changed their mind, but they had a good talk about it. [After] like 10 minutes or so, everyone had said what they wanted to say. No one was upset or angry. None of them were ever defensive and none were ever vicious with each other. I was pleased that they stayed in English the whole time. I mean, at least you're speaking about something, you're using your arguments, or at least you're trying to, so.

4.3.2 Amanda: Thematic Analysis

A summary of themes found in Amanda's narratives is shown in Table 8 below. All three of Amanda's incidents involved the theme of comfort level with students, while two of them also involved a perceived need. Two of her incidents involved affirming queer identities, while the remaining themes were present in one incident each.

Table 8. Amanda—Narrative Themes

Interview 2 Data	Theme	Planned Incident 1	Unplanned Incident 1	Unplanned Incident 2
Approaches and Techniques RQ 1, 2, 3	Visual Representation	×		
	Queer Language	×		
	Queer Celebrities	×		
	Challenging Assumptions	×		
	Affirming Identities	×		×
Contextual Factors RQ 4	Student Level	×		
	Comfort Level	×	×	×
	Fear		×	
	Need	×		×

4.3.2.1 Planned Incident 1: Challenging Assumptions.

The planned incident of challenging cisheteronormativity in the classroom reported in interview 2 included all five themes related to approach and technique. The teacher designed the lesson specifically for the purpose of challenging assumptions by using visual representations of a variety of individuals including queer public figures.

> So, I prepared […] a series of photographs of people, [...] all portraits. And I'd definitely chosen some that I thought would send them off in the wrong direction […] I randomly assigned these photographs to the students in pairs and asked them to make some assumptions based purely on what they could see about these people. So, their nationality, what they thought of their gender, their marital status, their sexuality and so on. (Amanda)

The queer people included in the set of portraits included public figures Leslie Feinberg and James Baldwin, representing the theme of queer celebrities.

Amanda reported the students making cisheteronormative assumptions about the queer individuals pictured: "I found that for the either queer or gender non-conforming people I'd chosen, that [the assumptions] were completely inaccurate because the students all acted on really cisheteronormative perceptions." She then challenged these assumptions by providing biographical data and affirming these individuals as queer. She narrated explaining that James Baldwin was not married to a woman because he was gay:

> I'd chosen a photo of James Baldwin. […] But they decided that he was married to a nice woman because he looked like a very respectable gentleman. […] When I told them that he was gay, they just said, "So not married then, teacher". (Amanda)

The affirmation of Leslie Feinberg's identity also introduced the queer language point of neopronouns.

> [The students] decided zie was a man based purely on visuals, so then we had an interesting conversation about how presentation is not gender and [about] neopronouns at the same time. I introduced this through biographical text through hir website, and I actually drew their attention [to the zie/hir pronouns]. "What does this say?", because there were some that said "typo?", and I said, "No no, this is actually a new word that we have". And I said, "These things we call neopronouns, you know, pronouns like 'I', 'you', 'we', 'he', etc. There are these alternatives that some people use if they think those other ones don't fit with them." (Amanda)

Themes found in this narrative relating to contextual factors include student level, comfort, and need. Amanda explained that her level of comfort with the students and their high level of English competence were key factors in her decision to introduce this material:

> […] with a group of B1 level students. […] This was a group I felt really comfortable to do this with; it was also a smaller group than usual. These are students who go through a special program that we have. They're the top scoring students in the country [on the university entrance exam], so they come in with a higher level of English.

She also discussed a perceived need for these students to be especially aware of their assumptions due to their future careers: "I wanted it to be a conversation. Because [they were medical students] who are going to encounter a lot of diverse people, it's important to me that they don't automatically rely on stereotypes of what they see" (Amanda).

4.3.2.2 Unplanned Incident 1: A Student Response.

The first unplanned incident that Amanda reported involved very little teacher intervention, and therefore fit no themes regarding approach or technique. The incident involved a student making a homophobic comment and declining any further discussion of it:

> One of the men in my classroom, it came up, was very antigay […] It was a very quick incident. […] I tried to draw him out. I said like, "What? What? You're not okay with this? Do you want to explain?" And [he said] "No, no I don't want to talk about it." So, we didn't. (Amanda)

In terms of contextual factors influencing her approach, Amanda's story touched on themes of comfort level and fear. She reported feeling comfortable with the class until this incident, after which the feeling changed: "It was another class I had a really good atmosphere with. […] I wouldn't have expected this kind of idea. It was definitely a shock to the system. I know I was never comfortable with this student thereafter" (Amanda).

She also explained that fears related to potential student complaints and possible job loss influenced her decisions during that lesson and with that class thereafter:

> And I [thought], "Okay, now we're definitely not going to talk about so many liberal topics" because I didn't know where that came from and I didn't know how deep that attitude went, and what the student might do. Because it's a very conservative institution that I work at, so depending on who that student would complain to, I know I maybe might not have a job. (Amanda)

4.3.2.3 Unplanned Incident 2: An Impromptu Debate.

The second unplanned incident Amanda narrated also involved little intervention on her part beyond the theme of affirming queer identities. The incident began with the teacher telling her students about a queer film she'd seen at the weekend and explaining its topic of coming out stories. This action represents affirming queer identities by sharing information.

> And one of them said to me, "Oh, teacher, what did you do [at the weekend]?" And I'd actually been […] to see a film at the weekend. […] So, I was like, "I went to see this film with so-and-so *hoca* [teacher]," and [they asked,] "Oh, what was it about?" and so I told them.

> But it happened to be a series of coming-out stories that we'd seen in the film. […] And some were like "Teacher, what is a coming-out story?" And I said, "It's when people tell their friends and family that they're gay." (Amanda)

This affirmation led to unanticipated expressions of cisheteronormative attitudes by some students, leading the class to engage in a student-directed debate on homosexuality. The teacher neither participated nor intervened in the discussion; she "just gave them space to talk" (Amanda).

The contextual factors that influenced the teacher's behaviour during this incident fits the themes of comfort and need. The teacher expressed that her comfort level with the class influenced her willingness to introduce the topic of coming out: "I taught most of them for the full year […] So I'd known them since they were A1 […] obviously I felt comfortable enough to tell them that I went to see this really gay film" (Amanda). The classroom rapport also played a role in her choice not to intervene, since "they also knew each other well enough, I think they were really good at reading each other's signals … No one was upset or angry. None of them were ever defensive and none were ever vicious with each other" (Amanda).

She also referenced a perceived need to let the discussion unfold, based on the local sociocultural climate and students' possible lack of exposure to sexuality and gender diversity:

> And [the lads] actually couldn't find a reason why they objected to [homosexuality]. They just couldn't wrap their heads around it. […] Regardless of whether the rest of us know that that's not quite right, that is what they're socialized into and it's very heavily prescribed here. Because they're still so young they haven't necessarily had much exposure to alternatives and different ideas, I can see why maybe they're stuck on the point that they've always been told, even if they can't articulate why they've been told that. (Amanda)

4.3.3 Amanda: Structural Analysis

The CAs revealed by the structural analysis of Amanda's data included involving actively challenging assumptions based on visual appearance, introducing the language of neopronouns, and explaining the concept of coming out. They also revealed students actively and vocally supporting queerness. Amanda's Or data included mention of the conservative nature of her workplace, the limiting nature of the highly normative sociopolitical climate, the high level of her students, and her rapport with her classes. The Ev clauses discuss the relevance of her own queerness and identity as an activist, her concerns regarding job security, and the students' academic and social need to discuss queer issues. Each incident, along with general biographical information, is discussed in more detail below with supporting excerpts.

4.3.3.1 Participant Orientation and Evaluation.

Like the other participants, Amanda noted her own queerness as part of her motivation for addressing cisheteronormativity in her classroom. She also discusses the importance of activism for the queer community and the internal motivation she feels to do more, as well as the academic harm of queer exclusion. In Or clauses, Amanda mentions feeling lack of support from the conservative institution where she works, as well as limitations posed by the local political climate.

Table 9. Amanda—Participant Orientation and Evaluation

Position	Code	Excerpt
17	Ev	Just as a queer person existing in the ELT space you see that there's such a lack of representation
18	Ev	and there's just something in me that goes, well this is ridiculous.
19	Ev	Someone has to do something.
22	Ev	So, I went and did the thing.
299	Or	because I know at my institution there are certain members of management including in my department and higher up the chain,
300	Or	in an institution which is very well connected to the present ruling regime,
301	Or	they're not so fond of such liberal topics, shall we say.
319	Or	So, it's a little bit hard to know quite what support is where in our institution, unfortunately.
481	Or	And I think coz, I want to say as queer educators

482	Or	but I think I mean even as educators in Turkey,
483	Ev, Or	we have to be cautious of what we say,
500	Ev, Or	Like I've made it my purpose to be a bit of an agitator.
501	Or, Ev	And that's definitely something that's hemmed in by the political climate we live in,
886	Ev, Or	I mean, I definitely didn't feel supported by the department.
888	Ev	I just knew that
889	Ev	if anything happened the department wouldn't necessarily support me.
900	Ev	Activists always feel like they need to be doing more,
901	Ev	and that's true about academic activism as well, I think.
926	Ev	because half of what we talk about academically is things like affect and the impact these things have.
932	Ev	like this causes affective filter,
933	Ev	this is the harm that is done.
935	Ev	and I think we really need to use the voice that we have
936	Ev	and use the space that we have to push for what matters for us.
944	Ev	so activism matters from a social justice point of view,
945	Ev	and we know activism matters in the queer community
946	Ev	because it's the only way we've ever gotten anything is to fight for it.

4.3.3.2 Planned Incident 1: Challenging Assumptions.

Amanda's planned incident involved exploring assumptions with a small group of high-achieving B1 level students with whom she was very comfortable, in a face-to-face environment. According to her Ev clauses, each of these Or factors impacted her choice of activity. She also mentioned motivation toward creating a safe space in which to explore and challenge assumptions. Her CA clauses reveal that she provided portraits of various people, some queer and gender non-conforming, and asked the students to make assumptions based on appearance using vocabulary they'd just learnt. Following this, she provided real biographical data that also involved discussion of same-sex attraction, gender identity, and neopronouns.

Table 10. Amanda—Structural Analysis of Planned Incident 1

Position	Code	Excerpt
25	Ab	I have a lesson I did with a group of B1 level students
26	Ab	where we were looking at assumptions and impressions.
72	Or, Ev	This was a group I felt really comfortable to do this with;
74	Or	These are students who go through a special program that we have where they'll go in;

75	Or	they’re the top scoring students in the country.
184	Or, Ev	I mean, students in this program you usually have quite a comfortable relationship with
185	Or	because they come in with a higher level of English
189	Or	But also because it’s a small group,
190	Ev, Or	it’s much easier to spend more time getting to know each one of them,
210	Or	But I also knew I had students that had mentioned unprompted
211	Or	that they were like queer allies for example, and were very supportive.
27	Or	So, they’d already had a lesson from a main course book on first impressions and the assumptions we make about people.
28	CA	So, I prepared as an additional lesson to this a series of photographs of people,
32	CA	and asked them to make some assumptions based purely on what they could see about these people.
42	CA	and then I revealed to them some biographical information about this person.
53	Ev	And for some of them their guesses were very accurate
54	Ev	but I found that for the either queer or gender non-conforming people I'd chosen that they were completely inaccurate
55	Ev	because the students all acted on really cisheteronormative perceptions.
64	CA	so then we had an interesting conversation about how presentation is not gender and neo-pronouns at the same time.
65	Co	So, that was a really interesting way to provoke their critical thinking around what we see and perceive and what might actually be someone’s real identity.
84	Ev	I think you need that feeling of community you get from being together in a physical space to do it.
85	Ev	And I think it's an activity that you need to do with a group you know well.
122	Ev	And I’d definitely chosen some that I thought would send them off in the wrong direction,
123	Ev	coz I wanted it to be a conversation.
220	Ev	I just wanted to create for them a space in which to be able to think
223	Ev	it’s a low-risk way of challenging assumptions and realizing that maybe we have to think a little bit more.
148	Ev	But my primary purpose was to get them to think generally about assumptions and to realize that for some people they would be wrong.

4.3.3.3 Unplanned Incident 1: A Student Response.

The Or clauses for Amanda’s first unplanned incident reveal that it also took place with a small B1 level class with whom she had a good rapport. The CAs reveal a two-part incident in which one student made an unexpected proclamation that they refused to discuss further, and then several weeks later another student presented a story project that centered

and supported a gay character. The Ev clauses reveal that Amanda's decision not to pursue the topic with the first student beyond an initial request for explanation, which he refused, and even her approach to that group in future lessons, was impacted by a concern about job security should the student potentially complain.

Table 11. Amanda—Structural Analysis of Unplanned Incident 1

Position	Code	Excerpt
356	Or	A few years ago, I was teaching another B1 level class.
357	Or	Not a special program class, just they were at that point in their education with us.
416	Or	And again, because they were a higher-level group,
417	Or	they were a little bit smaller than our usual class size.
411	Or	It was another class I had a really good atmosphere with.
360	Or	but we were talking about something to do with identity and lifestyle.
361	Ab, CA	One of the men in my classroom, it came up, was very antigay.
406	Or	This was a student who was really active in class, usually came up with what I would consider reasonable, sensible ideas, very valuable contributions to the classroom.
363	CA	Because I tried to draw him out.
410	CA	But he was very quick to shut down that discussion.
376	Ev	But I know I was never comfortable with this student thereafter.
461	Ev	And I was like, "Okay, now we're definitely not going to talk about so many liberal topics."
463	Ev	I mean, not necessarily in that lesson, but in general, of course now I was mindful.
464	Ev	Especially because I didn't know where that came from
465	Ev	and I didn't know how deep that attitude went.
471	Ev	because I know, depending on who that student would complain to,
472	Ev	I know I maybe might not have a job,
377	Or	But interestingly, I was advising that class at the time.
378	Or	They had a story project,
522	Or	The project was to create a whole character and the story.
379	CA	and one of the women in the class created a gay character in her story after this incident,
536	Or	no more than seven weeks [later] based on the way our quarters work,
381	CA	But she created this character that had to flee to another planet to be able to find peace
516	CA	this student that was being a grumpy so-and-so didn't have anything to say about it.
517	Rs	The students enjoyed her story, though.
518	Rs	She got a lovely round of applause

4.3.3.4 Unplanned Incident 2: An Impromptu Debate.

Rapport was once again a relevant Or factor in Amanda's second unplanned incident, which also occurred with a group studying at B1 level. She stated that she felt comfortable enough with the group to share that she had seen a queer-themed film over the previous weekend, which then sparked a debate between students supporting and opposing homosexuality. Other CA clauses reveal that Amanda did not participate or intervene while students laid out their arguments. The Ev clauses reveal that the students in opposition did not articulate clear reasons for their views on homosexuality, but that Amanda considers the cisheteronormativity of local culture, alongside the students' youth and limited exposure to difference as likely factors in their attitudes.

Table 12. Amanda—Structural Analysis of Unplanned Incident 2

Position	Code	Excerpt
549	Or	So, this was with a group I again was actually in my 2nd, or 3rd quarter with them… my third quarter with them.
553	Or	So, I'd known them since they were A1
556	Or	They'd have been doing the B1 book,
564	Or	But I had them on a Monday at one point and we were talking about our weekends, and asking, "Oh did you do anything"; these kinds of questions
568	CA	And one of them said to me, "Oh, teacher, what did you do?"
569	Or	And I'd actually been to one of the museums here in town to see a film at the weekend with a colleague that they also knew really well,
575	Or	But it happened to be a series of coming-out stories that we'd seen in the film.
621	Ev, Or	And obviously I felt comfortable enough to tell them that I went to see this really gay film with a teacher that you also know.
578	CA	and some of them were asking, "Teacher, how was it?"
579	CA	and some were like, "Teacher, what is a coming-out story?"
580	CA	and I said, "it's when people tell their friends and family that they're gay."
581	CA	and some of them were like, "Oh, teacher, that's really interesting"
582	CA	and some of my really manly men, my lads—who were the kind of boys who would say 'real men' blah blah—went, "Teacher, no, that's not normal."
585	CA	And that became a whole class conversation.
589	CA	And then these students set up their own little debate unprompted
590	CA	and decided to try to argue this point out between themselves.
688	CA	I just gave them space to talk.
690	Ev	Because they didn't need me to interfere in this conversation at all.
624	Rs	And we never did get to why it's not normal,
732	Rs	So, I don't think there ended up being a resolution
733	Rs	and nobody changed their mind,

734	Rs	but they had a good talk about it.
595	Rs, Ev	And they actually couldn't find a reason why they objected to it.
596	Ev	I mean, it's one of those rules where it's just so culturally ingrained in them,
597	Or, Ev	this deep idea of the cishet norm and the homogeneous ways Turkish society is structured.
750	Ev	I think it was just such a thing that, like, they couldn't comprehend it
751	Ev	and they were so used to being brought up where masculinity is a certain way.
760	Ev	Because they're still so young
761	Or, Ev	they haven't necessarily had much exposure to alternatives and different ideas.
762	Ev	I can see why maybe they're stuck on the point that they've always been told,
763	Ev	Even if they can't articulate maybe why they've been told that.
769	Or, Ev	Like I said, I was comfortable enough to have this conversation with these students
770	Ev	and knew they weren't gonna be weird with me.
790	Ev	Maybe with other groups I wouldn't let them get into a debate.
791	Ev	Maybe with other groups I wouldn't have told them I'd gone to see that film in the first place, so.

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented a detailed examination of the thematic and structural findings obtained from interview participant data. From the thematic analysis we see that both interview participants use several strategies to challenge cisheteronormativity in their classrooms, including introducing queer language, affirming queer identities, referencing queer celebrities, and challenging stereotypes. Additionally, one of the two participants utilized visual representations of queer individuals. The structural analysis of these two participants' incidents showed that both teachers planned skills activities that actively challenged cisheteronormativity, as well as addressing spontaneous incidents of cisheteronormativity and homophobia by challenging assumptions and asking critical questions. Furthermore, the structural analysis also revealed that both participants' own queer identities and backgrounds as well as the environment in which they teach impacts their choice of strategies in the classroom.

The following chapter will present the autoethnographic data and findings in detail, followed by a summary of all findings.

Chapter 5: Findings – Autoethnography

This study examines the experiences of queer EFL instructors working to challenge cisheteronormativity in our preparatory English classrooms in Turkish universities. I collected narrative data of relevant planned and unplanned incidents from two interview participants, and also collected written reflexive autoethnographic data from my own experience. The previous chapter provided an overview of the thematic and structural findings for all three study participants, and presented detailed information on the analysis of data from the interview participants. This chapter will present a similarly detailed analysis of the autoethnographic data in the same format as that of the previous chapter. First, I offer biographical information about myself as the autoethnographic participant, followed by the block narratives condensed from my written responses to the questions from my interview guide. I then present the detailed thematic findings from each incident, followed by the structural findings. A summary of findings for all three participants is presented at the end of the chapter.

5.1 Autoethnographic Participant: Jennifer

My autoethnographic data are drawn from my experiences as a queer, bisexual, cisgender woman who speaks English as a first language. I will be quoted by name as Jennifer. I have been teaching for over 17 years, mainly in Türkiye though also elsewhere in Southwest and East Asia. I have worked primarily with university students and teach skill levels from A1 to B1+ (elementary to upper-intermediate). Throughout my life, I have participated in various types of activism, including working with a student-led labor rights group during my undergraduate years and setting up a queer student organization during a study abroad program. I also helped for a time to organize English-language events with an LGBTI+ civil society organization in Istanbul. I additionally consider this study to be a product of queer activist scholarship.

My autoethnographic data comprise four stories—two planned incidents and two unplanned incidents. All four incidents took place in face-to-face classrooms at a small private university in the late 2010s and early 2020s.

5.1.1 Jennifer: Block Narratives

5.1.1.1 Planned Incident 1: Appearance Gallery.

During my first year at a [pretty liberal] private university, I made an activity for appearance vocabulary for an elementary class—the very first class I taught [at that institution]. Its purpose is to [discover and/or] practice vocabulary for appearance, such as curly hair, beard, fair skin, and blue eyes, and clothing, such as t-shirt and suit. The activity also uses present continuous and present simple verbs, as those were covered in the same unit. The original unit introduced gendered language like 'handsome' and 'feminine'. The book activity [to introduce the target language] was a very heteronormative listening about what men consider beautiful in women and what women find attractive about men. I didn't want to promote those cisnormative heterosexist beauty ideals, so I made this alternative.

The material I prepared is a gallery activity of photos of actors of different ages, genders, and ethnicities [including] some actors the students will likely know, such as Turkish actor Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ, and some they may not, such as US actor Julianne Moore. The images include actors who may be clearly read as—or are already known to be—a man or a woman, as well as actors whose gender may be less easily assumed from the photo. One photo, for example, is of Black US actor Lena Waithe wearing a suit and with her head shaved.

[The students also receive] a list of sentences anonymously describing the actors and the goal of the activity is for students to match each sentence with the image(s) that match the description. Each sentence is written to be gender neutral, and all use the word actor; none of the sentences use the gendered term actress. Sentences include, "This actor has red hair", "This actor is wearing makeup", "This actor has dark skin", and "This actor is handsome".

It's a gallery activity, so the students walked around the room, some working alone and some chatting together, to match the sentences with applicable pictures. A couple students asked me whether [actor and comedian] Aziz Ansari is Black or not, or whether I thought someone was wearing makeup.

As they finished up, we did a whole-class feedback and I collected their answers on the board. The students described Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ as both beautiful and feminine, so as a concept-checking question I asked, "So men can be beautiful? Men can be feminine?" The students overwhelmingly agreed, and I agreed with them as well.

For the sentence, "This actor is handsome", various students mentioned the different images of men. They didn't all agree, so we noted that it can be subjective. One student wanted to talk about Lena Waithe, but said, "Picture 8, I don't know he or she…". So, I explained that when we don't know, we can use 'they' for one person. Some of the other students agreed, and I then said, "That's Lena Waithe, and she does look very handsome in that photo, yes!" So, we established that men can be beautiful and feminine and wear makeup, and women can be masculine and handsome and wear suits. We also noted the difference between the terms 'Black' and 'dark skinned', which was another of the book's vocab words. Most of these points came from the students themselves, which was amazing. And since the activity went well, I've used it again with other classes since. It's nice because you can always update the photos with more current actors.

5.1.1.2 Planned Incident 2: Neutral Family Vocab.

I hadn't had very much time to prepare for [this] lesson […] but I had a plan to include the gender-neutral terms for family members in a lesson focused on family vocabulary. This [happened with] a relatively small elementary class […] in the early 2020s, during a time period when anti-queer sentiment was very visible in the media coming from important people. However, the institution [where I was teaching] is relatively queer-friendly. I also had

been working at the institution for several years at this point and felt more comfortable within and familiar with the department.

I brought in some photos of celebrities with non-traditional families [and] asked what the pictures were of, and [the students] of course said “families”. I then started eliciting what family relationship vocabulary the students already knew, starting with describing the relationships in the pictures.

I made a chart on the board with three columns: man, neutral, woman. When they gave me gendered vocabulary, I asked which category the words went into. Then I asked if the students know a gender-neutral term for the same relationship. So, for example, the students offered the words ‘mother’ and ‘father’, and I wrote those words in the appropriate gender column. I asked, “Is there a word that we can use for both of these people?” They gave me ‘parents’, which brought up the point that the neutral is often also used in the plural. So, I wrote up ‘parent’ in the neutral column.

The students offered me ‘son’ and ‘daughter’. I asked for a neutral term here [and] since we’d already noted that neutral is also often plural, someone said “children” and from there we got to ‘child’. I elicited the rest of the family vocabulary they knew and wrote it into the correct columns. We pointed out that ‘cousin’ is always a gender-neutral term that doesn’t change for gender. We also figured out that there are no gender-neutral terms for aunt and uncle or niece and nephew, though I did say in passing that some people have started to use ‘nibling’. They hadn’t known spouse or sibling.

Any time you teach family vocabulary to Turkish students, they actually want to talk about how certain family relationships translate, because Turkish qualifies some in different ways than English does. So, the students were more interested in the fact that in English, we use the word ‘aunt’ for both your mother’s sister and your father’s sister, because these are different words in Turkish. Turkish also has a word specifically for your brother or uncle’s

wife or fiancé, as well as different terms for maternal grandmother and paternal grandmother. So, the students asked me a lot of questions about those relationships and frankly were less interested in the neutral terminology.

Anyway, we then looked at the family chart in the back of the book. It was a typical textbook family tree with photos of white people in different-sex partnerships and each with two children of binary genders. I didn't use the questions the book provided though. I asked questions and wrote cloze sentences on the board to practice both the standard gendered language and the neutral language where it existed. For example, I asked, "Who is X's sibling?" and "Who is Y's spouse?" in addition to constructions such as "A is B's ___".

Following this, we did a reading around the subject of families, and then we studied have/has got. I noted that instead of asking, "Have you got any brothers and sisters?" like the book suggests, we can just ask, "Have you got any siblings?". They asked and answered questions about their own families and then wrote something about a family member. I don't recall anyone actually [using the neutral language in their own production], but at least they were exposed to the language.

5.1.1.3 Unplanned Incident 1: Which Pronouns?

This incident also happened with a small elementary group in the early 2020s. We were studying functional language for making plans and arrangements, and I think they were talking in small groups about their own free time activities or something. I was seated at my desk [when] one student seemingly out of nowhere asked, "Teacher, what pronoun do we use for trans people?" and then [asked whether we use] the singular third-person pronoun we use for objects and non-human creatures. I think I was very taken aback because we were in the middle of a completely unrelated topic and activity.

I was also a little on the defensive since this student had, perhaps inadvertently, said something very transphobic. But I recognized that this student was from a more traditional

background, and it was possible the question was posed with no ill intent. I also didn't want the lesson to get too far off track […] but it did seem like a good, if random, opportunity to just review pronouns and note that we validate people's genders by using the correct pronouns.

So, I responded with, "No, we don't use 'it' for people. We use the pronoun for that person's gender. So, if they're a woman, we use 'she'. For example, what pronoun do we use for Bulent Ersoy?" Bulent Ersoy is a famous, if problematic, Turkish entertainer who is a trans woman. Another student answered my question, saying Bulent Ersoy would be called 'she'. I said something like, "Exactly. She's a woman, so we say 'she' and 'her'."

Then the first student asked, "What about Ellen?" [I understood this to be a question] about Ellen DeGeneres, so I responded "Well, Ellen isn't trans; she's a lesbian, and I'm pretty sure she uses 'she' pronouns. Let's check." And then I opened a new tab on my computer and showed the projection of a Google search looking up Ellen's pronouns. I think we checked Wikipedia or something. I realize now in hindsight the student could have been deadnaming a different celebrity. But I'm pretty sure I projected a photo of Ellen DeGeneres, and the student didn't correct me.

I was asked about a few other famous people, both queer and not queer. I don't remember all of them, but I modeled looking up people's pronouns to check each one. And then I mentioned […] that some people also use 'they' as their pronoun and did a search for celebrities that use 'they/them'. As far as I remember, [singers] Sam Smith and Demi Lovato were two of the [many] examples that came up.

So here I was thinking that was a lovely little interlude and now let's get back to the day's plan, when the original student declared: "I don't like gay people". And at this point I was shocked, because we'd had this nice environment where I was modeling being respectful and just very matter-of-fact, and I was surprised this student went and turned that lovely

atmosphere on its head. I unfortunately wasn't entirely shocked to hear that attitude […] But I didn't know what to do. I think I felt really uncomfortable as well, because of course even if the students don't know I'm queer, I am, and I can't not take it personally. I think I said, "What? Why?" and got a response like, "Just I don't like, teacher." This was the early days of an elementary class. They didn't have the language to explain attitudes like this in English. They didn't have the language to explain their reasons for simple things, let alone to discuss complex topics like personal identity and prejudice.

Another student interjected here: "[Student 1] is homophobic." The word homophobic is a cognate in Turkish; it's the same word. I said something like, "Well, that statement does sound a bit homophobic, anyway." I think I meant to separate the student from the statement, like to avoid labeling the individual person as homophobic, but I doubt the students really got that differentiation. Given the limitations of the students' language, it didn't really seem worth trying to explore the attitude or discuss the topic any further. I also kind of wanted to get back to the lesson plan. I think at that point my emotional reaction made me want to shut down the conversation. So, I just said something like, "Well, we don't have to like everyone, but we do have to respect people. Do you think we can all respect people even if they're different from us?" And I got some affirmative response from somewhere and then said let's get back to whatever the original activity was.

5.1.1.4 Unplanned Incident 2: Inadvertently Queer Gossip.

One really basic incident happened while teaching reported speech to an intermediate class at a private university. This would have been in the late 2010s, before COVID. It was probably my second year or so at this institution. In this time period […] I was out to my colleagues but did not know whether it was safe to openly discuss queer issues.

It was a grammar context and discovery activity for reported speech. I set up a scenario of someone overhearing gossip and telling other people about it. I asked a student to

draw a picture on the board of two people talking, and then I drew a tree and a third person hiding behind the tree. The original pair of figures included one drawn wearing pants and another in a dress. I asked the students to name the people. They named the pants-wearing person Kılıbık (which means "hen-pecked", but I did not know that at the time) [and] the dress-wearing character Mr. Clean Clothes, which I found amusing but made no comment on. The person behind the tree was given the name Cemre (a women's name in Turkish).

I asked them to make a dialogue between Kılıbık and Mr. Clean Clothes. They created a scenario in which Kılıbık says to Mr. Clean Clothes, "Your boyfriend is in love with someone else" and, "I saw your boyfriend at a cafe with a girl. They were kissing!". I think I became more amused as I realized they'd inadvertently created a gay couple.

Then on the other side of the board, I drew the Cemre character talking to someone else, whom the students named Ayşe (another women's name). We went line by line through the reported speech of the previous conversation, with me sometimes eliciting and sometimes providing the changes. We discussed how the pronoun 'your' directed to Mr. Clean Clothes would become 'his' in reported speech, creating the phrase 'his boyfriend'.

At this point the students expressed some confusion or shock saying things like, "No, teacher, 'her'." So, I asked why. "Because she's a woman. She's in a dress; she has a boyfriend," they explained. I responded, "This person is Mr. Clean Clothes; isn't 'mister' a word used for men specifically? He can be a man in a dress, and men can have boyfriends." And I kind of shrugged, using intonation to suggest how utterly unsurprising it would be. They seemed to accept or at least acquiesce to my position.

I think […] it was a fun and lucky opportunity to represent a gay couple without even intending to. It allowed me to just usualize things like men in dresses and men who date men. The gossip the students had intended to be a simple cisheteronormative story of a man

cheating on his girlfriend ended up being a story of a queer man in a dress with an apparently bisexual boyfriend.

5.1.2 Jennifer: Thematic Analysis

As shown in Table 13, each relevant theme regarding both approaches and contextual factors was present in at least one of my autoethnographic experiences. The theme of queer language was present in three autoethnographic narratives, as was the theme of perceived need. The themes of queer celebrities, challenging assumptions, affirming identities, and fear were each present in two narratives, while visual representation, student level, and comfort level were each represented in one incident.

Table 13. Jennifer—Narrative Themes

Autoethnographic Data	Theme	Planned Incident 1	Planned Incident 2	Unplanned Incident 1	Unplanned Incident 2
Approaches and Techniques RQ 1, 2, 3	Visual Representation	×			
	Queer Language	×	×	×	
	Queer Celebrities	×		×	
	Challenging Assumptions	×			×
	Affirming Identities			×	×
Contextual Factors RQ 4	Student Level			×	
	Comfort Level		×		
	Fear		×	×	
	Need	×	×	×	

5.1.2.1 Planned Incident 1: Appearance Gallery.

On the question of how instructors introduce queer issues into our classrooms, the first planned autoethnographic incident included themes of visuals, language, celebrities, and challenging assumptions. This incident was one of only two collected narratives wherein the teacher provided visual queer representation in the classroom. As noted, I designed

> a gallery activity of photos of actors of different ages, genders, and ethnicities [including] […] actors who may be clearly read as—or are already known to be—a man or a woman, as well as actors whose gender may be less easily assumed from the photo. (Jennifer)

Additionally, this visual representation included an openly lesbian celebrity: "One photo, for example, is of Black US actor Lena Waithe wearing a suit and with her head shaved" (Jennifer).

In the course of the activity, queer language was introduced when I explained the use of singular 'they': "One student wanted to talk about Lena Waithe, but said 'Picture 8, I don't know he or she…'. So, I explained that when we don't know, we can use 'they' for one person" (Jennifer). Queer language was also utilized in the material itself, insofar as "Each sentence is written to be gender neutral, and all use the word actor; none of the sentences use the gendered term actress" (Jennifer).

Furthermore, this incident was designed to challenge stereotypes and assumptions about gender, as described in the narrative:

> The book activity [to introduce the target language] was a very heteronormative listening about what men consider beautiful in women and what women find attractive about men. I didn't want to promote those cisnormative heterosexist beauty ideals […] so as a concept-checking question I asked, "So men can be beautiful? Men can be feminine?" […] So we established that men can be beautiful and feminine and wear makeup, and women can be masculine and handsome and wear suits. (Jennifer)

The contextual factors that influenced my approach in the lesson are also addressed in the early lines of this quote, particularly "The book activity [to introduce the target language] was a very heteronormative listening […] I didn't want to promote those cisnormative

heterosexist beauty ideals" (Jennifer). This shows my perceived need to redress the normativity of the official materials and queer the topic of gender and appearance.

5.1.2.2 Planned Incident 2: Neutral Family Vocab.

In the second planned autoethnographic incident, I took a queer language approach to challenging cisheteronormativity. I "had a plan to include the gender-neutral terms for family members" (Jennifer), and the lesson then involved introducing and practicing gender-neutral vocabulary. In my account of the event, I reported:

> I made a chart on the board with three columns: man, neutral, woman. When they gave me gendered vocabulary, I asked which category the words went into. Then I asked if the students know a gender-neutral term for the same relationship. […] [Later in the lesson] I asked questions and wrote cloze sentences on the board to practice both the standard gendered language and the neutral language where it existed. (Jennifer)

Examples of gender-neutral family vocabulary provided in the data included 'parent', 'sibling', and 'child' (Jennifer).

Several contextual factors were present in this incident, including fear, comfort, and need. My narrative spoke to a fearful sociopolitical context when I located the incident "in the early 2020s, during a time period when anti-queer sentiment was very visible in the media coming from important people" (Jennifer), but also referred to a level of comfort with my specific institution when I explained that "the institution [where I was teaching] is relatively queer-friendly. I also had been working at the institution for several years at this point and felt more comfortable within and familiar with the department" (Jennifer). I again referred to cisheteronormative course materials and a perceived need to introduce queer alternatives to binarist vocabulary. I explained, "in the back of the book […] was a typical textbook family

tree with photos of white people in different-sex partnerships, and each with two children of binary genders. I didn't use the questions the book provided though" (Jennifer).

5.1.2.3 Unplanned Incident 1: Which Pronouns?

In autoethnographic unplanned incident 1, I navigated an unexpected incidence of transphobia and homophobia using strategies of affirming queer identities, referring to queer celebrities, and covering language points relevant to queer people. When asked by a student about which pronoun to use for trans individuals, I affirmed queer identities by explaining "We use the pronoun for that person's gender. So, if they're a woman, we use 'she'" (Jennifer). I noted that the incident provided an "opportunity to note that we validate people's genders by using the correct pronouns" (Jennifer).

I also referenced a transgender Turkish celebrity as an example: "For example, what pronoun do we use for Bulent Ersoy? […] She's a woman, so we say 'she' and 'her'" (Jennifer). Follow-up questions regarding the appropriate pronouns for other queer celebrities led me to introduce queer language in the form of singular 'they': "And then I mentioned […] that some people also use 'they' as their pronoun, and did a search for celebrities that use 'they/them'" (Jennifer).

Contextual factors impacting my choices during this incident included need, level, and fear. The question that began the incident was perceived by the teacher as a need to cover the topic. I noted that the student may have been unfamiliar with trans issues: "This student had, perhaps inadvertently, said something very transphobic. But I recognized that this student was from a more traditional background, and it was possible the question was posed with no ill intent" (Jennifer). However, a second comment from the student brought in factors of fear and student level. I mentioned a personal feeling of fear as a queer individual myself:

> I think I felt really uncomfortable as well, because of course even if the students don't know I'm queer, I am, and I can't not take it personally. […] I think at that point my emotional reaction made me want to shut down the conversation. (Jennifer)

Additionally, the students' elementary level of English was mentioned as an important factor in how I responded to the second comment:

> This was the early days of an elementary class. They didn't have the language to explain attitudes like this in English. They didn't have the language to explain their reasons for simple things, let alone to discuss complex topics like personal identity and prejudice. Given the limitations of the students' language, it didn't really seem worth trying to explore the attitude or discuss the topic any further. (Jennifer)

5.1.2.4 Unplanned Incident 2: Inadvertently Queer Gossip.

In autoethnographic unplanned incident 2, I navigated cisheteronormative attitudes by challenging stereotypes and affirming queer identities. During a grammar lesson wherein the students created a fictional couple, the students displayed normative assumptions about sexual orientation and gendered clothing:

> We discussed how the pronoun 'your' directed to Mr. Clean Clothes would become 'his' in reported speech, creating the phrase 'his boyfriend'. At this point the students expressed some confusion or shock saying things like, "No, teacher, 'her'." So, I asked why. "Because she's a woman. She's in a dress; she has a boyfriend," they explained. (Jennifer)

My response challenged both of those stereotypes and affirmed the validity of same-sex couples and gender-nonconforming clothing: "'He can be a man in a dress, and men can have boyfriends.' And I kind of shrugged, using intonation to suggest how utterly unsurprising it would be" (Jennifer).

5.1.3 Jennifer: Structural Analysis

Structural analysis of the autoethnographic data shows that I conducted planned lessons that involved both visual and linguistic representation of queerness as well as questioning of gender norms, and that I navigated unplanned incidents by modeling research and affirming queer identities. Influential contextual factors revealed in Or and Ev clauses included the background and level of the students, my familiarity with the attitude of the institution, a desire to expose students to new ideas, my own queerness, and a sense of responsibility. Representative excerpts from each incident and the general responses on setting and motivation are presented below.

5.1.3.1 Participant Orientation and Evaluation.

In my autoethnographic responses to the interview questions, I identified my own queer identity and history of queer erasure and marginalization as relevant to my choice to challenge cisheteronormativity in my English classroom. I additionally noted a sense of responsibility toward my students and my queer community, as seen in Table 14.

Table 14. Jennifer—Participant Orientation and Evaluation

Position	Code	Excerpt
12	Or	I have known I was queer
13	Or	since before I became an English teacher.
14	Or	I have also lived and worked in places
15	Or	where it is difficult to be a queer person,
16	Or	where queer people are vilified and marginalized, erased, oppressed.
17	Or	Also, as a bisexual woman, I have experienced erasure and invisibility throughout my life.
18	Ev	I know personally how harmful invisibility and erasure can be for a queer student's self-esteem.
19	Ev	I also believe that we have a responsibility to help our students broaden their knowledge
20	Ev	not only of English, but of themselves, the world around them, the variety of ideas and ways of being that exist in the world.
21	Ev	As a foreign teacher especially, I feel like I have both the opportunity and responsibility to raise questions my students may not encounter in their everyday lives,
24	Ev	But most importantly I want to help my community to be less vilified, more visible, and better accepted.

5.1.3.2 Planned Incident 1: Appearance Gallery.

In the first planned autoethnographic incident, the clauses coded as CA recount a gallery activity using photographs of famous actors with varied gender presentations to teach and practice appearance vocabulary as an alternative to a coursebook activity. They also describe the students providing ideas that challenge cisheteronormativity, as well as my introducing singular 'they' to meet an immediate need for it.

Clauses coded as Or reveal that the incident took place at the very beginning of my tenure at a private university, when I lacked awareness whether the institution was queer-friendly or a safe place to discuss queerness. Part of my motivation, described in the Ev clauses, involved a rejection of cisheteronormative materials provided in the official coursebook and a desire to challenge rather than reproduce gender stereotypes. I also noted a motivation to introduce gender-neutral pronouns and descriptions, and an interest in keeping the material simple and straightforward for elementary learners.

Table 15. Jennifer—Structural Analysis of Planned Incident 1

Position	Code	Excerpt
26	Ab, Or	During my first year at a private university, I made an activity for appearance vocabulary for lower levels.
32	Or	The original unit introduced gendered language like 'handsome' and 'feminine'.
102	Or, Ev	The book activity was a very heteronormative listening about what men consider beautiful in women and what women find attractive about men.
140	Or	The university is a pretty liberal private institution founded during the boom of private institutions in Istanbul.
147	Or	This event happened with the very first class I taught during my first year teaching at a that institution.
148	Or	I was unfamiliar with the department and the institution overall.
150	Or	I didn't know where the administration (neither department nor overall institution) stood on the topic of addressing queer issues or inclusivity.
74	Or	It's a gallery activity,
75	CA	so the students walked around the room, some working alone and some chatting together, to match the sentences with applicable pictures.
79	CA	and I collected their answers on the board.
80	CA	The students described Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ as both beautiful and feminine,
89	CA	One student wanted to talk about Lena Waithe,
90	CA	but said, "Picture 8, I don't know he or she…".

91	CA	So I explained that when we don't know,
92	CA	we can use 'they' for one person.
95	Rs	So we established that men can be beautiful and feminine and wear makeup, and women can be masculine and handsome and wear suits.
98	Rs, Ev	And since the activity went well,
99	Co	I've used it again with other classes since.
56	Ev	I use this opportunity to introduce the option of singular they as a gender-neutral third-person singular pronoun.
64	Ev	I also use this material to draw attention to the fact that while the word feminine is usually used for women,
65	Ev	men can also be feminine,
66	Ev	and that conversely, women can be described as handsome.
104	Ev	My aim for this material was to teach vocabulary for describing physical features and appearance
105	Ev	without relying on gender stereotypes,
106	Ev	which textbooks commonly do.
107	Ev	I wanted to provide examples of people who do not conform to expected gender norms of appearance,
108	Ev	and introduce learners to the possibility of gender-neutral descriptions.
109	Ev	I wanted to challenge any simplistic notions of masculine and feminine being specific to a particular gender
114	Ev	I chose to keep this material simple in terms of language and instructions
118	Ev	because the target language is visible and mainly concrete.
132	Ev	I do not ask the students theoretical questions about gender norms either;
133	Ev	at a low level they aren't likely to have enough language to navigate a discussion of gender norms and expectations, especially at elementary level.

5.1.3.3 Planned Incident 2: Neutral Family Vocab.

The account of my second planned incident described introducing neutral family vocabulary in addition to the gendered terminology officially included in the curriculum. The CA clauses reveal that this was done by eliciting and sometimes providing the neutral alternatives to the gendered target language and noting it on the white board, as well as using it in controlled practice activities. The Or and Ev clauses note the students' general lack of interest in the neutral terminology and focus on cultural differences revealed by family language. In terms of setting, the incident occurred with a small group of elementary learners, some from socially traditional backgrounds, in the early 2020s during a period of very visible

anti-queer rhetoric in media and politics—factors which the Ev clauses reveal influenced my approach, even at a liberal private institution. However, the Or clauses also reveal an increased level of comfort addressing queer issues in the workplace alongside departmental improvements in queer inclusion.

Table 16. Jennifer—Structural Analysis of Planned Incident 2

Position	Code	Excerpt
155	Ab	I didn't really prepare any materials for this lesson,
157	Ab, Or	but I had a plan to include the gender-neutral terms for family members in a lesson focused on family vocabulary.
235	Or	This was an elementary level class,
236	Ev, Or	so I focused more on the most basic family relationship language—the vocab they would be tested on.
264	Or	This was a relatively small elementary class with maybe 10 student who actually attended in-person lessons.
251	Or	Especially as this lesson happened in the early 2020s,
252	Or	when anti-queer sentiment was more visible
267	Or	However, the institution itself is relatively queer-friendly.
268	Or	By this time, I had hung posters in the corridor
269	Or	that discussed the use of singular they and offered gender-neutral language for a variety of different contexts, including some of the same family vocabulary we covered in this lesson.
271	Or, Ev	I think the department even had a section in our handbook on non-discrimination by this time.
272	Or	I also had been working at the institution for several years at this point
273	Or, Ev	and felt more comfortable within and familiar with the department.
159	CA	I brought in some photos of celebrities with non-traditional families:
170	CA	I then started eliciting what family relationship vocabulary the students already knew, starting with describing the relationships in the pictures.
171	CA	I made a chart on the board with three columns: man, neutral, woman.
172	CA	When they gave me gendered vocabulary,
173	CA	I asked which category the words went into.
174	CA	Then I asked if the students know a gender-neutral term for the same relationship.
212	CA	Anyway, we then looked at the family chart in the back of the book.
214	CA	I didn't use the questions the book provided though.
215	CA	I asked questions and wrote cloze sentences on the board to practice both the standard gendered language and the neutral language where it existed.
231	Rs	They were given the opportunity to use the language when talking about their own families.
232	Rs, Ev	I don't recall anyone actually doing so,

233	Ev	but at least they were exposed to the language.
226	Ev	I hate that we only teach the gendered terminology,
227	Ev	so I wanted to expose them to the alternatives.
228	Ev	I guess my hope was that they would at least know that gender neutral terminology exists for most family relationships
229	Ev	and maybe even use words like siblings and parents in basic biographic questions and answers
230	Ev	instead of making unnecessarily gendered and overly long questions like, “Have you got any brothers or sisters” and “I live with my mother and father”.
239	Ev	I also didn’t make any more involved materials like creating a bespoke family tree
240	Ev	because I simply hadn’t had very much time to prepare for that lesson.
246	Ev, Or	[And] because even at a private university
247	Ev	I don’t know whether that would get me in trouble,
248	Ev, Or	especially since I knew that some of the students were more conservative.
265	Or	As noted above, this was in the early 2020s,
266	Or	during a time period when anti-queer sentiment was very visible in the media coming from important people.

5.1.3.4 Unplanned Incident 1: Which Pronouns?

The first unplanned autoethnographic incident also involved a small group of elementary learners, including at least one from a traditional background, in the early 2020s, according to the Or clauses. The CAs of the incident involved a student asking unexpected questions about which pronouns to use when referring to transgender people and which pronouns various queer celebrities use, and the teacher modeling looking up the information online and also introducing gender-neutral pronouns. The CAs then continued with the student making a homophobic declaration and the teacher choosing to shut down the conversation. The Ev clauses reflect that I have mixed feelings about the incident and view some of my actions as positive and others as not positive. The data also reveal that compassion for the student’s lack of awareness on the issue as well as personal feelings of discomfort and the linguistic limitations of elementary learners impacted my choices in navigating the conversation.

Table 17. Jennifer—Structural Analysis of Unplanned Incident 1

Position	Code	Excerpt
275	Or	This incident also happened with a small elementary group in the early 2020s.
27	Or	We were studying functional language for making plans and arrangements,
277	Ev, CA	and one student seemingly out of nowhere asked,
278	CA	“Teacher, what pronoun do we use for trans people?”
279	CA	and then posited that it might be the singular third-person pronoun we use for objects and non-human creatures.
302	CA	So I responded with, “No, we don’t use ‘it’ for people.
303	CA	We use the pronoun for that person’s gender.”
316	CA	Then the first student asked, “What about Ellen?”
322	CA	And then I opened a new tab on my computer
323	CA	and showed the projection of a Google search looking up Ellen’s pronouns.
329	CA	I was asked about a few other famous people, both queer and not queer.
332	CA	but I modeled looking up people’s pronouns to check each one.
333	CA	And then I mentioned of my own accord that some people also use ‘they’ as their pronoun,
334	CA	and did a search for celebrities that use ‘they/them’.
340	CA	when the original student declared: “I don’t like gay people”.
352	CA	I think I said, “What? Why?”
360	CA	I said something like, “Well, that statement does sound a bit homophobic, anyway.”
366	CA	So I just said something like, “Well, we don’t have to like everyone,
367	CA	but we do have to respect people.”
371	Rs	and then [I] said let’s get back to whatever the original activity was.
373	Co, Ev	I feel positive about the way I addressed looking up pronouns.
375	Co, Ev	and it had academic skills value as well, with the modeling of searching for information.
377	Co	And it modeled that we can’t assume people’s gender
378	Co	and that it’s better to ask.
379	Ev	However, I feel less positive about the second part,
293	Ev	I was also a little on the defensive
294	Ev	since this student had, perhaps inadvertently, said something very transphobic.
299	Ev	But it did seem like a good, if random, opportunity to just review pronouns
300	Ev	and note that we validate people’s genders by using the correct pronouns.
344	Ev	I unfortunately wasn’t entirely shocked to hear that attitude,
345	Ev, Or	since the student was from a relatively traditional background
347	Ev	But I didn’t know what to do.

355	Ev, Or	They didn't have the language to explain attitudes like this in English.
363	Ev	Given the limitations of the students' language,
364	Ev	it didn't really seem worth trying to explore the attitude or discuss the topic any further.
381	Ev	I think at that point my emotional reaction made me want to shut down the conversation.
382	Ev	I didn't want to deal with overt homophobia.
383	Ev	It was upsetting.
398	Ev	I think the biggest impact for this incident was the level of the students.

5.1.3.5 Unplanned Incident 2: Inadvertently Queer Gossip.

The autoethnographic text response describing my second unplanned incident revealed that the incident took place with intermediate learners at a relatively queer-friendly private university in the late 2010s, and involved a student-led activity contextualizing reported speech. According to the CA clauses, the students created a scenario about a cheating boyfriend using language that created a same-sex couple, and the teacher took the opportunity to usualize and affirm same-sex relationships and gender-nonconforming clothing. The Ev data revealed the teacher being happy that the opportunity came up organically and feeling somewhat comfortable discussing queer issues in class but choosing to address the issue only in passing.

Table 18. Jennifer—Structural Analysis of Unplanned Incident 2

Position	Code	Excerpt
400	Ab, Or	One really basic incident happened while teaching reported speech to an intermediate class at a private university.
402	Ab	I set up a scenario of someone overhearing gossip and telling other people about it.
401	Or	It was a grammar context and discovery activity for reported speech.
460	Or	This would have been in the late 2010s, before COVID.
461	Or	It was probably my second year or so at this institution.
463	Or	and I was aware by this time of the queer-friendly research happening at the university.
465	Or	I may have, by this time, asked that we add singular 'they' to the curriculum formally
466	Or, Ev	and received a passive non-response.
467	Ev	So I felt comfortable with vaguely touching upon queerness in the way that happened here, but perhaps not super supported.
403	CA	I asked a student to draw a picture on the board of two people talking,

404	CA	and then I drew a tree and a third person hiding behind the tree.
405	Or	The original pair of figures included one drawn wearing pants and another in a dress.
409	CA	They named the dress-wearing character Mr. Clean Clothes, and the person behind the tree was given the name Cemre.
411	CA	I asked them to make a dialogue between Kılıbık and Mr. Clean Clothes.
412	CA	They created a scenario in which Kılıbık says to Mr. Clean Clothes, “Your boyfriend is in love with someone else”
413	CA	And, “I saw your boyfriend at a cafe with a girl. They were kissing!”.
414	CA	Then on the other side of the board, I drew the Cemre character talking to someone else,
418	CA	We discussed how the pronoun ‘your’ directed to Mr. Clean Clothes would become ‘his’ in reported speech, creating the phrase ‘his boyfriend’.
419	CA, Ev	At this point the students expressed some confusion or shock saying how is Mr. Clean Clothes a boy,
420		since the character was drawn in a dress and had a boyfriend.
421	CA	I said, “You named this person Mr. Clean Clothes;
422	CA	isn’t mister a word used for men specifically?
423	CA	He can be a man in a dress,
424	CA	and men can have boyfriends.”
425	CA	And I kind of shrugged, using intonation to suggest how utterly unsurprising it would be.
427	Rs	they seemed to accept or at least acquiesce to my position.
444	Co, Ev	I feel positive about this lesson.
436	Ev	I think I was thinking that it was a fun and lucky opportunity to represent a gay couple without even intending to.
437	Ev	It allowed me to just usualize things like men in dresses and men who date men.
438	Ev	I was probably glad for it to come up organically rather than in an activity I created,
450	Ev	I also did not choose to get into any further discussion about the character’s gender,
451	Ev	discuss gender in any greater depth, or introduce the gender-neutral honorific Mx.
452	Ev	I wanted to focus on the content of the grammar lesson;
454	Ev	I’m glad that I just treated it as very average that the character was in a same-sex relationship
455	Ev	and just got on with the lesson,
456	Ev	as it was a great opportunity to usualize queerness and treat it as a non-issue.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study has sought to explore whether and how queer instructors in English preparatory programs in Turkish universities challenge cisheteronormativity in their classrooms in both planned and unplanned situations, and how their teaching environment

impacts their strategies and approaches. To gather information on these questions, narrative accounts of both planned and unplanned events from three queer instructors were analyzed both thematically and structurally.

The thematic analysis has shown that these teachers do challenge cisheteronormativity in their classrooms in both overt and covert ways. All three participants introduced queer language in their lessons and made reference to queer celebrities. Each participant also challenged cisheteronormative assumptions, typically through questioning, and openly affirmed queer identities by providing information or usualizing queerness. Additionally, two of the three participants incorporated visual representations of queer people using photographs.

Themes relating to the impact of the teaching environment showed that all three teachers referenced fears of negative consequences, such as student complaints or possible job loss. Student level was a relevant factor to two of the teachers, regarding both high-level learners and low-level learners. Two teachers also referenced how comfortable they felt with a particular class as a factor relevant to their strategies. The most prevalent theme, however, was the teachers' perceived need for incorporation of queer issues, which occurred in 8 of 10 stories across all three participants. The teachers mentioned the real-life contemporary need for queer language such as singular 'they', students' lack of awareness surrounding queer issues, lack of queer representation and relevant language in official curricula and materials, and the teachers' feelings of responsibility to address these concerns.

The structural analysis largely reinforced these themes. The CA clauses across the stories reveal that the teachers challenged cisheteronormativity by using adapted and bespoke vocabulary, writing, and speaking activities that incorporated queer images and language, as well as by challenging cisheteronormative stereotypes and homophobic statements through questioning and challenging assumptions.

The Or clauses show that the teachers' queer identities, the type of university at which they work, the time period and sociopolitical climate in which the events took place, and the relative conservativism of Turkish culture all impacted the teachers' approaches to challenging cisheteronormativity. The Ev clauses express the impact of factors such as fears of student complaints and job loss, frustration with official materials and curricula, the academic and social justice impacts of queer inclusion and exclusion, students' levels of English and limited exposure to queer issues, and the teachers' own personal histories.

In the following chapter, I will discuss these findings, evaluate them in light of the existing literature, and consider their value and importance for the field.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) often requires teachers to simplify ideas in order to express and teach meaning in the same language the students are learning. This leads the field to often rely on stereotypes or highly expected normative behaviour that teachers and textbook authors expect learners to comprehend. This reliance on norms unfortunately often perpetuates negative attitudes about minority groups and reinforces oppressive social structures that subjugate marginalized identities. One such oppressive structure is that of cisheteronormativity, which enforces norms around gender and sexuality that not only harm and oppress the queer community but also limit the behaviour and expression of all people.

In a classroom context, the perpetuation of cisheteronormativity can lead to negative academic outcomes, cause psychological harm to queer students, and lend legitimacy to oppression in the minds of the students. Challenging cisheteronormativity, on the other hand, can improve the learning experience for queer students and promote values of equity and social justice for all learners. In the face of ongoing, and in some places increasing, hostility toward the queer community, it is important to consider how to challenge cisheteronormativity in all learning environments, including EFL and ESL classrooms.

Much of the existing literature available on the topic of queering ELT is suppositional and proposes suggested activities rather than reporting on actual implementation of those activities. Literature that does report actual practice is often set in liberal Western countries that are generally welcoming and open to queerness. Little literature exists exploring classroom practice of queering ELT in countries that are more hostile toward queerness and the discussion thereof.

This study was designed and conducted to explore the experiences of queer EFL instructors working in the relatively unwelcoming context of Turkish universities acting to

challenge cisheteronormativity in their English preparatory program classrooms. My aim for this study was to investigate the following research questions:

1. Do participant queer EFL teachers in Turkish university preparatory programs address cisheteronormativity in their classrooms, whether directly or indirectly?
2. Do they introduce queer issues or representation into their classrooms, whether overtly or discreetly?
3. How do they navigate instances of cisheteronormative attitudes, homophobia, or transphobia when these arise spontaneously?
4. How does the teaching environment impact their approaches and experiences?

To explore these questions, I collected both interview and autoethnographic data on a total of 10 incidents and analyzed this data both thematically and structurally. The previous two chapters have presented the findings of these analyses. This chapter will discuss these findings in more detail and examine them in broader context with reference to theory and previous literature. Following this, I will discuss the significance and limitations of this study and evaluate the usefulness of my methodology and theoretical framework. Finally, I summarize some key points I hope readers will take away from this study.

6.1 Review of Findings

My analysis of the collected data has revealed that the participant teachers address cisheteronormativity in our English preparatory program classrooms in both overt and covert ways. All three participants planned lessons that introduced queer issues and language into their lessons. Their plans included creating custom-designed speaking and writing activities to introduce neopronouns and gender-neutral pronouns, presenting visuals of queer people in speaking and vocabulary activities, adapting a grammar practice activity to incorporate a same-sex couple, and including gender-neutral alternatives to target vocabulary on family and relationships. Additionally, each of them made reference to queer celebrities and public

figures in some way. All of the participant instructors worked to challenge cisheteronormative assumptions and affirm queer identities, especially when dealing with spontaneous instances of cisheteronormativity or prejudiced attitudes.

Environmental factors that influenced the teachers' approaches included the sociopolitical climate and time frame in which the incidents took place, perceived institutional support or lack thereof, fear of student complaints and possible job loss, student level and rapport with classes, and the relative conservatism of Turkish culture. Teachers were also motivated by the lack of queer inclusion in official materials and a feeling of responsibility toward their students to cover queer issues and language.

In the following sections, I examine these results in reference to this study's research questions. Each research question is addressed separately, followed by a section focused on these results within the framework of queer theory.

6.1.1 Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked if participating queer EFL teachers in Turkish university preparatory programs address cisheteronormativity in their classrooms, whether directly or indirectly. The instructors involved in this study did indeed address cisheteronormativity during the lessons they narrated, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, though two spontaneously arising incidents also involved avoidance or abandonment of the topic, as further discussed below.

All three instructors involved in the study reported directly addressing cisheteronormativity in some of their narratives. In Serra's planned incident *Jane and Sheila*, she directly addressed the assumption that romantic couples should consist of a man and a woman. Similarly, in the unplanned incident *Single-Gender Schools*, she directly addressed cisheteronormativity by discussing with her class that single-sex schools would not necessarily lack romantic involvements, nor that everyone attending them is necessarily

cisgender. Amanda's planned activity *Challenging Assumptions* directly addressed student assumptions around James Baldwin's sexuality when Amanda stated openly that Baldwin was gay, as well as assumptions about gender when she introduced her students to transgressive gender identities in reference to Leslie Feinberg. In my autoethnographic unplanned incident *Which Pronouns?*, I noted directly that we should use the pronouns that affirm trans people's genders, and also directly informed the students that some individuals use singular 'they' pronouns. I additionally directly addressed cisheteronormativity in the incident *Inadvertently Queer Gossip* by stating openly that it's entirely reasonable for the character of Mr. Clean Clothes to be a man in a dress with a boyfriend. In my planned incident *Appearance Gallery*, I directly asked whether words like 'masculine' and 'feminine' only referred to particular genders.

Both Serra and I also addressed cisheteronormativity more indirectly in particular incidents. Serra's activity in the story *He vs. They* focused on use of singular 'they' as a generic subject, but she described it as an introductory activity to later more directly discuss the use of singular 'they' for nonbinary individuals. My second planned incident *Neutral Family Vocab* similarly introduced vocabulary relevant to queer individuals and relationships without directly stating those applications.

Interestingly, both Amanda and I narrated incidents in which we avoided or abandoned the topic. When a student in my incident *Which Pronouns?* stated a dislike for gay people, I shut down the conversation, whereas when a student in Amanda's incident *A Student Response* made a similar comment, she invited further discussion but dropped the subject when the student did not wish to discuss it further.

While I expected that the instructors selected as participants would address cisheteronormativity in our classrooms, the frequency with which the instructors did so directly was surprising and impressive to me. Both Seburn (2019) and Scott (2020) have

offered suggestions for queering ELT that involved addressing queerness and cisheteronormativity more directly. However, considering the challenges of discussing these topics in this study's relatively unwelcoming environment, I had expected that more of our incidents would only indirectly address cisheteronormativity. The specific approaches we used, as well as the fears and motivations behind our decisions, are discussed in the following sections.

6.1.2 Research Question 2

My second research question asked if the participating queer instructors introduce queer issues or representation into their classrooms, whether overtly or discreetly. All three participants in this study actively brought queer representation into the classroom, primarily but not exclusively in our planned incidents.

The participant teachers in this study introduced queer issues and representation through images of queer individuals and language representing queer people, as well as by mentioning queer issues in classroom conversation. The lesson that Amanda designed for her incident *Challenging Assumptions* brought overt visual and linguistic representation of queer individuals into the classroom and very overtly introduced queer issues with her students. The image of James Baldwin and the direct mention of his sexual orientation, and particularly the image of Leslie Feinberg alongside introduction of hir use of neopronouns constitutes very explicit representation of queerness. Amanda also overtly introduced queer issues in her unplanned incident *An Impromptu Debate* by casually mentioning in start-of-lesson conversation with students that she'd seen a documentary film about coming out, and subsequently explaining the meaning of the phrase. Serra overtly rewrote a grammar practice dialogue from her school's official materials in order to represent a same-sex couple in *Jane and Sheila*. Furthermore, all three participant teachers introduced gender-neutral language, via both my and Serra's teaching of singular 'they', Amanda's coverage of neopronouns, and my

inclusion of neutral family vocabulary; these approaches all align with Zimman's (2017) suggestions for teaching gender-neutral vocabulary as a challenge to cisnormativity.

In the unplanned incident *Single-Gender Schools*, Serra overtly discussed the possibility of romantic and sexual involvements between students of the same gender at single-sex schools. She also overtly introduced the possibility that some students at such schools may not be the gender they were assigned at birth. She offered Elliot Page as a familiar example to further clarify the idea of assigned gender, as he had been famous and known to the students before and after coming out as transgender. My autoethnographic planned incident *Appearance Gallery* was a more discreet introduction of queer representation, insofar as I incorporated images of queer and gender-nonconforming individuals, such as Lena Waithe, and addressed that masculinity and femininity are not bound by sex, but did not overtly discuss queerness or gender transgression.

As noted above, both Seburn (2019) and Scott (2020) have suggested and offered possible materials that overtly represent and introduce questions on queer individuals and relationships. Amanda and Serra's incidents are more closely aligned with this approach. However, the lesson reported on by Nelson (1999) in a heterogenous community college ESL class involved classroom discussion of a more ambiguous image of two people holding hands. My own incident is somewhat more aligned with this approach, insofar as I asked the students which images could be described as 'masculine' and 'feminine' and whether those words are necessarily gendered. I found it curious that I, being the only participant working at a more liberal private university, was the most discreet among the participants. One possible explanation for this is the relevance of student level, as discussed further below.

Also interesting is that in most cases, the participant teachers introduced representations of foreign rather than Turkish queerness. This is true of the visual images of queer people included in reported incidents—James Baldwin, Leslie Feinberg, and Lena

Waithe are American, and Elliot Page is Canadian—and of the English names Serra used in her representation of a same-sex couple. This is in contrast to O'Mochain's (2006) approach of intentionally using local queer voices. Furthermore, the reliance on foreign representations could potentially reinforce the cisheteronormative and prejudiced narrative that queerness is something foreign and not relevant to Turkish society, though queer Turkish celebrities could also be used in many of the activities the participant teachers described.

6.1.3 Research Question 3

The third research question of this study asked how the participating queer EFL instructors navigated instances of cisheteronormative attitudes, homophobia, or transphobia when those arose spontaneously. Such instances primarily arose in unplanned incidents, though not exclusively. The instructors responded to these instances by challenging assumptions and confirming queer identities, sometimes by asking critical questions, other times by providing information, and in two instances by allowing space for conversation.

Serra used critical questioning to challenge assumptions in several of her incidents, both planned and unplanned. In *Jane and Sheila*, she asked, in response to a student assumption about the gender of people depicted as a couple in a dialogue, whether all romantic couples are always comprised of a man and a woman. Similarly, in the *Single-Gender Schools* incident, she questioned whether students believe there would be no romantic drama or sexual tension in same-sex schools. In this incident, she also provided information in response to an assumption that all students at a same-sex school would be cisgender, by noting that some students may not be their assigned gender. Serra's questioning approach aligns with suggestions made by Nelson (1999) and Curran (2006) to interrogate students' beliefs around sexuality and gender rather than providing information from the teachers' own knowledge.

In contrast, my own autoethnographic responses to spontaneous instances of cisheteronormative attitudes, homophobia, or transphobia primarily involved affirming queer identities and directly providing information. When my students suggested that a character they had linguistically marked as a man must actually be a woman based on the character's clothing and the gender of their romantic partner, I simply stated that men can wear dresses and have boyfriends. This was an example of usualizing difference without essentializing any particular minority group, in alignment with similar suggestions made by Paiz (2018), Scott (2020), and Seburn (2019). In *Which Pronouns?*, a student asked a question about pronouns which was antagonistic to transgender people, whether intentionally or not, and I responded by simply explaining that we use the pronouns that affirm the person's gender. When the student further noted a personal dislike for gay people, I made a statement about respecting differences and shut down the conversation. The relevance of student level to that choice is discussed further below.

When Amanda faced similar situations of students expressing unfavorable opinions of gay people, her primary response was to open space for discussion. In *A Student Response*, her offer of further discussion was refused by the student who had shared the opinion, but the offered space was later utilized by another student who wrote and presented a story about a gay protagonist facing discrimination. When students in *An Impromptu Debate* expressed homophobic attitudes, Amanda allowed other students in the class to address the issue, resulting in a student-led class discussion on the subject. Amanda's incidents support earlier findings by Michell (2009) and Tekin (2011) that Turkish learners of English are willing to discuss queer issues. It may also be relevant that the latter incident took place with a group of students with whom Amanda had previously discussed queer issues. The queer-friendly space that Amanda afforded the students may have contributed to their feeling empowered to conduct a self-directed debate; Cahnmann-Taylor et al. (2021) have suggested that "studying

a second or foreign language from a queer perspective offers teachers and learners opportunities to deconstruct and question what is conceived to be normal and instead imagine what is possible, equitable, and inclusive in our real and imagined world" (pp. 20–21).

6.1.4 Research Question 4

The fourth research question of this study asked how the teaching environment impacts the participant teachers' approaches and experiences challenging cisheteronormativity in their classrooms in English preparatory programs at Turkish universities. Multiple factors were revealed in analysis, including student level and classroom rapport; fears of student reactions, lack of institutional support, and even possible job loss within the existing sociopolitical climate. They also expressed feelings of responsibility to counteract the shortcomings of their learning institutions and society in promoting awareness of queer issues.

6.1.4.1 Classroom Atmosphere and Student Level.

As mentioned above, student level was an important factor impacting the approaches taken by both Amanda and myself. Amanda noted in her *Challenging Assumptions* incident that she felt able to discuss issues of gender and sexuality with those students in part because of their high level of English. Similarly, in my own autoethnographic incident *Which Pronouns?*, I described shutting down the topic when confronted with overt homophobia because at A1 level the students did not have the language skills to discuss topics of gender, sexuality, or prejudice. Similarly, Cahnmann-Taylor et al. (2021) have suggested that critical discussion of queer issues would likely be "too advanced for novice [language] learners" (p. 14). Overall, three of my four autoethnographic incidents took place with elementary-level (A1) students, while all incidents reported by both Serra and Amanda were with students studying at intermediate (B1) level. This likely contributes to the fact that my own incidents more often took indirect and discreet approaches; I noted in my narration of *Which Pronouns?*

that “[my elementary learners] didn’t have the language to explain their reasons for simple things, let alone to discuss complex topics like personal identity and prejudice” (Jennifer). Direct discussion of queer topics simply requires more language than is available to an A1 learner, limiting the applicability of deconstruction and critical questioning in low-level classrooms.

Class rapport was also a reported factor that influenced Amanda in all of her incidents. She mentioned feeling particularly comfortable with the students she was working with in the planned incident *Challenging Assumptions*, for whom she designed a lesson to directly and overtly challenge assumptions and introduce neopronouns, as well as the students in the unplanned incident *An Impromptu Debate*, where she overtly discussed having seen a queer film about coming-out stories. She mentioned in the latter narration that, with a different group, she may not have mentioned the film, let alone allowed them to start debating the topic (Amanda).

6.1.4.2 Fears around Institutional and Sociopolitical Context.

Fear was a central environmental factor for all three participant instructors, whether related to possible student reactions, lack of institutional support, or potential job loss. Amanda’s approach with her class in her incident *A Student Response* was altered due to fear of potential student complaints. She noted that the university at which her incidents took place is a conservative institution with close ties to the government, and expressed concern that if a complaint was lodged, her job could be at risk. This echoes similar fears reported by O’Mochain (2006), who had worried that discussing queerness in a cultural studies class at a religious women’s college in Japan could threaten his employment.

Serra expressed similar fears around possible negative student reactions and the lack of institutional support. Serra’s incident *Jane and Sheila* took place during her first semester teaching at a large public university. She noted a high degree of policing at public institutions

and a lack of institutional support, which has led to a degree of self-censorship. Furthermore, she mentioned concerns that students may lodge a complaint within the online CİMER system, from whence they are sent directly to the President of Türkiye.

Fear also factored into my own experiences, especially in earlier incidents that took place before I became aware of my institution's friendlier attitude. I noted in my narration of my *Appearance Gallery* incident, which took place during my first semester at a small private university, that I was unaware at the time of the institution's attitude toward queer issues, but that by the time of my *Neutral Family Vocab* incident, I had become aware of queer scholarship at the institution and my department had instituted a non-discrimination policy. This suggests that it is important for friendly institutions to make their position on queer issues known to faculty. However, while these factors increased my comfort level addressing queer issues, fears surrounding the broader sociopolitical context still negatively impacted my approaches. In my narration of *Neutral Family Vocab*, I twice commented on the time period in which the event occurred, wherein the media and individuals in positions of power in the country were frequently speaking negatively about queer people. This was significant enough to stop me from using an overtly queer family tree with depictions of queer individuals and partnerships out of a fear of potentially "getting in trouble" (Jennifer).

Such expressions of fear were expected, considering the sociopolitical attitudes toward queer issues and academic freedom discussed in the introduction of this report. However, it is interesting that all three participants express similar fears regardless of whether they were in a public or private context. Serra stated a perception that private universities have more autonomy than public schools, which are more closely monitored. However, Amanda's incidents took place at a large private university, and she directly expressed fear for her job security. Additionally, my autoethnographic incidents took place at a smaller, more liberal private institution which is relatively queer-friendly, but I also still expressed fear around

addressing queer issues in class. This suggests that while an unsupportive institution may negatively impact a teacher's attempts to queer their EFL classroom, a friendlier institution may have limited mitigating effect in the face of a hostile sociopolitical environment. Nonetheless, while a challenging sociopolitical or institutional climate may impact how a teacher addresses cisheteronormativity, each of the instructors in this study still found ways to do so.

6.1.4.3 Necessity in a Highly Normative Environment.

Despite their fears, the instructors involved in this study felt a responsibility to challenge cisheteronormativity in their classrooms, especially in response to highly normative social and educational attitudes. Both Serra and I expressed frustration or discomfort with the cisheteronormative and stereotypical nature of the official materials offered by our programs. This is unsurprising given the work of Thornbury (1999), Gray (2013), Paiz (2015), Hampson (2020), and Selvi and Kocaman (2021), who noted the highly heteronormative design of English language textbooks produced for both global and local audiences. I created the material described in *Appearance Gallery* out of a refusal to perpetuate the cisheteronormative appearance ideals promoted by the textbook, and I adapted another textbook's highly normative coverage of family vocabulary in *Neutral Family Vocab*. Similarly, Serra created an error-correction lesson in *He vs. They* to introduce singular 'they' out of frustration that her department's official materials do not teach the singular use of the pronoun. She also adapted a book activity in *Jane and Sheila* to include representation of a same-sex couple in the face of materials that only ever depict heterosexual couples, and she expressed frustration in her incident *Single-Gender Schools* that the materials provided by her institution often perpetuate stereotypes around sex and gender, as well as other social justice issues, with no concern for the type of message they're sending. She was required to use the material, but discussed its problematic nature with her students, in line with Paiz's (2018)

suggestion that teachers help students learn to interrogate the representations of identity in official materials by doing so with them.

Another environmental factor which was noted by each teacher is the highly normative nature of Turkish society. This factor influenced Serra's decision to ask critical questions; she noted in *Jane and Sheila* that students may never have been asked such questions before. Similarly, Amanda noted in *An Impromptu Debate* that the strong cisheteronormative influence of Turkish society results in a lack of exposure to alternative ways of being, thus creating a need to introduce queer issues and allow for open discussions in class. All three instructors mentioned that students will need language or awareness around queer issues, whether in terms of referring to people of unknown gender or protecting future medical patients against mistaken assumptions, echoing assertions made by Nelson (2006) and Moore (2016) that students need language to navigate queer issues, whether in their personal lives or in broader society. Furthermore, since students may not come across queer topics in regular life, Amanda and I addressed homophobic comments and assumptions—in *An Impromptu Debate* and *Which Pronouns?*—gently and with understanding that the students may not intend hostility. Finally, Serra also noted that even if the students are exposed to queer issues on social media, film, or television, seeing queer representation in classroom materials has a greater impact. Along a similar line, Hampson (2020) has noted that ELT coursebooks are often viewed as an authority on the English language.

Having examined the results of this study in relation to each of my research questions, we see that the participating instructors applied both inclusion/representation and critical questioning techniques. The next section will examine these results in relation to queer pedagogy, exploring whether queer pedagogy is applicable in EFL contexts by considering whether any of the participant instructors actually used a queer pedagogical approach in their incidents.

6.2 Applying Queer Pedagogy to English Preparatory Classes

Considering from a queer theory perspective that gender and sexuality identities are socially constructed, created and maintained through both behaviour and language, the way we address these topics in the language classroom can either endorse or challenge the constructed norms that perpetuate cisheteronormativity. While some of the literature examined earlier offers various suggestions for queering the English language classroom, many of those suggestions focus more on higher-level learners or content classes, or on ESL classes in more liberal, queer-friendly contexts. Therefore, it is valuable to consider whether and how the teachers participating in this study, working in a less-welcoming EFL environment and in some cases with low-level learners with very limited language skills, applied queer pedagogy in their incidents.

Britzman (1995) suggests that a queer pedagogy approach involves questioning and deconstructing the binary categories that privilege certain identities over others, as befits the critical questioning approach forwarded by Nelson (1999, 2002). Curran (2006) similarly suggests posing questions that deconstruct students' underlying beliefs about gender and sexuality. As discussed above, Serra used critical questioning in several of her incidents to challenge learners' assumptions regarding gender and sexual orientation. While highly theoretical questions regarding the performance and maintenance of gender would be beyond the ability of B1 level students, Serra did pose level-appropriate questions that challenge the presumption of heterosexuality by asking whether all romantic couples are necessarily comprised of a man and a woman and whether her students truly believed that a single-sex school would be devoid of sexual tension or romantic drama.

The issue of level-appropriacy becomes more challenging with elementary learners. The list of sample critical questions suggested by Nelson (1999), for example, would be far too advanced for low-level English language learners. Prior to this study, I believed that

critical questioning could not be applied in elementary classes. However, I now propose that my own approach of asking my A1 learners whether men can be feminine and women can be masculine qualifies as a level-appropriate type of critical questioning; despite not directly challenging a binary view of gender, these questions challenge the socially constructed normative behaviour expectations of these two particular gender categories with which elementary learners are already familiar.

While Britzman (1995) warns that an inclusion-based approach can potentially contribute to the othering and subjugation of queerness, particularly when that inclusion focuses on difference or tolerance, she also notes that queer pedagogy involves challenging the binary of normalcy and deviance, as echoed by Lovaas et al. (2002). It is therefore arguable that an inclusion-based approach focused on representations which do not other or exoticize queerness but rather usualize queerness as unremarkable have a place within queer pedagogy.

As noted in the literature review, usualization involves tacitly affirming an identity as unremarkable and entirely acceptable without othering or drawing attention to difference (The Classroom, n.d.). The strategy of usualization was applied in several of the incidents explored in this study. Amanda used this strategy within her activity that included visuals of James Baldwin and Leslie Feinberg when she stated that Baldwin did not have a wife because he was gay and, likewise, noted without any further discussion that Feinberg's zie/hir pronouns are simply another set of singular third-person pronouns equal to those the students already knew. Similarly, I also applied the strategy of usualization when I responded to my students' normative assumptions around gender and sexuality that a man can both wear a dress and have a boyfriend, with no further comment on the matter.

The teachers who participated in this study were able to operationalize queer pedagogy to a level-appropriate degree in some of their classroom incidents by challenging

normative assumptions regarding gender and sexuality through strategies of critical questioning and usualization. Despite the limitations of critical questioning with learners whose language level hinders their ability to engage in discussions on the nature of identity and oppression, even simple questions can disrupt normative assumptions and perceptions of gender and sexuality, as well as of normalcy and deviance. Furthermore, usualization can be a powerful tool for language teachers in challenging cisheteronormativity with any skill level.

6.3 Implications and Evaluation

6.3.1 Contribution and Significance

This study was conducted in order to address a gap in the existing literature on the practice of queering ELT. Paiz (2019) speaks of the need for the ongoing advocacy for queer inclusivity in ELT to expand beyond the countries where queer scholarship is currently centered and into those that may be more hostile to queerness. Similarly, Merse (2022) notes in his overview of existing research on sexual and gender diversity in EFL that more research is needed on actual classroom practice, particularly in these less-welcoming environments. This study therefore contributes valuable knowledge in this area by exploring the actual classroom practice of EFL instructors working in a more frigid environment. It has provided examples of how teachers in such environments challenge cisheteronormativity in more direct and overt ways as well as more indirect and discreet ways.

In addition, much of the existing research on queering ELT seems to focus on higher-level learners, or proposes approaches and activities that would require a certain level of English proficiency to be able to navigate effectively. I found little available information on actual classroom practice working with lower-level learners. This study therefore also provides useful data and analysis on queering ELT with low-level learners, and provides examples of how queer pedagogy can be applied at lower skill levels.

6.3.2 Limitations and Recommendations

In this study, I have sought to explore and understand the experiences and perspectives of a small number of queer EFL instructors in Turkish university preparatory programs. This critical qualitative study makes no claims of generalizability. The findings may be more relevant to EFL practice in similarly less queer-friendly contexts than in ESL contexts or with other age groups. Furthermore, while Türkiye is a relatively unwelcoming environment for queer identities, there still exist environments even more unwelcoming, such as those contexts where even discussing queerness is directly forbidden by law. Nelson (2006) has noted the challenges of conducting research on queer issues due to the threat of negative consequences, and this study has reflected the fears experienced by teachers working to challenge cisheteronormativity in this environment. Some of this study's results, particularly instructors' more direct and overt strategies, may be less relevant in countries that directly criminalize queerness. The findings regarding indirect and discreet strategies may still be useful in such contexts. Further study of classroom practice in other hostile environments, where possible, would be beneficial to the field.

This study has aimed to explore not only classroom practice but also the impact of sociopolitical structures and other environmental factors on that practice. Therefore, I have focused exclusively on textual data in the form of narratives, to the exclusion of supplementary materials, though some of the narratives provided descriptions of materials used. I have found narratives an effective way to collect information on both classroom practice and teacher evaluation of their own approaches, in addition to promoting queer voices in keeping with my theoretical framework of queer theory. The queer theory lens informing this study is aimed at "critiquing heteronormative assumptions, values, and institutions so as to contribute to awareness and social justice" (Manning, 2017, p. 3).

Interpretation of the same data from another theoretical perspective could yield different results.

The use of a queer theory lens has helped me consider whether and to what extent the approaches used by the participant teachers can be considered to challenge cisheteronormativity at its roots, by interrogating or disrupting the social construction, performance, and discursive maintenance of gender and sexuality identity categories. Operationalizing queer pedagogical approaches in ELT can be difficult, as noted by Paiz (2018), considering the limited language skills of the students. However, this study has revealed that the participant teachers found level-appropriate ways to challenge students' normative expectations around gender and sexuality.

Additionally, the sample size of this study is necessarily small given the sensitivity of the topic. Nonetheless, in-depth examination of data from small sample can still provide a valuable contribution to the field (Farrugia, 2018), especially when little or no previous data exist on the topic (Tracy, 2010).

Because these participants are themselves educated activists with a particular interest in queer issues, they have existing experiential knowledge of queer marginalization and prior experience interrogating queer oppression, making them especially appropriate sources of relevant data. However, all three participants were cisgender queer women, meaning no trans or nonbinary voices have been represented in this study, nor those of any queer men. These results are not expected to be representative of all queer instructors, let alone any wider category of EFL instructors. However, it is my hope that the results from this critical qualitative research study may inspire other instructors working in less-welcoming environments and provide examples that can be utilized and built upon.

6.4 Conclusion

This study has shown that despite their fears, queer teachers working in English preparatory programs in Turkish universities find ways to challenge cisheteronormativity in their language classrooms. Even in a relatively frigid environment, instructors can and do queer their classrooms in both overt and indirect ways, using strategies of both representation and deconstruction. Indeed, these two broad approaches are not an oppositional binary of their own, but can both be operationalized to challenge cisheteronormativity. The teacher participants have included linguistic and visual representations of queer people and relationships, taught gender-neutral language, applied critical questioning, and usualized queerness. These strategies largely mirror those suggested by existing research, though in this less-welcoming context, teachers are sometimes more indirect with their approaches. This is particularly true at lower levels, suggesting the level of directness may have more to do with proficiency levels than the sociopolitical climate.

The results of this study suggest that queer pedagogy can be operationalized in level-appropriate ways in EFL classrooms to a limited extent. Although the type of critical questioning of gender production and performance proposed by Britzman (1995), Nelson (1999, 2002), and Curran (2006) will be beyond the language ability of many general EFL learners, teachers can pose critical questions at their students' comprehension level that challenge assumptions of cisgender and heterosexuality as well as normative expectations around gender performance. Furthermore, representative inclusion can be practiced in such a way as to avoid essentializing or othering queer identities. This type of usualization can be implemented with any skill level, and functions to quietly disrupt the binary of normalcy and deviance (Britzman, 1995; Lovaas et al., 2002).

Contrary to participant expectations, whether an institution is public or private had less impact on the instructors than the overall sociopolitical climate, though the administration

of a department or university also plays a role in how safe or unsafe an instructor feels addressing queer issues in class. The participant teachers feared student complaints which could potentially result in job loss, in accordance with O'Mochain's (2006) previous research, and in some cases only addressed queerness in classes with whom they felt particularly comfortable. Teachers also expressed frustration with the lack of concern for queer issues, as well as broader social justice issues, within official materials, echoing the attitudes of the instructors interviewed by Gray (2013), who desired greater queer representation in course materials. Where possible, supportive institutions within unwelcoming environments should make an effort to clarify their support to their instructors, and ideally incorporate queer language or representation into the official curriculum, because as we've seen, even discreet strategies, such as representations of people with less obviously readable genders or incorporation of gender-neutral vocabulary and pronouns, can challenge cisheteronormativity without directly mentioning queerness.

Risks notwithstanding, these teachers worked to actively challenge cisheteronormative assumptions in their classrooms because they feel it is necessary and important for students to be exposed to the existence and acceptance of queerness in a society that often erases and maligns queer identities and because the students need to be able to navigate queer issues in real life. These attitudes reflect the positions of Liddicoat (2009), Moore (2016), and Nelson (2006), all of whom noted that students need appropriate language to function in the real world. As queerness grows increasingly accepted in some countries while continuing to be contested in others, the need for language to navigate these conversations only becomes more prevalent. And as Nelson (2002) notes, learning to challenge the restrictive binaries of gender and sexuality ultimately benefits everyone, not just queer people, by opening the door to broader social and cultural transformation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Form

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	**20231016-ED**
Approval Period:	December 7, 2022 – December 31, 2023
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Cecile Badenhorst Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	*Queer EFL Instructors' Experiences Challenging Cisheteronormativity in EFL*

December 7, 2022

Jennifer Thorson
Faculty of Education
Memorial University

Dear Jennifer Thorson:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarifications and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* for **one year**. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make additions and/or modifications, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical concerns, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before **December 31, 2023**. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the ***Applications: Post-Review*** link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

James R Drover

James Drover, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Faculty of Education

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter

Recruitment email/message

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Thorson, and I am a student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am conducting a research project called *Queer EFL Instructors' Experiences Challenging Cisheteronormativity in EFL* for my Master's degree, under the supervision of Dr. Cecile Badenhorst. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and approaches of queer English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers working to counter the cisheteronormativity of EFL in our classrooms in Turkey, through narrative accounts.

The participants will all be university level EFL instructors in Turkey who identify as members of the LGBTQI+ community and who actively seek to challenge cisheteronormativity in their English prep classrooms.

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in an interview. You will be asked to recall and describe both planned and unanticipated classroom incidents (1-2 of each) in which you acted to challenge cisheteronormativity during lessons. Participation will require approximately 1 to 2 hours of your time and will be held at a location of your choosing in Istanbul or online via Zoom. A second follow-up interview may be requested but would not be obligatory. Interviews will be recorded for accurate transcription. Recording is necessary to ensure accurate transcription of the interviews into text form for data analysis. In-person interviews will be audio recorded by mobile phone. Those held via Zoom will be audio and video recorded due to the platform's functionality, but cameras can remain off during the interview and only audio recordings will be used in data analysis.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond to this message to arrange an interview. Participation is fully voluntary. If you choose not to take part in this research, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

If you have any questions about me or my project, please contact me by email at jethorson@mun.ca, or by phone or WhatsApp at [redacted].

If you know anyone who may be interested in participating in this study, please forward them a copy of this information.

Thank you in advance for considering my request,

Jennifer Thorson

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title: Queer EFL Instructors' Experiences Challenging Cisheteronormativity in EFL

Researcher(s): Jennifer Thorson, Memorial University Faculty of Education, jethorson@mun.ca

Supervisor(s): Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Memorial University Faculty of Education, cbadenhorst@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled "*Queer EFL Instructors' Experiences Challenging Cisheteronormativity in EFL*."

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, Jennifer Thorson, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:
My name is Jennifer Thorson and I am a student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. As part of my Masters thesis I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Cecile Badenhorst.

Purpose of Study:
The field of English Language Teaching often relies on simplification to express recognizable meaning, thereby perpetuating cisnormative and heteronormative concepts and representations in materials and classroom practice. The exclusion of queerness in EFL is well-documented, but most research on potential remedies has focused on socially liberal western countries and on proposals rather than actual classroom practice. There has been little research or discussion of how to subvert cisheteronormativity in EFL teaching in environments which are hostile toward queer identities.

The purpose of this critical narrative study is to explore the experiences and approaches of queer EFL teachers working to counter the cisheteronormativity of EFL in our own classrooms in environments which are less welcoming to queer identities. This study intends to discover strategies and approaches used by queer teachers in Preparatory English programs at Turkish universities and to explore the reasoning behind those strategies.

What You Will Do in this Study:
Participants will be interviewed one-on-one, either in person or via Zoom, and asked to recall and describe both planned and unplanned incidents (1-2 of each) in which you acted to challenge cisheteronormativity in your classroom, as well as to reflect on what motivated your choices in those incidents.

Length of Time:
An interview is expected to take between 60 and 120 minutes. It is expected that only one interview will be necessary, though there is a small chance that a second, optional, follow-up interview may be requested if needed.

Withdrawal from the Study:
If you wish to revoke your participation during the interview, you can state this and any data collected to that point will be erased.

Following the interview, your audio recording will be transcribed into written text, with pseudonyms in place of any names. You will be sent a copy of your transcript to check for accuracy within two weeks of your interview. From receipt of your transcript, you will have one week to make any necessary changes or additions, or to withdraw from the study. If you wish to revoke your participation at this point, or following your interview and prior to receipt of your transcript, you may do so by contacting me by email at jethorson@mun.ca or [redacted] to request removal of your data from the study.

Following the one-week period allotted for checking your transcript, each incident described therein will be condensed into block narratives that reconstitute the story chronologically. This reconstitution is necessary for data analysis purposes. These condensed narratives will be included in the final report.

Possible Benefits:
This project is expected to benefit the wider ELT community by providing insight into teaching approaches and activities that can be used to make classrooms more equitable and empowering for students and especially queer English learners. This project will also benefit the scholarly community by providing data on a gap in the current body of knowledge, as very little data presently exists on lived classroom practice of challenging cisheteronormativity in EFL classrooms in environments less welcoming to queer identities.

Possible Risks:
You will be asked to recount both planned and unanticipated instances of challenging cisheteronormativity in your classroom, which could remind you of emotionally challenging or upsetting occurrences. If your participation in the study and queer identity is known, participants could face potential social risks such as homophobic backlash from their institutions or students, or financial/employment risks such as limited future job opportunities. Therefore, every effort will be made to maintain your anonymity, as described below.

If you do experience upset or repercussions, therapy and legal counsel for queer people in Turkey is available through the Istanbul-based NGO SPOD.
https://spod.org.tr/
info@spod.org.tr, danisma@spod.org.tr
0212 292 4802

Confidentiality:
The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.

Your interview will be conducted one-on-one at a location of your own choosing or online, and can be conducted in private. Additionally, consent forms and interview recordings will be stored separately from transcribed data, so that it will not be possible for anyone other than the researcher to associate a name with any given set of responses without your express consent.

However, because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, some of whom are known to each other, and because the data involves recounting classroom experiences, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said.

In the transcript of your interview and in all written analysis and reporting, you will be given a pseudonym, and no identifying information [such as the name of your workplace and names of students or colleagues] will be included in the report.

Anonymity:
Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance.

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure the anonymity of your data. Names and identifying characteristics of participants will not be included in collected data or the final report. You will be referred to by a pseudonym, though characteristics such as nationality, gender and sexual identity, and approximate years of teaching experience may be included. Any names that come up in your interview will also be replaced with pseudonyms upon transcription. Workplaces will be described only as small, mid-sized, or large private or public universities in Istanbul or Turkey.

Recording of Data:
Interviews will be recorded. Recording is necessary to ensure accurate transcription of the interviews into text form for data-analysis. In-person interviews will be audio recorded by mobile phone. Those held via Zoom must be both audio and video recorded due to the platform's functionality, but cameras may remain off during the interview and only audio recordings will be used in data analysis. Zoom recordings will be saved to my personal computer and not to Zoom's online platform. Video recordings will be immediately deleted and only audio recordings will be used and stored. The privacy and security policy of the Zoom platform can be found at: https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:
Only the researcher will have access to the original recorded data. The recording of your interview and a digital copy of your consent form will be stored in a password-protected archive folder on the researcher's external hard drive. Hard-copy consent forms will be stored in a locked storage compartment in the researcher's home.

Transcribed data will be anonymized and only refer to participants by pseudonyms, and will be stored locally on the researcher's own password-protected personal computer and hosted securely online through Taguette qualitative data analysis tool, as described below. Backups of anonymized data will be stored on the aforementioned hard drive in a separate password-

protected archive folder. Anonymized data will be accessible to both the researcher and the research supervisor.

Data will not be archived for future use. Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. After 5 years both recordings and transcripts will be deleted and consent forms shredded.

Third-Party Data Storage:
The anonymized transcripts of data collected from you as part of your participation in this project will be hosted and/or stored electronically by Taguette open source qualitative data analysis tool and is subject to their privacy policy, and to any relevant laws of the country in which their servers are located. Therefore, confidentiality of data may not be guaranteed in the rare instance, for example, that government agencies obtain a court order compelling the provider to grant access to specific data stored on their servers. If you have questions or concerns about how your data will be collected or stored, please contact the researcher and/or visit the provider's website for more information before participating. The privacy and security policy of the Taguette platform can be found at: https://app.taguette.org/tos. Data will be deleted from this platform following final submission of the thesis.

Reporting of Results:
This study is being conducted for publication as a Masters thesis. Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, and can be accessed online at: http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses.

The data from this research project will be published and may be presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although I will report your condensed block narratives and direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and no identifying information [such as the name of your workplace or names of students or colleagues] will be included in the report.

Sharing of Results with Participants:
After your interview, and before the data are included in the final report, you will be able to review the transcript of your interview, and to add to or correct the information if desired.

Upon publication of my Masters thesis, the participants will be sent a link to the online version of the report hosted by Memorial University.

Questions:
You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: researcher Jennifer Thorson at jethorson@mun.ca or supervisor Dr. Cecile Badenhorst at cbadenhorst@mun.ca.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Consent:

Your signature on this form [or oral consent in the case of online interviews] means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You agree to have your interview audio recorded if conducted in person, and audio-video recorded if conducted online (with the understanding that cameras can remain off).
- You agree to the anonymized transcription of your interview, the transcripts being reconstituted as block narratives, and the publication of those block narratives in the final report.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that **point will be destroyed**.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study **prior to or up to one week following the receipt of your interview transcript.**

I agree to the use of direct quotations	☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree to the reporting of my nationality	☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree to the reporting of my gender and sexual identity	☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree to the reporting of my approximate years of teaching experience	☐ Yes ☐ No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your Signature Confirms:

☐ I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

☐ I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

☐ A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

Researcher's Signature:
I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator	Date

In the case of online interviews, your oral consent means you have read and understood this document and agree to the above statements.