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Representations of Heteronormativity and Gender Binarism in
Norwegian Textbooks for the English Subject – Challenging
Queer Tolerance in Teaching Practices

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Abstract

Queer people continue to be marginalised and discriminated against in society (Smestad, 2018), so it is therefore reasonable to presume that such attitudes are present in textbooks used for educational purposes, since textbooks represent and reproduce “societal knowledge” (Höhne & Heerdegen, 2018, p. 240). For that reason, newly published textbooks accompanying the new Norwegian curriculum (LK20) need to be subjects of analysis, as their inclusion or erasure of queer narratives may be reflected in the classroom practice of teachers in years to come. On this account, I have analysed queer textual and visual narratives from three textbooks, *Engelsk 7*, *Engelsk 8* and *Stages 9*, which are designed to be used in the English subject in Norwegian classrooms in grades 7, 8 and 9. I have chosen these three textbooks as case studies to examine how the presence and absence of queer voices in textbook narratives may serve to uphold the idea of gender binarism and reproduce heteronormativity. Additionally, I have discussed some of the implications these findings may have in regards to questions about language, diversity, and classroom practices involving teachers and their students. The theoretical background I have employed is based upon textbook studies and queer studies, in particular queer pedagogy derived from a Norwegian context. Furthermore, my methodology is that of a qualitative approach, applying the method of critical discourse analysis, and consisting of close reading, analysis, and interpretation of three case studies. Through my research, I have found that my examined textbooks do reproduce the ideas of gender binarism and heteronormativity to a large extent.

1. Introduction

Queer people continue to be marginalised and discriminated against in our society (Smestad, 2018) so it is therefore reasonable to presume that such attitudes are present in textbooks used for educational purposes, since textbooks represent and reproduce “societal knowledge” (Höhne & Heerdegen, 2018, p. 240). The presumption that textbooks reproduce societal knowledge may lead us to believe that textbooks represent the “idea of normality”, which participates in shaping the practice of a teacher. This assumption may be supported by the argument that textbooks are “used as the dominant medium in the classroom” and the fact that many teachers structure their classes based on the content of the textbook (Höhne and Heerdegen, 2018, p. 242). Wilmot and Naidoo also suggest that the curriculum and textbooks in particular represent the most powerful establishment of normality (as cited in Höhne and Heerdegen, 2018, p. 242). Textbooks further continue to hold an unquestionable status, because their content is often perceived as natural, rather than subjective interpretations of reality (Höhne and Heerdegen, 2018, p. 242). For these reasons, newly published textbooks accompanying the new Norwegian curriculum (LK20) call to be subjects of analysis, as their inclusion of or erasure of queer narratives may be reflected in the classroom practice of teachers in years to come.

The core values of the current Norwegian curriculum (LK-20) state that: “School shall give pupils historical and cultural insight that will give them a good foundation in their lives and help each pupil to preserve and develop her or his identity in an inclusive and diverse environment” (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2017, p. 5). Further, they contend that: “All pupils shall be treated equally, and no pupil is to be subjected to discrimination [...], and school shall support the development of each person's identity [...]” (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2017, p. 5-6). The curriculum clearly emphasises the school’s responsibility to help students gain knowledge and insight, so that they may further develop their own identity. This should be valid for pupils who do or will at some point identify within the queer community. However, the absence of and the poorly portrayed LGBTQ+ narratives within textbooks are often more common than not (Smestad, 2018, p. 15). This lack of representation may be reflected in the classroom by the silencing of LGBTQ+ voices, because they never get the chance to enter the classroom in the first place. Alternatively, queer narratives may be represented to some degree as textbooks tend to them

as a one-time, separate topic which is deemed unimportant of being presented as a continuous dialogue (Smestad, 2018, p. 17), and therefore marked as different.

The curricular core values shall colour the pedagogical practice throughout primary and secondary education and training (Røthing, 2020, p. 42). The English subject therefore shares the responsibility to see that these values become a part of the teacher's classroom practices. Although the English subject curriculum does not mention words like sexual orientation, gender identity, or homosexuality explicitly, textbooks for the English subject contain more pages with LGBT content as a theme than textbooks in several other subjects (Smestad, 2018, p. 13). This is due to fictional narratives including queer voices, and Smestad (2018) stresses the importance to have language textbooks as subjects of analysis to better understand what these narratives have to offer students. Therefore, I have examined four narratives consisting of textual and visual elements, from three textbooks designed for grades 7, 8 and 10 in the English subject: *Engelsk 7* (2021), *Engelsk 8* (2021) and *Stages 9* (2021). During my examination of these textbooks, I have attempted to answer the following research questions:

How are queer topics integrated into Norwegian textbooks for the English subject?

Does the absence or presence of queer voices in textbooks shape the way queer content is taught in the EFL classroom, so that it reproduces heteronormativity and gender binarism?

During my years of obligatory education, heteronormativity has permeated my teachers' pedagogical practices, as there were no queer narratives made visible in the classroom at all. Heteronormativity is defined as the idea that everyone is presumed to identify as heterosexual, unless something else is stated, thereby making heterosexuality seem like the most wanted, normal and natural sexual orientation (Røthing, 2020, p. 46; Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 40). By erasing LGBTQ+ issues completely, the education I was given ignored a part of my identity that I proudly embrace. Today, I identify as lesbian or queer. However, coming to terms with my sexual orientation has not been easy, as I have struggled with feeling different and societal expectations of gender expression and labelling. My motivation for this paper is therefore to make a contribution to textbook studies in the English subject and queer education in Norway, and highlight some problematic tendencies I have found in current English textbooks, which may influence teachers' practices and further

the education of their students. I also hope my study contributes to providing teachers and students some suggestions for a better inclusion of queer topics than I had.

2. Theoretical frameworks

In this section, I will discuss my choice of terminology, and present my theoretical background, which consists of queer theory and queer pedagogy in Norwegian contexts, and textbook studies. The theoretical frameworks presented in this section will function as a foundation for further interpretation and argumentation in my analysis and discussion.

2.1. Terminology: LGBTQ+ or queer?

During the development of this paper, I have found myself posing valuable questions about whether it is more appropriate to use the word LGBTQ+ or queer, when writing about representation of characters who define themselves outside of gender norms and the heterosexual norm in society. When I started my research, I used the word LGBTQ+ to describe the textbook narratives that I was interested in analysing and discussing. However, as my research into established queer theories progressed, my perspective upon my application of the word changed. The abbreviation LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer people as a group. Furthermore, the '+' is included to emphasise that there are other terms included in the acronym, such as questioning, but not explicitly stated (FRI, 2018). Further, the '+' also signals how terminology continues to shift, historically and currently, as established terms receive additional meanings and new terms continue to emerge. Therefore, one may view the word LGBTQ+ as an inclusive alternative, and FRI (2018) states that this is the most precise and inclusive term to use when referring to this group.

However, although Henderson (2019) suggests that the word LGBT may be viewed as more neutral and less negative in its historical utilization than the word queer, the four categories of LGBT still uphold the idea of binaries and ask people to limit their experience of gender and sexual orientation to specific labels (p. 4). This suggestion that Henderson poses may be further applied to the word LGBTQ+. Although the word LGBTQ+ may be understood as more inclusive, because it includes one more letter and a sign, both words rely on the idea that people's experiences of gender identity and sexual orientation may be

contained to certain categories. Thus, this acronym excludes people whose gender identity or sexual orientation may be described as somewhere beyond traditional and defined labels. According to Haeefe-Thomas (2019), the word *queer* has appealed to many because it could be used as “an umbrella term for anyone and everyone who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender, and even for heterosexual allies who did not feel “straight” on a narrow sense” (p. 66). The term *queer* may therefore be understood as pushing beyond binaries, such as “masculinity/femininity”, “male/woman”, “heterosexual/homosexual” (Haeefe-Thomas, 2019, p. 66), and to a larger degree function as a broader term that allows for the possibility of discussing forms of non-normative gender expression.

The final decision to use the word *queer* to generally describe the textbook narratives that I have analysed in this paper was made on the basis of what is discussed above and that *queer* felt like a word that could potentially make room for not only the narratives of a young gay boy and a trans-girl, but also what may be understood as the ‘untold’ narrative of a presumed boy who per definition cross-dresses. The voice of this boy if told would possibly represent an expanded understanding of the terms gender expression and gender identity. This research paper seeks to encourage the reader to begin to think of gender identity and sexual orientation as going beyond binaries, and extend and redefine identity labels and terminology.

2.2. Queer Theory and Queer Pedagogy in Norwegian Contexts

Although queer studies are viewed as a respected academic discipline particularly in Great Britain, Europe and parts of North America, it is important to state that *queer* is a derogatory word that LGBTQ+ people have reclaimed, thus some people within the community still find this word difficult and hurtful (Haeefe-Thomas, 2019, p. 64). Our understanding of the word *queer* may therefore vary especially in terms of geographical location, and not all people within the community are comfortable with identifying or have others identifying them as *queer*. Haeefe-Thomas (2019) further notes that many trans people do not wish to use the term *queer* to describe themselves (p. 67). However, Røthing (2020) argues that “*queer*”, which in Norwegian is usually translated to “*skeiv*”, has become an integrated part of the Norwegian everyday language, and is in the process to mean the same as terms like lesbian, gay and bisexual (p. 123). This may suggest that the word “*skeiv*” holds fewer negative connotations than what “*queer*” does in English. In Norwegian, “*skeiv*” originally had a more excessive meaning, which still is used in academic settings (Røthing,

2020, p. 123). I will therefore use the word queer in this paper as an umbrella term, and apply more defined labels where it seems appropriate. My overall intention is thus not to impose a term upon those who do not wish to identify with it, but merely utilize a word that, in my view, may be broad enough to create space for the diversity and nuances that are present with-in gender identities and sexual orientations. This is important to my study, as it aims to encourage textbook authors to invite students and teachers to gain a more diverse and ‘queerer’ language to understand oneself and others.

In order to understand queer theory, one may begin with defining the concept of queerness. For Neto (2018), this notion includes queer subjects who “lost visibility” during the gay movement in the 1960 and 1970s; people who did not adopt heteronormative practices to “normalize” the gay and lesbian movement (p. 590). The term ‘queer’ may then be understood as an attempt to make visible individuals that were effaced by this normalization, for example feminine boys, trans people, and gender non-conforming people (Neto, 2018, p. 590). Furthermore, the academic field of queer studies adopted the term ‘queer’ to identify their field, as a result of American political activism taking back ‘queer’, which previously connoted negative associations as a discriminatory word, and in that way trying to deconstruct its derogatory meaning (Neto, 2018, p. 591). Queer theory may thereby be said to aim “to denounce the heteronormativity that influences even the gay movement” (Neto, 2018, p. 591). This understanding of queer theory denotes that queer subjects are solely tolerated to the extent to which people conform to a set of socially constructed values, further rejecting people who fall outside the established norm (Neto, 2018, p. 591).

Further, working with queer perspectives can also help to analyse processes which make heterosexuality appear as given and wanted, and simultaneously interrogate queer sexualities, relations and identities presented as abnormal and unwanted (Røthing, 2020, p. 46). Heteronormativity and gender binarism may be understood as such concepts which favour heterosexual and cisgender identities to queer identities. *The gender binary* refers to the idea of understanding gender as a binary, that is that a person is either a man or a woman (Haefele-Thomas, 2019, p. 2). To reveal the power relations that these concepts create within textbook narratives, we need to analyse why the categories *heterosexuality* and *cisgender* are granted the connotation as the norm.

Moreover, I find it relevant to present the following terms, as they represent key concepts to understand queer topics and power relations which are found in textbook narratives. Queer theories understand conceptions of gender and sexuality as *cultural*

phenomena, that is the understanding that they as phenomena are “continually interpreted and given meaning, and that these meanings are ‘cultural’, not fixed and ‘naturally given’” (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 34). However, over time, one’s understanding of the terms gender and sexuality may appear as given, because of repetition and common interpretations of the same phenomena (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 35). Textbooks contributions to this manifestation of certain phenomena as “given”, since they hold the power to repeat each other’s interpretation of gender and sexuality, and thereby establishing a common understanding of these terms within the school context.

Further, queer pedagogy, which is based in ideas of queer theory against normalization, aims at being a contribution to educational practices, and offers a critical view of practices of exclusion that are normalized in the classroom by heteronormativity, which erase the voices of those who contradict a certain standard (Neto, 2018, p. 591). Further, it becomes crucial to question dominant practices in schools today, so to not merely represent socially privilege groups (Neto, 2018, p. 591). In the core curriculum, it is established that: “All pupils shall be treated equally, and no pupil is to be subjected to discrimination” (Norwegian Directorate for Training and Education, 2019, p. 5). A part of the school’s responsibility is therefore to shield students from indirect discrimination, which may be understood in terms of the concepts of marginalisation and othering (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 58). Marginalisation defines social processes which excludes certain individuals from a group as a whole, and may be present when the classroom as a collective is defined in terms which does not include everyone (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 58).

It is also key to discuss how teachers’ attempts to counteract oppression and othering are established differently in distinct teaching practices. According to Røthing and Svendsen (2009), education *for* and *about* the other are two variations of anti-discriminatory education, that are most common in Norwegian school, in particular the second one mentioned (p. 61). Both practices are concerned with “the other”, as education for the other seeks to identify and differentiate teaching to each student, and education about the other, which aims to prevent discrimination to provide knowledge about the other (Røthing, 2009, p. 63). The idea is to increase knowledge about the other, which will lead to students developing empathy for the other (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 42). Education about the other is in contrast to education for the other, meant to include all students, however much indicate that this practice becomes one for the majority in the classroom (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 63). Further, Røthing and Svendsen (2009) propose a third alternative which is education that problematizes privileges

to create change, which they argue is the best approach to pervasive anti-discriminatory teaching (p. 61). This is because the approach focuses on processes which creates the understanding of someone as the other, and includes a shifting focus to what creates such otherness and further makes majority's privileges visible and to question (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009). These educational practices are contributions to queer pedagogy in that they purpose certain ideas to prevent discrimination, which may be used to address oppression which manifests through heteronormativity and gender binarism. Furthermore, to include knowledge about queer people specific texts about "them" is usually included in teachers' educational practice (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 63), which further emphasises the need to examine textbooks as educational resources.

2.3. Textbook studies

Fuchs and Henne (2018) provide their readers with the following definition of a textbook: "[...] conventionally a tool designed for students or pupils to learn, be taught, or work from and which, according to school type or subject, is adapted to the respective curricula or standards and the specific aims, competences, and content defined within" (p. 25). Textbooks should therefore be examined in terms of their overall leading purposes, which may be understood as aiming to meet a country's respective national school curricula and function as an educational medium for teachers and students. Further, textbooks seek to reproduce "the respective knowledge base" of a specific subject in a manner that is understood as comprehensible for students (Fuchs and Henne, 2018, p. 25). Additionally, they aim for students to consider the construction of basic concepts, by introducing approaches which open up for different perspectives and encourage problem-oriented learning processes (Fuchs and Henne, 2018, p. 26). In my particular study, I have examined textbooks' function as an educational tool for both students and teachers, and to what extent my selected textbooks shape the teachers' practices in ways that make them sufficient to meet curricular core values.

Social changes and movements which began in the 1960s helped concentrate the focus of textbook research on the medium's social and political function, which may be understood as prompting the development of a more systematic textbook research in the 1970s (Fuchs and Henne, 2018). Textbook researchers necessitated a methodology for textbook research, and criticised the lack of theoretical dialogue of textbooks as such a significant and influential medium (Fuchs and Henne, 2018). However, this request did not

lead to the emergence of an overall theory of textbooks, but textbook research did begin to develop beyond mere content analysis, and methods applied within the current field are influenced by theoretical approaches from other relevant disciplines (Fuchs and Henne, 2018). In my study, I have made use of critical discourse analysis, which may be understood as a method in which textbook research has developed further from content analysis. Moreover, my methodology, in terms of interpretation of data material, is influenced by close reading and interpretive methods applied in literature studies and queer theory.

Furthermore, I will present textbook research on queer content, which depicts some emerged patterns within studies in the field. Research on queer content in textbooks has found an overall ignorance towards this topic (Smestad, 2018). Content on bisexual and trans people is rarely included, and few research papers mention this explicitly (Smestad, 2018). Further, Bittner establishes in her research that the heterosexual norm is upheld in textbooks for history, biology, and English in lower secondary school (as cited in Fuchs and Henne, 2018). Her findings demonstrate an address of legal aspects of anti-discrimination in textbooks, yet they fail to provide the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity, nor any presentation of this as normality (Bittner as cited in Fuchs and Henne, 2018, p. 19). Bittner's research may therefore suggest that the mere inclusion of legal anti-discriminatory aspects is not sufficient enough to deconstruct heteronormativity within textbooks, if marginalisation and othering continue to be present. Moreover, in a Swedish study, commissioned by the Swedish National Agency for Education, which analysed textbooks in several subjects, one concluded that Swedish textbooks are generally heteronormative (Larsson & Rosén, 2006). These findings have had an impact on my own presumptions of presence of heteronormativity and gender binarism in my own data material.

According to Smestad (2018), LGBT issues are present in Norwegian textbooks to the extent that detailed analysis of the particular inclusion is possible, which contrasts to a widespread ignorance towards queer issues found in international research. However, textbook research addresses the selective inclusion found in Norwegian textbooks as striking and problematic (Smestad, 2018; Røthing, 2017). Smestad (2018) concluded that LGBT issues "were found on less than two pages per textbook" and that these pages did not include bisexuals or trans people to any notable extent. In Norway, textbook research on queer content has also found that queer tolerance is established as an implicit ideal goal, in which presumed heterosexual students are to be provided with content which helps them become tolerant towards queer people (Røthing, 2009; Røthing, 2017; Røthing and Svendsen, 2009).

However, tolerance is limiting in that it does not prompt students and teachers to deconstruct cis-normativity and heteronormativity, as developed in my Analysis and Discussion section.

3. Research Methodology and Method

In this section, I will present my research methodology, which consists of a qualitative approach, a multiple case study and critical discourse analysis. Furthermore, I discuss my choice of textbooks and ethical considerations to my writing of this research paper. The research methodology presented in this section is structured accordingly to provide the reader with insight into my research process.

3.1. Qualitative Approach and Critical Discourse Analysis

Given my interest in analysing queer narratives presented in textbooks, I found that a qualitative research approach was suitable to apply to my study. In qualitative research, researchers may use a case study as an approach to collect texts and images about the focus of the study (Heigham and Croker, 2009, p. 320). Further, they analyse the data to allow for multiple interpretations, which is to take place without the influence of preconceived hypotheses to the extent in which it is possible (Heigham and Croker, 2009, p. 320). However, I have been conscious of the fact that, from the earliest drafts of my research questions, I have based my study upon the presumptions that heteronormativity and later gender binarism are present in my chosen textbooks. To shed light on these phenomena, I decided to do a collective case study, as I used three cases to explore the issues at hand by comparing and contrasting the different cases (Heigham and Croker, 2009, p. 308). Conducting a collective case study to understand how gender binarism and heteronormativity are constructed within textbooks was further influenced by my reading on critical discourse analysis.

Fuchs and Henne (2018) state that various forms of discourse analysis have found its place within textbook research for the past decade (p. 29). Fuchs (2011) further includes discourse analysis in his description of overall developments in methods applied in recent textbook research, alongside analysis of images and approaches from social and cultural studies (p. 21-23). Along similar lines, Schreier (2012) states that discourse analysis in all its forms aims “to analyse the ways in which language contributes to the construction of social

reality” (p. 46). Thus, recognizing that language does not represent reality, but rather contributes to shape our perception of a phenomenon or thing, is an assumption which discourse analysis rests upon (Schreier, 2012, p. 45 and 47). This assumption has been prominent in my analysis, as I have examined textbook narratives to recognize how language shapes our perception of heterosexuality and the gender binary as given and unquestionable norms. Among others, critical discourse analysis has been applied to analyse institutionalised texts such as textbooks, as one continues to understand them as an expression of power given how they create meaning through language, which reflects and reproduce societal ideologies (Veum and Skovholt, 2020, p. 18-19). According to Fairclough, a critical approach differs from a non-critical approach in that it not merely provides a description of a text, but further conveys how power and ideology appear in the text, and how the text and its language may form societal knowledge, perceptions and relations (as cited in Veum and Skovholt, 2020, p. 19). These ideas are relevant to my study as I seek to discuss how the language used in my selected textbooks conveys a certain societal knowledge which serves to reproduce heteronormativity and gender binarism. As stated in my Analysis and Discussion section, despite well-meant attempts at including queer voices, the textbooks still marginalise queer people in that the language reflects and reproduce normative ideologies. This further influences what readers view as the norm, and what they think of as outside the norm (Veum and Skovholt, 2020, p. 19).

3.2. Choice of Textbooks

For my data collection, I have chosen to examine the textual and visual narratives in two books from the textbook series *Engelsk* by Cappelen Damm, designed to be used by students in the English Subject in 7th and 8th grade. I have selected one book from the textbook series *Stages* by Aschehoug, designed to be used by students in 9th grade. As mentioned in the introduction, the new curriculum LK20 has prompted the production of new textbooks, and to me it was important to examine these versions, as they are meant to be used in the future Norwegian EFL classroom. My choice of textbooks was further influenced by my access to particular textbook series, and it is possible that I would have chosen different textbooks if more textbook series had been available at the library. However, I reviewed several textbooks before I decided upon using the presented textbooks as my data material. The three textbooks were chosen because they included narratives with both present and absent queer voices. Apart for accessibility, one of my criteria was that I wanted to include

textbooks that had narratives including queer voices, which automatically limited the number of textbooks I could choose from, as textbooks still ignore LGBT issues (Smestad, 2018, p. 7).

Further, as Smestad (2018) has found, textbook authors tend to include LGBT material in the latest school grades possible (p. 13). My choice of grades was therefore to some degree chosen for me, as I found no narratives including queer voices in the textbooks I examined designed for earlier grades. Furthermore, I decided to widen my scope add two related narratives, which I have read as missed opportunities to introduce queer voices. These were further included in my data material, because I found it relevant to examine what implications these narratives may have in contrast to those that included queer voices. Research on LGBT content in textbooks rarely mentions trans issues (Smestad, 2018, p. 7), and I further suspect that there is an absence of discussion on gender identity in the same research. When I found textbook narratives that included the voice of a trans-girl and the absent voices of possible gender diverse characters, I knew that I wanted to include these in my study, as I felt they could to some degree, try to represent the diversity within the word “queer”. I therefore ended up choosing my three respective textbooks as they are not merely concerned with sexual identity, but also gender identity and gender expression.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

In my introduction, I commented on my positionality in relation to this topic. Although this position provides me with insight to certain aspects of being queer in today’s society, it does not automatically make me more equipped to research on queer topics, or provide me with some given competence to which I can speak on the behalf of the queer community (Røthing, 2020, p. 209). Therefore, it is important to me to express that I am conscious that there still is an ethical dilemma to a cisgendered lesbian writing a thesis on queer representation including narratives depicting both gender- and sexual identities. For example, even though I identify as a lesbian, I am nevertheless granted privilege in that I also identify as cisgender. This further shows how different social categories, such as gender and sexuality, intersect and influence how people experience being queer, further depending on other social categorizes, such as race and ability among others (Røthing, 2009, p. 50, Haefele-Thomas, 2019, p. 10). Therefore, the experience of being queer will be different to each person, which further makes me incapable of representing the queer community as a whole. I also want to acknowledge some limitations to my research paper. Due to the

required length of this paper, which is conveyed in the FOU guidelines, page limitation has influenced my presentation, analysis and discussion of the selected textbook narratives in that it lacks possible nuance and alternative perspectives to the textbook narratives as a whole. With that said, I hope to convince readers of this paper that my research is trustworthy through a theoretical foundation and in-depth analysis, and that my findings are still of value in that they offer a humble contribution to the field of textbook studies and queer education in Norway.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Research Findings

In the following section, I will present and analyse my research findings. I will also integrate my discussion and reflection into this section. The reason for combining these in one section is that throughout my analysis, I found it natural to refer to theory, and further include my own interpretations into the analysis. Additionally, I found it difficult to separate the analysis of the textbooks' narratives from my discussion of their implications for teaching practices, as I to some degree see these two as weaved into each other. It therefore became important to analyse and discuss my findings together while also using theory to ground my argumentation. The section includes description, close reading and interpretation of four textbook narratives, and additionally, a discussion of my findings' implications in the Norwegian EFL classroom. The narratives analysed are multimodal in that they consist of both textual and visual elements. The selected textbook narratives include a short story named *Coy Mathis*, which is taken from the book *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* by Francesca Cavallo and Elena Favilli in *Engelsk 8*. I also selected the short story *If You Kiss a Boy* by Alex Sanchez from *Stages 9*. The excerpt from the first chapter in the book *The Boy in the Dress* by David Walliams in *Engelsk 7* was also included. Lastly, I selected the visual narrative of a presumed boy, who is seen cross-dressing, in *Engelsk 7*. The last two narratives are, in my view, depicted as overlapping narratives of absences of potential queer voices. I have further chosen to divide my findings into four subheadings, which represent several tendencies drawn from the findings, and which may influence teaching practices.

4.1. Textbook Narratives' Establishment and Upholding of the Gender Binary

The short story, named *Coy Mathis*, has a third person narrator tell the story of the real elementary school student Coy Mathis, as she shares her gender identity with her family.

It further depicts the following reactions and sanctions from her surroundings to the fact that she is trans. The narrator begins the story by introducing Coy as a boy, who “loved dresses, the color pink and shiny shoes”, and who further tells his parents that he wishes to be addressed as “she” (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). Following a statement made by Coy, questioning when they are to go to the doctor to make him into a “real girl”, the story sees Coy’s parents visiting a doctor, who explains that Coy is, by his definition, a transgender girl. This prompts Coy’s parents to ask people in Coy’s life to treat her as a girl. Further, the story shortly describes Coy being denied usage of the girls’ bathroom in school, and her parents fight for their daughter’s rights. The story ends with Coy and her parents throwing a big party to celebrate the judge’s ruling on their case in their favour.

The textbook may be said to set the terms of how students are to think of gender before they are introduced to Coy’s story. The way in which students are supposed to discuss gender and gender stereotypes is established in the task meant to be done by students before they read the related story. It encourages students to think of activities and items that are typical for girls and boys: “Are there activities, clothes or toys that you think are specifically for boys or girls? Explain your thinking using examples” (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). Through the task, the authors establish how students are to think about gender as they continue reading and discuss further tasks, which may be said to be limited to the contemporary assumption that gender is to be understood as a binary, that is the culturally constructed idea that one is either a man or a woman (Haefele-Thomas, 2019). The textbook draws this duality with the use of the words “boys” and “girls”, thus instructing students to discuss gender as a binary.

In my opinion, the inclusion of a textbook narrative about a trans-girl should be used as an opportunity for authors to invite students to think of gender beyond the established binary, and thereby challenge its societal givenness. The short story about Coy introduces the word *transgender* as an option to the traditional gender categories of man and woman. However, the text provides students with a definition of transgender that on the idea of gender binarism, which further may be said to uphold this established conception. The doctor defines the word transgender to Coy and her parents as follows: “[...] there are some boys who feel female, and some girls who feel male. They’re called transgender, and Coy is a transgender girl” (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). This definition may be said to resemble the way in which some have come to use the term as referring to people who identify as the binary gender opposite to the one that they were assigned at birth, which is the

meaning the word transsexual used to possess (Haefele-Thomas, 2021, p. 20). The textbook therefore provides students with a definition of the word transgender that cannot exist without the gender binary. This definition is understood as a person crossing the gender binary to ultimately conform to the opposite binary gender of what one was assigned at birth, that is either man or woman (Haefele-Thomas, 2021). Some trans people identify within the gender binary, which may make the presented definition valid to their understanding of their gender identity. However, the words transgender and trans may, in their broadest sense, be understood as umbrella terms for people who reject the gender binary or aim to opt out of it, and therefore include individuals who identify not only as transgender, but also genderqueer and non-binary among others (Haefele-Thomas, 2020, p. 24). I argue that the definition of the word transgender provided by the textbook narrative is narrow in that it excludes several individuals who may not feel comfortable identifying within the gender binary. Therefore, the narrative further erases genderqueer and non-binary identities, since it insists on students' discussion to find place within the terms of the gender binary, whether this is to indirectly discuss cisgender or directly discuss transgender. Furthermore, this suggests that gender identities beyond the gender binary are not to be found among students in the classroom either, and the gender binary remains intact in the textbook and within the classroom. This counteracts some of the values of inclusion in the core curriculum, in that the classroom should be a place where the teacher ought to help every student to experience belonging and encouraged them to develop their own identity (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2017).

Moreover, Coy expresses herself outside the gender binary, and she has expectations of a coherence between her body matching with her inner understanding of her gender identity, in order for her to be in her words a "girl-girl". Coy states the following to her mother: "When are we going to the doctor to make me fixed into a girl-girl?" (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). The statement conveys Coy's feeling of a missing accordance between her own sense of gender and her physical body signs, which in her mind should align for her to be a "real" woman which is a problematic depiction of gender dysphoria in that it adheres to dominant and problematic expectations of accordance between gender and bodily signs in society (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009).

Gender binarism is further upheld in the tasks which follow the short story about Coy. The textbook later introduces tasks, which are probably included for students to develop acceptance, towards the act of using items or taking part in activities that are not thought of as

“typical” for one’s gender. However, these tasks still have students talk about gender within the binary of man and woman, as these are the only terms that are made available for students to apply to discuss gender: “It is easier to be a boy than a girl. [...] In our society, boys and girls can do the same things”. Further, the tasks use formulations such as: “[...] typical for your gender. What about the other way around?” (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2021, p. 152-153). The latter clearly signals an established gender duality, since “the other way around” implies that there is only one other gender to consider in opposition to your own. The textbook may therefore be said to fail to provide students with a language which may be applied to broaden their understanding of gender, and that a reproduction of gender binarism will likely be reproduced within student discussions in the 8th grade. The textbook, as stated above, continues to encourage students to think of gender as a binary, despite the inclusion of transgender as a term, which potentially could have functioned as a means for students to talk about gender outside of the established binary.

4.2. Language to Limit or Expand Self-understanding: Working towards a ‘Queerer’ Language

As I have introduced in the presentation, analysis, and discussion of my findings, language is crucial in that it sets the boundaries to which we are capable of understanding as a phenomenon. Wilchins (2004) discusses her own experiences with the feeling of language coming to a short, since it could not capture her feeling different. She further states the following: “It was the understanding that I could have this very different thing about me, that there were no words for it, and that no one understood it, that made me begin to suspect the hollowness and limitations of what passes as knowledge” (Wilchins, 2004 p. 2). I interpret Wilchins’ utterance to express a form of hopelessness in terms of believing that there are no words to describe one’s feelings, but that, in reality, it has to do with whether these words and language are made available to you. Further, she claims that the continuous omission of certain language which may be used to put one’s feelings surrounding gender identity or sexuality points to the limitations of what society in general unquestionably passes as knowledge. In this sense, I argue that the text provides students with limited knowledge to understand their gender identity, as it encourages them to think of gender within the binary, and the word transgender as solely used by people who identify with the opposite binary gender to the one assigned as birth. These options do not provide gender diverse students,

who do not feel comfortable within the binary, with a language to express their feelings in regards to their gender identity. Some may eventually recognize the limitations to knowledge provided based on the idea of gender binarism, but many will most likely feel left alone as they struggle with feelings, which deviate from an established binary and are incapable of putting these into words.

The curriculum for the English subject stresses the role of the English language as a means for students “to express their feelings, thoughts, experiences [...] (which) can provide new perspectives [...] on the pupils’ own way of life and that of others” (The National Directorate for Education and training, 2020). However, such an aim will only be possible to achieve if students are provided with language in teaching material and teaching practices that gives them the opportunity to put their own sense of gender and sexuality into words. The following two related textbook narratives may function to highlight how such language could have been conveyed to students, if these queer voices were made available to them. Students are introduced to Dennis in the excerpt from the first chapter of the novel *The Boy in the Dress* in *Engelsk 7*. The excerpt begins with the following sentence: “Dennis was different” (Solberg, Unnerud and Haegi, 2021, p. 80). However, exactly in what way Dennis is different is not revealed to the reader, as the excerpt mainly presents Dennis’ complicated relations to his mother, father and brother. It is first in the last sentences of the excerpt that the narrator, to some degree, elaborates on the introductory statement: “So why was Dennis so different, I hear you ask? [...] Well, I’m not going to tell you why yet, but the clue might be in the title of this book...” (Solberg, Unnerud and Haegi, 2021, p. 83). The textbook leaves it to the reader to come to a conclusion as to why Dennis is different, which based on the title of the novel is because he wears a dress.

Walliams’ novel tells the story of twelve-year-old Dennis who grows a fascination for cross-dressing, and is written with the intention to teach children that cross-dressing is a healthy way of gender expression (Walliams, 2008). However, as the textbook authors have chosen to omit this crucial part of Dennis’ narrative, they pass on an opportunity to include the voice of a young boy who rejects gender norms and further contradicts the idea of a given accordance between bodily signs, gender expression and sexual desire (Røthing and Svendsen, 2022, p. 38). In the novel, Dennis experiences cross-dressing and wearing a dress in public as “Denise”, a persona in which he also goes on a date with another boy (Walliams, 2008). However, in the end of the novel, Denise contemplates confessing his feelings to his best friend Lisa, and thus contradicts gender norms and introduces an idea of sexuality as

fluid. As this portrayal of Dennis' experiences with gender expression and sexual orientation is omitted from the textbook, students and teachers miss out on an important opportunity to broaden their understanding of gender identity and sexuality.

Furthermore, the visual narrative of a presumed boy wearing a dress in *Engelsk 7* may be perceived as an additional missed opportunity to voice the thoughts and experiences of the visually represented character (see Appendix 1,2 and 3). The visual narrative is not accompanied by a textual narrative, and readers are thereby not provided with the name of the character, further meaning that it is not given that he does in fact identify as a boy. However, seeing that the textbooks make little to no effort to contradict the established gender binary, one could assume that this character is meant by authors to be interpreted as a young boy. The boy is first pictured in the textbook as part of a larger illustration depicting a classroom to introduce a new chapter. The image (see Appendix 1) features several students sitting at their desks being occupied with each other or different items, and their teacher standing with a book in their hands (Solberg, Unnerud and Haegi, 2021, p. 52-53). The boy I am referring to is shown sitting at his desk with short black hair, wearing a pink dress and purple shoes, as he holds a picture frame. Another picture frame lays on his desk alongside a copy of the novel *The Boy in the Dress*. The boy's facial expression is somewhat enclosed as his mouth is illustrated as a line slightly bending downwards, and his eyes do not meet that of the reader, but rather seem to be either looking at the picture in his hands or closed entirely (Solberg, Unnerud and Haegi, 2021, p. 52-53). The same image of the boy occurs two additional times in the same chapter (see Appendix 2 and 3), without providing the reader with an elaboration on the character who has been introduced (Solberg, Unnerud and Haegi, 2021, p. 74 and 102). Furthermore, the textbook presents a textual and visual narrative consisting of twenty pages, which tells the stories of several of the students introduced in the introductory illustration. However, the illustration of the boy is not given a part in this narrative. I would then claim that the textbook authors erase the voice of a potential gender diverse character, who could have provided students in the EFL classroom with language to express thoughts about gender identity and gender expression.

According to Røthing (2009), English literature from the educational field describes gender diversity by applying several terms, which, as of now, are not available within the Norwegian everyday language (p. 122). This further emphasises the possibility the English language possesses to help students develop certain tools to express their own sense of self in the EFL classroom. Røthing (2009) further explains how "Terms as *gender diverse*,

questioning, non-binary, gender-queer and *queer* are used, and offer in that way a further detailed language to pick up on and talk about children and youth's diverse experiences of and with gendered self-understanding and practises" (p. 122) (my translation). None of the textbooks examined in this paper included any of the words listed above. However, the narrative which tells the story of Joe presents a perspective that contradicts the heterosexual-homosexual binary to some degree, and invites students and their teacher to understand sexuality as a spectre and have a dialogue about whether one has to identify with a certain preestablished label. In the textbook *Stages 9*, Joe experiences feelings for his best friend Jamal, as he tries to figure out if he might be gay. Students need to discuss the following question: "Does Joe know if he is gay?" (Pettersen and Røkaas, 2021, p. 310-311) (see Appendix 6). Joe never explicitly states that he is gay, which prompts students to consider the possibility that he may wish to identify as something else or simply, for the time being, just have feelings for Jamal, and leave it at that. However, this presupposes that the teacher does not merely encourage students to be satisfied with the answer that Joe simply does not know, disallowing the possibility of any gender questioning options and further presuming that he eventually will identify as gay.

Identity categories may provide a sense of order, stability and freedom to some, but to others they may provide unwanted conformity and demarcation, which further stress the importance of introducing language that can help youth understand themselves as they feel in this moment, without it necessarily having to lead to an identification with established categories like gay or trans (Røthing, 2009, 123). It would prove helpful to students with male bodily signs who question their gender identity to read of the visually presented boy in a dress in *Engelsk 7* identifying as gender-queer or gender-diverse. Teaching practices should aim not merely to accept diversity but further contribute to increase diversity and students' opportunities to be diverse (Røthing, 2020, p. 71). I believe this among starts with opting for developing a 'queerer' language in the EFL classroom, which serves the purpose of providing more students with words they need to express their understanding of gender identity and/or sexual orientation, further functioning to deconstruct the idea of a given and limiting gender binary.

4.3. Cisgender Privilege, Binary Oppositions and Othering

In my analysis and discussion, I demonstrate that my examined textbooks establish and serve to uphold the idea of gender binarism, which further prompts me to believe that

they also reproduce heteronormativity. This presumption is based on Haefele-Thomas' (2021) understanding of heteronormativity as an idea consuming society that normal and natural relationships solely find place between two cisgender people who are attracted to the opposite gender (p. 49). Furthermore, heteronormativity creates the binary construction of sex and gender, which conveys that male and female are the only existing categories, and that "male equals man and female equals woman" (Haefele-Thomas, 2021, p. 49). As the gender binary is a result of heteronormativity, it may be fair to assume that my examined textbooks reproduce heterosexuality as a norm, since they already have been proven to uphold the gender binary overall. In the following, I present textbook findings which establish an idea of tolerance towards queer people, which I in section 4.4 further suggest to have an influence on a teachers' practices.

In the narrative about Coy Mathis, after the doctor has explained to Coy's parents that she is transgender, as she deeply feels like a girl, he further states: "[...] she should be allowed to be one" (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). At first glance, the reader may interpret this statement as a positive affirmation of Coy's gender identity, as the doctor encourages her parents to allow Coy to be herself. However, if one takes the statement into closer consideration, then the phrase "should be allowed" implies that Coy's identification as a girl does not hold the privilege of passing unnoticed, without the need to stress its right to be allowed. This conveys the idea that Coy deviates from societal expectations that as a person born with male bodily signs, she should feel like and identify as male (Haefele-Thomas, 2021, p. 8). Privilege is therefore granted to people whose gender identity coheres with the sex they were assigned at birth, as societal interactions are based on normative assumptions around gender and sexuality. As Coy rejects this norm, she suddenly loses the privilege she earlier possessed to move through life as unnoticed in terms of gender. Haefele-Thomas (2021) defines this privilege as cisgender privilege (p. 25). It allows cisgender people to pass in social interactions without the need to have others grant them allowance to exist without having to explain their identity. In the short story, however, Coy's gender identity is marked and seems to be in need of an explanation to the people in his surroundings. Further, the doctor's statement may function to encourage students, who read the story, to allow trans people to identify as the gender they feel they are. Thereby, the text includes the student in a collective cisgendered "we" along with Coy's parents and the doctor, which grant them the privilege to choose whether they will or will not allow and tolerate Coy's gender identity (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 226).

Moreover, students are encouraged to voice their opinion about the following statement from a discussion task following the narrative of Coy: “Your gender is decided by the body you were born with” (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 153) (see Appendix 5). In the task, students are asked to agree or disagree with provided statements and argue for their opinion. This task may be problematic in the way that it invites students to have an opinion on the definition of gender, and in extension of that have an opinion on people who identify as trans (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 226). If students argue for their opinions in a convincing manner, then they are in principle free to argue that the experiences of gender identity of trans people are less valid or should be ignored, based on an understanding for gender as linked to a person’s sex. The heterosexual, cisgendered collective “we” is in this task asked directly to have an opinion on people’s feeling of gender, and granted the privilege to potentially devalue an experience of gender identity which contradicts the norm.

In my analysis, I have observed how further findings from the related tasks to the narrative above contribute to establish an idea of a presumed collective cisgendered, heterosexual “we”, who needs to learn to tolerate “them”, that is those who identify or are identified by others as queer. The following task named “Being transgender” appears after the short story about Coy, and asks students to give reasons for their opinions on the following questions: “Why do you think it can be difficult for someone to tell their family that they were born with a gender they do not identify with?” and “What do you think it was like being transgender 50 years ago?” (Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 152) (see Appendix 7). Firstly, before analysing how the questions aim to engage students, there is reason to question the formulation of the first question, in my opinion. The question gives students an inaccurate understanding of the word gender, since it suggests that one is born with a gender, which Haefele-Thomas (2021) states is not the case as one is assigned a gender at birth, thus emphasising gender as a social construction, rather than “natural” and given (p. 8 and 20). Moreover, both questions in the task seem to encourage students to gain acceptance towards trans people, as they are to imagine themselves in the position of a trans person. Both tasks are also likely to produce answers which depict trans lives as difficult and unattractive.

4.4. Othering in Textbooks and Reproduction of Heteronormativity in Queer Tolerant Teaching Practices

The findings discussed in section 4.3 may prompt a teachers' educational practice to be one *about* the other. Kumashiro (2002) defines the term "Other" as groups and individuals that have been traditionally marginalised and "othered" by society in that they often are defined "in opposition to groups traditionally favoured, normalized, or privileged in society, and as such, are defined as other than the idealized norm" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 32). Trans people become "the other" as they are marked in the discussed tasks without any mentioning of the term cisgender, which allows the cis-norm to continue as given and without the need to be marked. Further, a presumed cisgendered, heterosexual collective classroom "we" is supposed to read about a trans person to possibly obtain knowledge about trans persons, and position themselves in the place of trans people as "the other", which may create opportunities for the majority to develop acceptance towards queer people. However, the textbook provides students with no knowledge about trans peoples' lives fifty years ago, which may lead students to base their answer on their presumptions about trans people, rather than actual historical knowledge.

Additionally, it is problematic that the questions are formulated so that it is presumed that the students, who are to answer, do not have any experience with identifying as trans (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009). As Røthing and Svendsen (2009) state, such tasks indicate that students are to voice their thoughts on "a foreign phenomenon" that is not a part of their own reality, but belongs to the lives of others, outside the classroom (p. 225). Moreover, such tasks may therefore be said to reproduce cisgenderism, in that they presume each student, who are to answer them, to be cisgender, and thereby erasing trans identifying students' voices from the class discussion. Queer students are therefore marked as "the other", and their experiences are thought to be beyond those belonging to the students (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 225). Moreover, the two task questions presented in 4.3 (see Appendix 7), most likely aim to recognize that trans people have experienced and still do experience challenges in regards to their identity. The same may be said for the inclusion of the discrimination Coy faces at school, as her teachers decides that she is not allowed to use the girl's bathroom. However, while these instances are clearly well-intentioned inclusions to make such encountered difficulties visible, their mere presence in the textbook may say to encourage students to develop empathy with trans people, rather than prompting students to

examine the structures which allow for discrimination and certain difficulties to continue to be something trans people encounter. The depictions of such difficulties also contribute to entrench expectations that being trans is difficult (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 224). This may have further implications for a teacher's practice in that such narratives make being trans seem difficult and little attractive to students, thereby also different (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 224-225).

Furthermore, this emphasis on challenges connected to being queer are also present in Joe's narrative in the short story *If You Kiss a Boy* in *Stages 9*. He experiences being teased based on a fellow student's assumption that he is gay, and he reveals that his father has voiced the following about homosexuality: "My dad thinks being gay is a sickness" (Pettersen and Røkaas, 2021, p. 310). In the discussion tasks related to the narrative, students are asked to consider the following: "How does Joe's father feel about homosexuality? How do you think this makes Joe feel?" (Pettersen and Røkaas, 2021, p. 311). These tasks and the challenges depicted in the text indirectly encourage students to contribute to not make it harder for queer people to live their lives. Students may be said to be encouraged to develop further sympathy for queer people (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 224). Further, both the stories of Coy and Joe show students that queer people are just the same as an implicit "us", in that they are normal and acceptable (Kumanshiro, 2002, p. 42). In the story of Coy, it is made a point to emphasise that she is just like any other girl. The story of Joe may, as it is an isolated narrative with the inclusion of a queer voice, be understood as to convey that Joe has just as much worth whether he is gay or not, and that his feelings for Jamal is just the same as heterosexual love. This aligns with the idea of homo tolerance as an overarching aim in education about homosexuality in Norwegian school today: teachers seek to counteract homophobia by developing tolerance through making queer people visible and rendering them harmless (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 222). Queer voices seem to be included in textbook narratives so that "we" as readers are encouraged to tolerate "them", thus heteronormativity is reproduced among "us" (Smestad, 2018).

The textbooks I have examined are fundamentally heteronormative in that they portray heterosexuality and being cisgender as the norm, whereas queer narratives, if present at all, exist as a marked queer narrative that is separated from the rest of the textbook. It is therefore the selective inclusion of queer voices which contributes to the reproduction of heteronormativity (Røthing, 2017). This reflects an overall tendency in Norwegian textbooks (Smestad, 2005). This continuous marking of queer people, in a textbook context that

otherwise is merely heteronormative, makes them subjected to othering and heterosexuality will automatically continue to be seen as the reference point without need to be explicitly stated or considered any further (Smestad, 2018). Furthermore, the absence of queer voices in the narratives from *Engelsk 7*, which I examined in the section 4.2, also reproduces heteronormativity because there is not presented an alternate understanding to contradict the normativity of heterosexuality, in that queer voices are completely ignored. This complete erasure of queer voices makes the heteronormativity in the textbook total (Smestad, 2018).

My presentation, analysis, and discussion of my findings in this section argue that the examined narratives and tasks give presumed heterosexual and cisgender students opportunities to develop sympathy towards queer people. This further place the focus of the textbooks on the queer character, without attempts to shift the attention to the majority and the structures which allow the challenges queer people face to continue to happen. I would conclude that these narratives do not aim to deconstruct the challenges that are depicted, or encourage students to make change by letting them consider the very structures which enables prejudice and discrimination to find place. The textbook narratives indirectly invite students to develop queer tolerance, by obtaining knowledge about queer people and recognize the challenges they face. It is further likely that this implicit aim of queer tolerance will influence the educational practice of teachers. However, these teaching practices, which teaches about the other for the benefit of an implicit majority, are not sufficient to meet curricular core values. According to core curricular values, “all pupils shall be treated equally, and no pupil is to be subjected to discrimination” (The Norwegian Directorate of Training and Education, 2017, p. 5). However, the selected textbooks and the mentioned queer educational practices do not treat all students equally in that they favour the presumed need of heterosexual and cisgender students to learn about queer people. Furthermore, this results in queer students being subjected to indirect discrimination, since they become subjects of marginalisation and othering.

Finally, I wish to direct the attention to education in order to problematise privilege and create change as an alternative teaching practice to practices I have presented earlier in this section. Fuchs and Henne (2018) state the following about textbooks: “[...] textbooks are considered to be the most effective instruments with which to implement curricula and should therefore be the most suitable method of introducing didactic and methodological innovations and of implementing them in practice” (p. 26). Textbooks are thereby rendered as highly suitable educational mediums to introduce didactic innovations which further may be adapted

to teachers' classroom practice. In terms of queer education, textbook authors should therefore seek to construct queer narratives in ways that may prompt teachers to develop teaching practices, which do not merely settle with queer tolerance among students. Textbooks should rather offer teachers in the EFL classroom help to redirect the focus in their practices from those who are subject to othering to those who create othering and marginalisation. This further includes textbooks and teachers raising questions to majority's privilege, and continue to evolve their language (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009). In order for teachers' educational practices on queer topics to broaden students' understandings of gender and sexuality and ultimately create change, it is crucial to develop a teaching practice which is not just "characterised by good intentions, but also has good consequences" (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, p. 61). I believe textbook authors need to change the textbook discourse to the extent that new approaches are included in terms of inclusion of queer voices and representation, so that future textbooks may prove themselves to be relevant educational tools for teachers to make use of to further develop their queer educational practices.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to highlight this quote by Neto (2018): "As long as our teaching materials and practices reflect and reproduce heteronormative perspectives, too many students will feel excluded" (p. 601). As my research paper has tried to convey, current textbooks in the English subject and the educational practices they invite teachers to develop, continue to reflect and reproduce heteronormativity and gender binarism. Consequently, this can make too many queer or questioning students feel left on the outside of the classroom collective. This exclusion should be rendered to be of enough importance for future textbooks authors to rethink their inclusion of queer voices in their narratives. Furthermore, the criticism that is conveyed in the interpretation and discussion of my findings is not meant to be read as an encouragement to erase queer stories that are present in textbooks for the English subject as of today. As my own education included no queer stories, I will not take these narratives for granted, because it is not given that these queer stories are allowed to be present in textbooks at all (Smestad 2018). However, I do argue that tendencies within my findings lay the foundation for a teaching practice that is not sufficient enough to meet the mandatory curricular responsibilities of the school. The paper therefore does not intend to ignore the importance of making queer narratives and stories visible to students. Instead, it is

rather motivated by the idea that current textbooks should be elevated even further in terms of inclusion of several and more nuanced narratives to provide students with a language to express their own gender- and sexual identity, together with a redirecting of focus towards the privileges of the majority to deconstruct the gender binary and heteronormativity. Such changes may help EFL teachers in adapting a teaching practice which not only provides knowledge about queer people to develop queer tolerance, but also provides challenging knowledge which problematizes privileges and othering to create change. Further research should therefore be done to these particular textbooks and other textbooks designed for the English subject to ensure the expansion of the fields of textbook studies and queer education in Norway.

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Appendices

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

I am who I am



“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”
Oscar Wilde

Jokes

Q: Your mother's brother's only brother-in-law is asleep on your couch. Who is asleep on your couch?

A: Your father

Q: What should you wear to a tea party?

A: A T-shirt.

Q: What's rain's favourite accessory?

A: A rainbow.

Appendix 3



Speak up!

Good relationships

Everyone needs good relationships. The important thing is to find someone who sees you and loves you for who you are.

It is not so important who they are, but that there is someone there for you.



Which person(s) would you like to talk about?

a teacher	your sibling(s)	your carer
a friend	your mother	your aunt or uncle
a neighbour	your father	your cousin
a school nurse	your foster parent(s)	your grandparent(s)

Appendix 4

Before reading

Are there activities, clothes or toys that you think are specifically for boys or girls? Explain your thinking using examples.

Appendix 5

TALKING

16 Four corners

Work in groups of four. On a piece of paper, draw a cross in the middle to create four squares. In the first, write: *Agree*, in the second: *Partly agree*, in the third: *Partly disagree* and in the last: *Disagree*.

Read out the first statement below. On the count of three, each student points to the square they feel suits their opinion. Then, each of you should explain why you agree, partly agree, partly disagree or disagree entirely with the statement. Feel free to discuss. Continue the process with the other statements.

It is easier to be a boy than a girl.

It is easier for girls to wear typical boys' clothes than for boys to wear dresses.

*In our society, boys and girls can do the same things.
Your gender is decided by the body you were born with.*

Ways of expressing your opinion:

In my opinion ...

I believe ...

I understand your point, however I think ...

I agree with you because ...

I disagree with you because ...

Appendix 6

VIEWPOINTS

2 Discuss the questions.

- a Why do you think Mr Bonita wants to talk to Joe?
- b Why does Joe ask Mr Bonita about his wedding band?
- c How does Joe's father feel about homosexuality?
How do you think this makes Joe feel?
- d Does Joe know if he is gay or not?
- e Mr Bonita tells Joe: whether you are [gay] or not, what matters is this: that you accept and respect yourself for who you are. Do you think this is a good piece of advice?
What advice would you give Joe?
- f How does Joe feel after his talk with Mr Bonita?
Why do you think he feels this way?
- g Why do you think Jamal is waiting for Joe?

Appendix 7

UNDERSTANDING

14 Being transgender

Write down your answers to the following questions.
Give reasons for your opinions.

- a) Why do you think it can be difficult for someone to tell their family that they were born with a gender they do not identify with?
- b) What do you think it was like being transgender 50 years ago?

Appendix 8

Terminology

I would like to define the following terminology, because it is either frequently used throughout my research paper or determined to be in need of a more thorough explanation:

Cisgender was developed as a term to refer to people who have a gender identity which aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth (Haefele-Thomas, 2019, p. 25).

Cross-dressing, though the word's definitions has varied over time, may refer to "dressing in clothing deemed appropriate for a different gender" (Haefele-Thomas, 2019, p. 17).

Gender may be defined as "the ways culture and society reinforce what is masculine to go with the male sex and what is feminine to go with the female sex", while *sex* often is understood as biological, that is male or female (Haefele-Thomas, 2019, p. 8).

Gender dysphoria is "used to describe a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity" (Stonewall, 2022).

Gender identity is understood as a person's deep feeling of their own gender, that may be male, female or something else, and this sense may or may not correspond to the sex one was assigned at birth. This term should not be mistaken for the term *gender expression*, which is a who a person chooses "to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender" (Stonewall, 2022).

Heterosexual is to be "romantically and/or sexually attracted to a person of the opposite sex", and *homosexual* is the opposite in that one is attracted to persons of the same sex (Haefele-Thomas, 2019, p. 46-47).

Sexual orientation is broadly defined as "to the persons (if anyone) to whom you are attracted sexually, romantically and/or emotionally" (Hafele-Thomas, 2019, p. 45).

Trans may be used as an umbrella term “to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth” (Stonewall, 2022). Trans people may describe themselves as *transgender* (Stonewall, 2022).