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In Full Color: Investigating Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Literary Representation of Gender Queerness in the EFL Classroom

Master's thesis in in Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education for Years 5–10

Supervisor: Jade Dillon

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Abstract

Using literature in language learning builds on the learners' connections, enriches their learning, and increases knowledge (Paran & Robinson, 2016, p. 15). Although it is stated that literature enriches learning in education, there has been little research on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the Norwegian EFL classroom. This thesis will investigate the use of texts in the EFL classroom that authentically represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary. This thesis will perform a close critical analysis of two books, *Gender Queer* (a graphic novel) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (a nonfiction book). I will explore these texts through visual methodologies and close readings to investigate the potential benefits of using them in the EFL classroom to promote inclusion. Additionally, the Norwegian curriculum is considerably vague, and topics such as LGBTQ+ can be marginalized in primary education. Because of this statement, I want to interview three teachers to investigate the usage of such literature in the EFL classroom and explore the reasonings for their inclusion or lack thereof. Using the teachers' attitudes and previous practice, I will connect the interview data to the suggestive vagueness of the Norwegian curriculum. I will then connect the aforementioned literature to the curriculum in an attempt to suggest further LGBTQ+ implementation in the EFL classroom. Through researching these aspects, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. *How can fiction and non-fiction texts be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary?*
2. *Are in-service teachers including such literature in the EFL classroom?*
3. *Is the curriculum's implied vagueness damaging for both people outside of and within the LGBTQ+ category?*

Sammendrag

Bruk av litteratur i språkopplæringen bygger på elevenes forbindelser, beriker læringen og øker kunnskapen (Paran & Robinson, 2016, s. 15). Selv om det er uttalt at litteratur beriker læring i utdanning, har det vært lite forskning på inkludering av LHBTQ+litteratur i det norske EFL-klasserommet. Denne oppgaven vil undersøke bruken av tekster i EFL-klasserommet som på en autentisk måte representerer personer som definerer seg som kjønnskeive og/eller er hinsides kjønnsbinariteten. Denne oppgaven vil utføre en nær kritisk analyse av to bøker, *Gender Queer* (en grafisk roman) og *Beyond the Gender Binary* (en fagbok). Jeg vil utforske disse tekstene gjennom visuelle metoder og nærlesninger for å undersøke de potensielle fordelene ved å bruke dem i EFL-klasserommet for å fremme inkludering. I tillegg er den norske læreplanen svært vag, og temaer som LHBTQ+ kan bli marginalisert i grunnskolen. På grunn av denne uttalelsen ønsker jeg å intervju tre lærere for å undersøke bruken av slik litteratur i klasserommet og utforske begrunnelsene for inkludering eller mangel på inkludering. Ved hjelp av lærernes holdninger og tidligere praksis vil jeg koble intervjudataene til den norske læreplanens antydningssvis vage formuleringer. Jeg vil deretter koble den nevnte litteraturen til læreplanen i et forsøk på å foreslå ytterligere implementering av LHBTQ+ i EFL-klasserommet. Gjennom å undersøke disse aspektene forsøker denne studien å besvare følgende forskningsspørsmål:

1. *Hvordan kan skjønnlitteratur og sakprosa brukes i EFL-undervisningen for å representere personer som definerer seg som kjønnskeive og/eller er hinsides det binære kjønnsbegrepet?*
2. *Inkluderer lærere i praksis slik litteratur i EFL-klasserommet?*
3. *Er læreplanens underforståtte vaghet skadelig for både personer utenfor og innenfor LHBTIQ+ kategorien?*

Acknowledgements

Throughout the writing of this master's thesis, I have received a great amount of support and inspiration from multiple people around me.

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Professor Jade Dillon, for making my research possible. I would like to express both my gratitude and appreciation to you for not only making my research possible, but for always staying positive and believing in me throughout this whole process. I appreciate our conversations and your insightful feedback. You have helped me become a more critical thinker, which I find important to bring with me into the teaching profession. Thank you for always supporting and encouraging me, and for always being positive, patient, and inspiring!

To all my fellow students, thank you for always answering my questions, even the stupid ones. Thank you for always helping me when I get stuck and letting me take inspiration from your work. I also want to show gratitude based on how you always have a shoulder to lean on, even when you might need it most yourselves. I am so grateful for the friendships we have made, and without you, these five years would have been draining, and this master's thesis would never have been possible.

To my Jonathan. Thank you for being supportive through the emotional rollercoaster I have had writing this thesis. You helped me through every word and every page, and never stopped believing in me. Thank you for all the errands and favors you have done for me during this time, and for always telling me to keep going. I appreciate how you always tell me how proud you are, your kind words, support, love, and encouragement.

Last, but not least, I want to thank the rest of my family for always being there for me. You have never stopped believing in me since I was a child, and you have pushed me through this journey as well. Thank you for forcing me to keep writing, even when I didn't feel like it. The love, encouragement, support, help, and all the favors you do for me are greatly appreciated.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	x
1 Introduction	11
2 Theoretical Framework.....	15
2.1 Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.....	15
2.2 Queer Theory.....	16
2.3 Queer pedagogy.....	18
3 Methodology	22
3.1 Qualitative research.....	22
3.1.1 Ethnographic Case study	23
3.2 Interviews as method of data collection.....	23
3.3 Selection of Literature	25
3.4 Analysis.....	26
3.4.1 Visual and literary close critical analysis.....	26
3.4.2 Comparative analysis.....	27
3.4.3 Pedagogical analysis.....	27
3.5 Ethical Considerations	27
4 Critical analysis	29
4.1 Analysis of <i>Gender Queer</i>	30
4.2 Analysis of <i>Beyond the Gender Binary</i>	36
5 Discussion	41
5.1 The availability of LGBTQ+ texts and literature	41
5.2 The inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom.....	44
5.3 The damage that vagueness can do	48
6 Conclusion	50
References.....	53
Appendices	58
Appendix 1: Interview Guideline.....	59
Appendix 2: Information and Letter of Approval	60
Appendix 3: NSD Approval	63

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Maia taking eir shirt of at the school trip (Kobabe, 2019, p. 25)	32
Figure 1.2 Maia inside the snail shell with all eir thoughts (Kobabe, 2019, p. 74)	33
Figure 1.3 Maia in the pink hot tub at eir birthday (Kobabe, 2019, p. 30)	35
Figure 1.4 The cover of the book (Vaid-Menon, 2020)	38

1 Introduction

Throughout this thesis I focus on teachers attitudes in Norway towards the inclusion of literature that represents people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or any other non-normative gender identify or sexuality (LGBTQ+) into their English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Further, I focus on how LGBTQ+ literature can be implemented within the EFL classroom, and lastly, if the implied vagueness of the curriculum can be seen as the reason as to why such literature are excluded. One of the competence aims and assessment after year ten in the English subject curriculum states that the pupils shall acquire knowledge about different ways of living, thinking, communicating through different types of text, and further learn to see their own identity, and others' identities (Ministry of Education, 2019). However, research shows that the majority of LGBTQ+ pupils experience more bullying and harassment than their peers (Gartley, 2015). Through incorporating literature that represent LGBTQ+ within the EFL classroom, pupils gain knowledge, which can promote awareness and inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community. By representing people outside the heterosexual norm, teachers can be a part of breaking up and challenging these norms. During my teacher training I found that there are different topics being excluded from pupils' education, one of them being the LGBTQ+ topic, more specifically those who define as gender queer or being beyond the gender binary. In addition, research shows that LGBTQ+ pupils are more likely to avoid going to school, drop out, have worse grades, and lower academic achievement. With this in mind, I wanted to investigate if teachers explicitly ignore the topic, and, if so, why this was the case. I also decided to study the possibilities that literature has as well as how the curriculum gives teachers possibilities to exclude important topics.

As a pre-service teacher, I find it important to gain as much knowledge as possible before entering the role as an in-service teacher. Through my education at NTNU I have gained an insight into different topics that can be difficult for teachers to include in their classrooms because of the discomfort it might provoke. Like Schmidt, Armstrong, and Everett (2007), I see schools as agents for social change and I believe that teachers have a significant role in selecting reading materials that engage pupils in critical discussions about different world issues. The discomfort it might provoke is something I see as positive because of how critical discussions with pupils can become the best conversations for them, coming away with invaluable lessons learned. As Dr. Simpson states in an interview, she sees "the value in discomfort, which, in her classes, has stemmed from a couple of different sources", she further states that a part of the role as a teacher "is to help people think about difficult issues more critically – individually and together" (Johnson, 2015). Using literature to teach difficult topics can be valuable in the discussions and conversations that might arouse from it, unfortunately, teachers lack knowledge within teaching topics of gender, race, and sexuality. Through my education I have expanded my knowledge of teaching multiple topics through literature, and further learned that teachers avoid this. Because of this, through my MA, I want to show how teachers avoid teaching the LGBTQ+ topic, how this is problematic, and further give an example of how literature can be used to teach LGBTQ+ issues in conjunction with power and social norms. Lastly, through my discussion I want to amplify the attitudes of

teachers and moreover implement the Norwegian curriculum in the discussion of its implied vagueness.

Diversity and inclusion are central topics in the EFL classroom, and further in the Norwegian school curriculum. However, teachers encounter a lack of definition within these terms, and further do not know what these terms imply in connection to an inclusive and diverse EFL classroom. Including people within marginalized groups is important when teaching diversity and inclusion. Yet, previous research show that the topics of race, sexuality, and gender are often avoided in the teachers' EFL classroom because of the discomfort the topics might provoke (Banks & Banks, 2019; Paiz, 2019; Smestad, 2018; Thein, 2013). I wish to challenge EFL teachers and the implied vagueness of the curriculum to suggest that pupils need a representation of everyone within the diversity to promote inclusion, despite the discomfort it might provoke. This thesis looks at the possibility's literature have in teaching the LGBTQ+ topic, moreover the queer topic, and further why the exclusion of this marginalized group of people is damaging. I hope that the focus of this thesis can have the potential of being part of a bigger study, and further increasing the inclusion of queer literature in the EFL classroom. The research questions that have guided me through the process are 1) "How can fiction and non-fiction texts be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary?", 2) "Are in-service teachers including such literature in the EFL classroom?", and 3) "Is the curriculum's implied vagueness damaging for both people outside of and within the LGBTQ+ category?". The first research question has been used to study the chosen literature for this thesis, and further analyze them and their benefits in connection to Bishop's Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors, Rose's visual methodologies, as well as in connection with other theorists, queer theory, and queer pedagogy. The second research question was to find out if teachers implement LGBTQ+ representative literature, moreover, queer literature in their EFL teaching. To answer this, I have conducted an interview with three in-service teachers with different educational backgrounds, and ages. Further, the participants answers will be used to supplement my other findings in the discussion. Lastly, the third research question offers a critical view of the Norwegian curriculum, implying a vagueness and the damage this might do to both people who identify within the LGBTQ+ community, in addition to people who do not.

This thesis is divided into six sections, with this introduction as the first part. Second, a review of the theoretical framework where I present the three different frameworks chosen for my thesis to show the importance of including LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom. The theoretical framework is divided in three, consisting of the metaphorical perspective of Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors, queer theory, and queer pedagogy. Following the theoretical framework is the third section, methodology, where I explain the different methods used in my thesis for collecting data and how the data was used later. The fourth section is the critical analysis of the two books *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020), both written by the authentic authors Maia Kobabe and Alok Vaid-Menon. In the analysis I present my findings from the two books, explain what they mean and how they are relevant to my thesis. Next, in the fifth section, I discuss my findings from the analysis in connection with the participants' answers from my survey, and in connection with the Norwegian school curriculum. Finally in the sixth section, I connect the sections in a conclusion to try to answer my research questions.

In Norway, the LGBTQ+ community has a history of fighting for their rights and visibility, and, up until 1972 Norwegian laws prohibited homosexual relationships. Fortunately, there has been a change towards the better, but there is still a long way to go before I can state that those within the LGBTQ+ community experience the same living rights as those who define as heterosexual. Through including queer theory, queer pedagogy, and the metaphorical perspective of Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors in my thesis I can reflect upon the social constructs regarding gender, further, shedding a light on how people perceive the social norms built on power and society, which is important especially in queer theory. Furthermore, queer pedagogy states that LGBTQ+ representation is important in education, moreover, that it is the teachers' responsibility to make sure that the representation is existing. Multiple researchers state that literature can be an entry into teaching the LGBTQ+ topic, critically exploring the connection between power and gender. Through specific literacy practice it is possible to promote tolerance and remove the dangerous invisibility of specific groups and minorities (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Wood, Kissel & Miller, 2016). Lastly, the metaphorical perspective of Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors showcases how children need books where they can mirror themselves, as well as others, and additionally experience imaginary worlds (Bishop, 1990;2015). In addition, it is important to have a sufficient amount of books that can provide these mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors in supporting pupils to gain knowledge about how we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities. The mentioned theories and metaphorical perspective are key perspectives during my thesis, and further central in the critical literary analysis, discussion, and conclusion. I have gone more into depth of each framework in chapter 2, theoretical frameworks, which further function as a red thread throughout the rest of the chapters.

In addition to my theoretical framework and methodological choices, I have tried to center my position as both a researcher and as an individual. My positionality has been one of my main ethical considerations, which will further be reflected upon in my methodology chapter where I embrace my position, my "right", and my humble awareness. This connects to my thesis based on how being humble and showing respect are important attitudes to bear in mind during the inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom. Respect can also be shown through terminology, and the terminology used throughout this thesis are well thought through for a respectful position and understanding. The most central terminology used in this thesis are the acronym *LGBTQ+*, and the terms *queer*, *identity*, *heteronormativity*, *gender*, and *diversity*. The terminology used are definitions from the American Psychological Association, the HRC (Human Rights Campaign) Foundation, and Bufdir. The acronym *LGBTQ+* is an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer "with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities" used by members within the community" (HRC Foundation). In this thesis I use the acronym when I am referring to the diverse sexual identities and further when talking about LGBTQ+ literature and inclusive teaching. Additionally, the term *queer* is used repeatedly as a collective term for people who are non-binary or have gender-expansive identities which does not fit into the socially constructed gender norms. This connects to another central term in my thesis, *identity*, which is described as two sets of perspectives. The first perspective refers to a person's individual sense of self defined by a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person, whereas the second perspective refers to an individual's sense of self defined by a range of affiliations and social roles (American Psychological Association, 2023). A person's

sense of who they are and who they associate with in society shape their identity, and is often influenced by body image, memories, goals, values, expectations, and beliefs.

Throughout this thesis, the term identity can be seen in connection with gender and how this is a person's own internal sense of self and their gender, one's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Next, *Heteronormativity* is also a term used consistently in my thesis and refers to the assumption that heterosexuality is the preferred sexual orientation in society, upholding a social hierarchy based on sexual orientation. Furthermore, heteronormativity assumes that there are only two distinct opposite genders and is often linked with heterosexism and homophobia, devaluing, marginalizing, and discriminating people who deviate from its normative principle (American Psychological Association, 2023). This perspective other people within the LGBTQ+ community, additionally making them socially invisible and unrepresented. Because of the norms constructed by society and power, *gender* is an important term I use in my thesis and can be defined as something biological, psychological, and social. It is common to believe that there are only two genders, male and female, however, these two categories does not home everyone, and there are people who do not identify as either. Moreover, gender diversity is a term that opens the possibility that there are more gender identities than female and male, creating space for different gender expressions, preferences, and identities without categorizing (Bufdir, own translation). *Diversity* includes the wide range of variation of human differences, including age, gender, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, education, livelihood, and marital status. The term is important for my thesis to show how those within the LGBTQ+ community is part of the diversity, and further to illustrate how they are made socially invisible and underrepresented despite of what the national guidelines and curriculums state about the importance of diversity and its representation. For the implied reader, this overview of key terms will support the reader's understanding and awareness when reading the various chapters in my thesis, and further clarify what my study aims to accomplish.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors

Professor Rudine Sims Bishop's 1990 seminal text *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors* offers a central metaphorical perspective that will be taken throughout this thesis. Bishop's metaphor illustrates how people, more particularly, children need books where they can see themselves and others, or additionally, experience imaginary worlds that authors make in which they can become a part of having only to use their imagination. Bishop (1990;2015) states that a book can change a child's life, if it is only for a short period of a time, and, although it won't solve world problems, it can "help us to understand each other better by helping to change our attitudes towards difference" (p. 2). Additionally, Bishop (1990;2015) stresses the importance of having enough books that can provide the mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors for all children, assisting them in acquiring knowledge about how we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, and that both simultaneously are what makes us all human (p. 2). The literature that children are exposed to in school and in classrooms should be diverse, and the benefits of diverse books further connect to this thesis as it includes an analysis of two authentic books, written by individuals who identify within the LGBTQ+ category, to demonstrate how and why these types of books can work as a resource and as support in the EFL classroom.

Tschida, Ryan and Ticknor (2014) encourage a disruption of single stories using Bishop's metaphor of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors to show how it is important to put the single stories away, adding a range of other stories instead, "stories that make historical events, people, and cultural narratives messy, more complex, and more validating to *all students*" (p. 36). Tschida, Ryan and Ticknor (2014) state that it seems much easier to keep the single stories on the shelves, but that this further builds on stereotypes and marginalizes those who are not able to mirror themselves in books. Additionally, they discuss how using single stories affect those pupils who do not have a voice in how or whose history is told, leaving them wondering why they cannot seem to find themselves in the stories they read or hear in school (p.36). To help pupils choose books who steps outside the single stories, teachers need to create a relationship between both single stories and diverse stories to support pupils in selecting books that provide more diverse representations, building critical and unbiased minds within them (p. 36). Thus, by using Bishop's metaphor of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors in conjunction with queer theory and queer pedagogy, this thesis argues that 1) visibility in and 2) access to LGBTQ+ texts in the EFL classroom grants all students the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the books they read.

Novelist Chimamanda Adichie (2009) challenges, captivates, and inspires listeners in her TED-talk where she discusses the story of how our lives and our cultures are composed of many overlapping stories, not just one. Adichie (2009) warns that critical misunderstanding might occur if we hear only a single story about another person or country, something she herself experienced as a child. She further states that "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story". (13:04-

13:13). Additionally, Adichie talks about how impossible it is to engage with a place or a person without knowing all the stories of that place and that person, something that can lead to robbing people of their identity, and signifying "how we are different rather than how we are similar" (13:56-14:00). When showing people only as one thing, repeatedly, that is what they become, and this is what creates a single story (Adichie, 2009).

When pupils are introduced to culturally diverse characters with both similar and different experiences and emotions, they can strengthen both their distinct cultural identity and their understanding. Through introducing pupils to books where they find diverse characters that are like them, they can mirror themselves and experience a sense of belonging. However, it is just as important to be exposed to these diverse characters for those pupils who do not mirror themselves in them because of the window these books can provide (Westby, 2022). This ties to Bishop's argument (1990;2015), where she states that literature exists "to transform human experience, and reflect it back to us" so that we can better understand it. Through the literary mirror "we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience" (p. 1).

2.2 Queer Theory

According to Clarke (2021) the term 'Queer' was not used in relation to a person's identity before 1894, and the slur 'Queer' is also believed to have originated around this time. During the trial of Oscar Wilde, a letter from the Marquis of Queensberry is said to be read aloud in court. The letter specifies disgust towards Wilde's allegations where the Marquis of Queensberry referred to homosexual men as "Snob Queers" (Clarke, 2021). Based on this, it is believed that the slur was picked up and adapted by American newspapers, however, the slur wasn't used more commonly by the society before 1914. Furthermore, the dictionary refers to the term 'Queer' as an adjective, verb and as a noun. As an adjective, the dictionary refers to the term as a synonym for "strange or odd from a convention viewpoint; unusually different" or as something "of a questionable nature or character; suspicious; shady". When the dictionary describes the word 'Queer' as a verb, it is explained to be similar to words such as "spoil; ruin". Further, as a noun, explained to be slang in an offensive way stating that the noun "a queer" is often used with disparaging intent and considered offensive among those who approve of the corresponding adjective "queer" (The Cambridge English Dictionary, 2023).

During the 1980's and 1990's the reclaiming of the word queer started with members of the LGBTQ+ activist group Queer Nation wanting to take it back. Queer Nation wanted to reclaim a set of positive associations for the term 'Queer', and at the same time proclaim queer people's right for a cultural space (Stryker, 2004). Their slogan was "We're Here. We're Queer. Get Used to It." and was used to not only take the term back, but also to extend what mainly was seen as a gay and lesbian social movement into a more inclusive movement that included bisexual and transgendered people as well. The term 'Queer' became an umbrella term for those who did not fit into the oppressive social and cultural norms and policies related to sexuality and gender. According to Stryker (2004), "The lived political necessity of understanding the nexus of gender and sexuality in this broadening social movement in turn helped launch the field of "queer studies" in higher education" (p. 1). Because of the history of the term 'Queer', it is still considered as an offensive and degrading slur by many people within the LGBTQ+ community. There is still an existing dislike of the term, and some people can still become offended with its

use. As I position myself as a white, cisgendered female, the term will humbly be used in my thesis as a label that embraces the fluidity of identity.

Up until 1972, Norway had a law called §213 which practiced a criminal prohibition against what they called "homosexual acts between men" if these were a public outrage (Berge, 2022). Different movements and unions fought for equal rights for everyone in Norway, which led to the inclusion of homosexuals in the anti-discrimination legislation in Norway. Although the different movements and unions fought for equal rights, the situation of transgender and bisexual people was difficult to include because of how society saw them as groups that made visible transitions within gender and sexuality. In 1993, with equality as an argument for inclusion, the Partnership Act was approved and gave marriage-like rights for homosexuals. Further, in 2008, Norway adapted a gender-neutral marriage law and gave lesbians the right to both adopt and undergo artificial insemination. Lastly, as Berge (2022) states, the term 'Queer' came into use as an identity marker in the years after 2000 with a meaning that if you identify as queer you distance yourself from the normative expectations related to gender and sexuality. After an attack aimed to hurt queer people in Oslo in 2022, the Government started working on a plan for extending LGBTQ+ rights. This plan, which is applicable from 2023, "will have a special focus on improving the quality of life for LGBTQ people, protecting their rights and fostering greater acceptance of gender and sexuality diversity" (Bakke, 2022). In addition, LGBTQ+ people with minority backgrounds and gender incongruence will get extra efforts, and the government's idea behind this plan is to "strengthen the efforts to combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics", seeing how although the quality of LGBTQ+ people's life are gradually changing for the better, "there is still a need for a targeted and systematic effort" (Bakke, 2022).

The dynamics mentioned above, in addition to several others have been paralleled in a theoretical field called queer theory. Queer theory refers to the history of LGBTQ+, and additionally, signal the study of an inclusive approach to sex and gender difference in relation to power. Queer theory challenges sexuality- and gender-based normativity, further studying how society defines the concepts of heterosexuality, homosexuality, gender, and sex identities. According to the Illinois Library, the concept of queer theory "came from multiple critical and cultural contexts, including feminism, post-structuralist theory, radical movements of people of color, the gay and lesbian movements, AIDS activism, many sexual subcultural practices such as sadomasochism, and postcolonialism", and is therefore a theory that is hard to define in a clear way (Illinois University Library, 2022). Many theorists and scholars have studied queer theory, challenging how we perceive gender, sex and sexuality. Judith Butler is an acknowledged theorist within queer theory, and builds upon another queer theorist, Michel Foucault. Foucault (1980) refuses to accept that sexuality is something that can be clearly defined, and rather focuses on how power regimes heterosexism and produce it. In other words, Foucault argues that repressive structures in society normalizes heterosexuality, whilst homosexuality (queerness) becomes stigmatized. Butler builds upon Foucault's theory and examines how culture informs our understanding of biology through presuming the priority of gender, introducing the idea that gender is performative and repetitive, and that there are several things in society that signify gender at each moment. Based on how society and culture have constructed and perceived sex and gender, Butler challenges our perception of it through studying how gender and sex are more complex than heterosexuality. Butler (2006) states that;

If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called "sex" is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all (pp. 9-10).

By pointing out that even sex is something constructed by discourse and culture, Butler deconstructs the binary of sex and gender, further arguing that there are more than two genders. Further, Butler (2006) discusses how society and cultures function to make us believe that heterosexuality is the only natural and acceptable option, differentiating the masculine term from the feminine term for a heterosexual desire. Instead of allowing a critical perspective on there being just two genders, "The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire" (p. 31).

As mentioned above, Foucault's studies state that heterosexism (queerness) is something that power regimes, and that the society produces a discrimination against homosexuality, normalizing heterosexism. Butler uses Foucault's studies to further challenge our perception of how culture and society plays a big part in the priority of gender. Butler (1990) states that "[...] gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis" (p. 273). Butler further states that seeing how gender is both performative and repetitive we are through social, familial, and legal rules, forced to conform to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity. This normalization of the heterosexual matrix can also be referred to as heteronormativity, a central term in queer research, which is important for this thesis since it suggests that the literature children are exposed to at school should be diverse. Further, this thesis includes Bishop's *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors*, to show how children need books they can see both themselves and others in to celebrate both our differences and our similarities. If diverse books that include queer people are not available for children at school, heteronormativity can implicitly be prompted, children end up with no windows to learn, and those who need diverse books that mirror themselves end up excluded. This thesis includes all these aspects to discuss why and how LGBTQ+ literature should be included in the EFL classroom, and further discusses the danger of not including such literature.

2.3 Queer pedagogy

Gartley (2015) states that national and international surveys have discovered that LGBTQ+ pupils experience bullying and harassment at a higher extent than their peers (p. 144). According to the surveys included in Gartley's (2015) paper, both LGBTQ+ pupils and non-LGBTQ+ pupils reported that they overhear homophobic language and comments at school. Further, studies across Europa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific, and in countries such as Canada, U.S., and the Netherlands found that LGBTQ+ pupils are more likely to feel unsafe at school (p. 144). In addition, Dodge and Crutcher (2015) discuss that teacher risk is an issue of concern that is often raised in discussions of including LGBTQ+ literature and topics in schools (p. 103). Dodge and Crutcher (2015) found that teachers worry about introducing LGBTQ+ issues and topics in their classrooms because of parent pushback threatening their jobs, and because of how Dodge and Crutcher (2015) "also concede, from re- search and personal experience, that

teachers may face communities, cultures, policies, and even laws that impede or prohibit inclusion of LGBTQ YAL or validation of LGBTQ experiences" (p.103). Because of the factors mentioned above, the quality of LGBTQ+ pupils' lives and education suffer, and LGBTQ+ pupils "are more likely than their peers to skip school, drop out early, or have lower grades and poorer academic achievement" (p. 145). As Gartley (2015) states, educators should be aware of the mentioned barriers LGBTQ+ youth and children might face, however, it is important to avoid assuming that this concerns all LGBTQ+ pupils. As studies have found in schools with a LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, both LGBTQ+ pupils and non-LGBTQ+ pupils report feelings safer at school, as well as they report less bullying and harassment as well as better pupil achievement (Gartley, 2015, p. 145).

Aware of how schools across the world can be hostile environments, Wood, Kissel and Miller (2016) describes how literature can be "presented as an opportunity to critically explore that complex intersection of experience, power, culture, and identity, particularly as related to sexuality", and further used to teach so that it meets "the needs of adolescents" (p. 46). The three authors describe how "safe zones" that address "the experiences of LGBTQ youth while promoting tolerance" can be fostered through specific literacy practice (p.46). This connects to what Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2018) states, when they suggest that "student behavior toward LGBTQ people is more welcoming in the presence of more inclusive instruction" (p. 5). Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2018) want to help the readers of their book understand how LGBTQ+-inclusive teaching can have a broad and positive impact on many different pupils, and they believe that the best defense against potential resistance can be provided for pupils through a broader understanding of the benefits that a LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum have (p.5).

Including LGBTQ+ topics in school is important because we live in a world where LGBTQ+ people exist, ignoring this reality and implementing curriculums that leave LGBTQ+ people out does not co-exist with how school is supposed to "teach children about the world and equip students to live in it" (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018, pp. 7-8). The world includes LGBTQ+ people, and therefore schools should be a place where LGBTQ+ topics are included as well. As Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2018) states, considering how the investment of ending racism includes white people standing up as well as how the investment for women's rights includes men standing up, non-LGBTQ+ people have an important role in the investment of making a more LGBTQ+ safe and inclusive world (pp. 7-8). When thinking about why and how to include representation of LGBTQ+ people in the EFL classroom, the clear benefits of LGBTQ+ inclusion to pupils can help as a guide. According to Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2013), the visibility of LGBTQ+ identities should not be separate from the curriculum but be included to build skills through reading such literature. As mentioned, the single-story is a problem for LGBTQ+ pupils because pupils need themselves reflected in the texts they read, something that can be done through literature with LGBTQ+ characters or themes. This connects to Bishop's article which state that all children are entitled to books that mirror their own images, and books that open fewer familiar worlds to them (1990;2015). Furthermore, teachers need to be able to recognize what role literature has in the process (that Bishop prompts) for their pupils, and further be able to evaluate books that can do such work for their pupils (Blackburn, Clark & Nemeth, 2015; Tschida, Ryan & Ticknor, 2014).

The Norwegian core curriculum states that throughout history we have fought for equality and equal rights "[...] which are in constant need of protection and

reinforcement. School shall present knowledge and promote attitudes which safeguard these values. All pupils shall be treated equally, and no pupil is to be subjected to discrimination” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 5). However, Smestad (2018) states that “gay” is still a term of abuse in Norwegian schools, and that many pupils in the Norwegian schools have negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people (p. 4). Smestad (2018) further states that Norwegian pupils learn little about LGBTQ+ issues in schools and include a survey of living conditions that show that invisibility of transgendered and bisexual people is still a problem in Norway (p. 4). In addition, Røthing and Svendsen (2010) states that Norwegian pupils express positive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people, however, “It seems heterosexuality is valued in such a way that it undermines the apparently equal status of heterosexual and homosexual relationships and lifestyles and even leads to homophobia” (p. 149). The Norwegian core curriculum’s values, plus, the heteronormativity that exist in Norwegian schools can be compared to what Bishop (1990;2015) states about the mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors that children need in literature. Studies have found that schools in Norway does in general not have a lot of literature including LGBTQ+ characters, especially not authentic LGBTQ+ literature (Gausel, 2022). Exposing pupils in the EFL classroom to authentic LGBTQ+ literature can therefore be helpful in creating the safe zones and tolerance that the Norwegian core curriculum states shall exist in school (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 5).

Heteronormativity is wrapped in a discourse of tolerance and acceptance, which can be seen as a result of how LGBTQ+ pupils have been left out of the agenda and the curriculum of many schools. As Kjaran (2017) states, “A possible explanation for the persistence of heteronormativity and heterosexist views in schools could be that the school system, is not ready to deal with questions of sexuality and gender non-conformity” (p. 39). Using LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom can help both teachers and pupils with topics they find difficult, and further have the ability to learn through reading. Gray (2021) gives examples of affordances that LGBTQ+ literature have in the EFL classroom, and state that LGBTQ+ literature offers the pupils learning of their worldview, “and to learn about others and the ways in which they encode the world, while simultaneously enabling them to reflect on themselves and their own language using” (p. 143). Further, Gray (2021) states that literature has the power to arouse emotions in the reader, something that further can lead to identification with characters in books, characters who may be both similar and very dissimilar from ourselves. The school system in Norway today work with positive, liberal values of gender equality, but, are according to Bergstrøm (2014) depicted in ways that uphold hierarchies between the genders. The EFL classroom, however, has the ability to build tolerance and acceptance through literature, which is what Norwegian schools wants to promote. Grey (2021) discusses why literature is important, especially for LGBTQ+ pupils, stating that:

From the point of LGBTQ students, whose erasure is a reminder of their marginalized status, opportunities for identification are particularly important, as it is through identification that we (partly) construct identities and become culturally intelligible to ourselves and others. But as Oatley points out, identification is not only a matter of selfrecognition—it can also be the result of empathy, namely the ability to step outside oneself and to see the world from the perspective of the Other, as someone demanding and deserving of recognition. So in addition to providing LGBTQ students with opportunities for identification through self-recognition, literary texts have the potential to play a key role in enabling non-LGBTQ students to see the world through different eyes, enlisting their empathy and capacity for Other-recognition (Grey, 2021, p. 143).

Including LGBTQ+ literature into the EFL classroom can help both LGBTQ+ pupils, non-LGBTQ+ pupils, and teachers to break the heteronormative norms that exist, and further make non-hegemonic gender performances accepted and tolerated. Moving beyond the unawareness and invisibility that might exist, using Bishop's metaphor of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors as a guide to why literature can be used to practice respect and tolerance to LGBTQ+ rights and attitudes, prohibiting the silencing and harassment that has been going on (Kjaraan, 2017). Additionally, Grey (2021) states that teachers that are unused to, or who feels cautious about working with literature that includes LGBTQ+ characters and topics should know that this does not require highly specialist knowledge, and implicit literature about the topic also exist for those who might be teaching in more hostile environments.

3 Methodology

This section of my thesis presents an overview of the research methodology and materials I have included in this thesis. In the first part of the methodology section, I am going to explain how this thesis includes a qualitative research method. Secondly, an overview of the reading methods used to analyze the chosen texts will be examined. Next, I will describe how my study is a case study and present what types of data are desirable to gather for answering the research questions that this study asks. My research questions for this thesis are:

1. *How can fiction and non-fiction texts be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary?*
2. *Are in-service teachers including such literature in the EFL classroom?*
3. *Is the curriculum's implied vagueness damaging for both people outside of and within the LGBTQ+ category?*

Furthermore, the fourth part of this section will highlight the various forms of analysis needed to answer the above research questions. In the last part of the methodology section, I try to position myself in the study, reflect upon the quality of the study, the ethical considerations and my research validity and reliability.

3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a methodology of scientific research which provides textual data and information about values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of populations. Additionally, qualitative research is an effective way of identifying intangible factors, which connects to this thesis in the way that it seeks to explore the representation of LGBTQ+ literature, literature including marginalized gender-queer groups (Mack et al., 2005, p. 1). Scientific research seeks to answer questions, collect evidence, and produce undetermined findings that further are valid beyond the immediate limitations of the study. Connecting the above-mentioned points to scientific research, this connects to this current study in the way that this study includes actual endeavors from teachers to look at how LGBTQ+ texts are included in the Norwegian EFL classroom. For my qualitative research I will collect data through interviews arranged at the participants' school/workplace to further discuss the inclusion of LGBTQ+ literary texts in the EFL classroom.

In addition to the interviews, I will incorporate multiple sources of data: analyzing two authentic queer books and presenting a critical reflection of the Norwegian curriculum. This way of using multiple data sources, both literary and visually is also central in Creswell's (2007) characteristics of qualitative research (p. 38). Covering more than one way of collecting data gives the researcher the ability to reinforce the findings with a connection to each other. This further connects to the next section of the methodology part where the ethnography of this study will be introduced. Similarly, the ethnographic case study states the possibility of incorporating other qualitative research methods for further research within a study.

3.1.1 Ethnographic Case study

This case study will incorporate an interview of three teachers, unraveling their thoughts and beliefs regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom. Based on the small number of teachers being interviewed for this study, it can be categorized as an ethnographic case study (Creswell, 2007, p. 68). In history, ethnography is defined in different ways, but what they all have in common is that ethnography is a complete portrayal of cultural membership (Singer, 2009, p. 191). Moreover, this implies that the researcher does fieldwork, studying people within their own cultural environment instead of collecting data from an office. Singer (2009) states that "It typically involves in-depth investigation", most commonly observations and interviews, and that the researcher tries to remain open for the participants' interpretations of the world (p. 191). Further, this is a qualitative study, an ethnographic case study that in addition to interviews includes a literary analysis and an analysis of the Norwegian curriculum. Incorporating other qualitative techniques into the study for exploring the further "why" and "what" is also known in ethnographies and is central to find the larger outcome that this thesis aims to discover (Singer, 2009, p. 191).

In the section below, the interviews as a method of data collection will be described. It will describe how the participants are included in the thesis, how their privacy is maintained and how their personalia are anonymized throughout the study. Believably, these are important aspects to consider during any study, and Creswell (2007) states that providing mundane details about the participants is important in ethnographic research, as well as using standard categories for cultural descriptions. Reflecting upon the "sensitivity to the needs of individual studies", acknowledging the impact that the study has on the people and places being studied (pp. 69-72). Seeing how the answers of the interview are based on the teachers' personal thoughts and opinions, the researcher must reflect upon how the participants are demonstrated in the study.

3.2 Interviews as method of data collection

To answer my research questions, I will conduct interviews to collect data about the inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom from teachers working in Norwegian schools. According to Mack et al. (2005), "In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored" (p. 2). Seeing how the participants in this study might feel uncomfortable sharing their personal thoughts and practice on including or excluding LGBTQ+ representation in the literature they incorporate in their teaching, this information can be considered as sensitive data for them to share. Asking questions about how they include marginalized gender-queer groups in their pedagogical practice can be difficult for a teacher to answer because they might get the impression that the questions have a right or wrong solution. This can lead to proper answers over truthful answers from the participants, as they may be worried about harming their image as teachers.

As stated, the data necessary to obtain for this study embraces personal opinions, experiences, feelings, interpretations, connections, and relationships, which in-depth interviews contributes an opportunity for (Mack et al., 2005, p. 30). Since some topics

might be difficult for participants to answer, it is important that the participants can trust the researcher to keep personalia and other personal details concealed and anonymized. An interview guide, personal notes and tape recordings will be brought into the interviews, which further will be worked with, modified into typed transcripts that will help demonstrate the responses from the interviews in the study. The transcripts will be amended into what Mack et al. (2005, p. 30) states are the most utilized form of typed transcripts, coded according to responses, questions, and the most significant themes arising. The goal of my interviews is to obtain data that can be analyzed and utilized in this study to solve the research questions.

The interview guide consists of eight general questions with supplementary questions as example: "why?" and "why not?" to achieve a broader discussion and reflection of thoughts from the participants. This is important in an ethnographic case study where the conversations between the interviewer and the participants have the possibility to go beyond the external frames of the interview guide. Further, the questions are divided into three categories: *Practice*, *Socio-cultural influences* and *Perspectives and Beliefs*. The questions are separated into categories for keeping a sense of similarity within the categories, and for further providing a coherent understanding of how the questions differ or connect to one another across the categories. The questions are few and "intend to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 187). A complete copy of the interview guide exists in the Appendix of this thesis. The questions for the interview guide were made before the interviews took place and gave me the time to think thoroughly about what I wanted to collect from them, ensuring that the same general areas of information are collected from each participant.

Since there is little research on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the Norwegian EFL classroom, the questions were made to discover if teachers include such literature in their EFL classroom, and if they understand the curriculum's suggested vagueness as a reason for teachers' choosing to not include LGBTQ+ literature in their teaching. The teachers' experiences, personal opinions, and further feelings and interpretations are fundamental to include in the interviews to obtain the in-depth answers that are needed for this study. For this study, three teachers will be interviewed. The participants are teachers from different grade levels, in an attempt of differentiating the participants' answers from each other, gaining as much contrast and potential opinions as possible from only one school.

Before the interviews took place, the participants were contacted and asked if they wanted to part-take in the interviews. The school where the interviews are going to take place is at a school where I have been during one of my student practices. The teachers were already asked if they would like to participate in interviews for my thesis and was later asked again. Before the interview, informational scripts about their privacy, protection and rights were handed out for them to read. In addition, the participants were showed the NSD approval where they could read about the purpose of the study, their place in it and how they have the possibility to change their mind. The NSD approval can be found in the Appendix. Because of the existing relationship with the teachers, it is possible that they feel safer in elaborating on the questions, and that the interview will proceed as a conversation ruled by me, but not in a one-way dialog (Creswell, 2007, p. 140).

To elaborate on what happened to the interviews later in the process, and how the participants are further protected in the study, the process of transcribing, saving and anonymization will be described. During the interviews, the participants were recorded with a recording device borrowed from NTNU, approved from NSD. The data was further kept in a restricted database at NTNU where only the people with access, the researcher, and the data controller from the institution (NTNU) could enter. When the study was completed, all files and copies of audio recording and other personal data concerning the participants were deleted. Further, the participants and school were anonymized and details that could make connections to the participants and their workplace was changed or left out of the study. Lastly, the participants, in coherence with what the NSD states were allowed to draw their consent and would be erased from the study if they wanted to.

The fact that this is a case study, and the answers cannot be generalized it is important to look at how this ethnographic case study is for adding knowledge onto the field, additionally, since there has been little research in the current field, this study can also, hopefully, be an opening to greater research on the topic. Notably, there has been research done on how to use queer literature in the Norwegian EFL classroom, the representation of LGBTQ+ in general in classrooms, and on the portrayal of gender diversity in intersectional YA literature in the Norwegian lower secondary EFL classroom. However, the research on how fiction and non-fiction texts can be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary is not very touched upon, as well as the research into if teachers are using such literature and if the curriculum's considered vagueness can be damaging for both people outside of and within the LGBTQ+ category. Seeing how these are the research questions made for this thesis they are specific to this study, nevertheless, finding research that investigates only parts of what this thesis ask are difficult.

3.3 Selection of Literature

As mentioned, this study aims to discover how gender-queerness are represented in the literature available for pupils in Norwegian EFL classrooms. Further, this study aims to discover how fiction and non-fiction texts can be used for representation of those who define as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary. Because of the lack of attention this topic has received, it is important to shed a light on how literature can be used to educate in the English course. Using literary texts in language learning can provide an access to implicitly learning both grammatic and building tolerance of other thoughts and beliefs. As Bishop (1990;2015) states, literature offer readers a window into other worlds, as well as sliding glass doors they can walk through to enter the world created by the author. Further, literature provides a mirror for the readers, which according to Bishop (1990;2015) often is what readers pursue in books. The texts chosen to analyze in this study are a graphic novel and a nonfiction book. The two books are *Gender Queer* (2019) by Maia Kobabe and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) by Alok Vaid-Menon. Both books are written by individuals defining as within the LGBTQ+ community and who identifies as e/ei/eir and they. They are contemporary LGBTQ+ books, describing experiences and including examples from both authors' lives.

Based on how the books are written by members that identifies within the LGBTQ+ community, the books can be seen as authentic (Rutherford, Johanson & Reddan, 2022, pp. 573-574). In September 2015 an author named Corinne Duyvis created a hashtag

(#OwnVoices) on twitter for readers to recommend books about authors who openly share the diverse identity of their main characters from underrepresented/marginalized groups. Because of my reliability and validity as a cis, straight, white woman I find it essential to clarify biased views through showing self-awareness and self-reflection. This is something that can be shown through including authentic queer books for representation in this study.

The Norwegian English subject curriculum (2019) states that pupils shall read texts from a broad specter, and that "By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society" (p.3). Further, the pupils will use texts to establish the foundation needed to see both their own identity and others' identities (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 3). However, the curriculum has no clear guidelines of including the topic LGBTQ+ in education and literature, and because of the mentioned lack of research regarding the topic, the chosen literature, and the suggestive vagueness of the curriculum, this research aims to discover how *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) can work as examples of beneficial literature to incorporate in the Norwegian EFL classroom. In the next section, there will be an illustration of how the above-mentioned books are going to be analyzed.

3.4 Analysis

As mentioned in the section above, this study includes close readings of two books, a graphic novel, and a nonfiction book. Because close reading is a method chosen, the use of a close critical analysis is necessary, and further a comparative analysis to compare the two books. Lastly, in the analysis part, a pedagogical analysis is called upon to show how and why the books can be involved in the EFL classroom. To conduct a close critical analysis, articles from other researchers are applied to place the reading of the two books in context. In the comparative analysis the two literary devices are compared to one another, and their similarities and differences are presented to show how these books can be beneficial to include in the EFL classroom. The comparison is done to allow a better understanding of the books. Further, in the pedagogical analysis, the selected books are analyzed through a pedagogic vision, describing how the literature is appropriate for the purpose of teaching.

3.4.1 Visual and literary close critical analysis

Close critical analysis happens through a multimodal analysis, analyzing the visual, and a literary analysis of the texts themselves. Firstly, visual analysis will be applied. A visual analysis of *Gender Queer* (2019) is necessary based on how the book contains elements beyond the textual. Gillian Rose (2001) states that to understand the importance of visual images the readers must take the images seriously, consider the social conditions and effects of visual objects, and think about how they interpret the images individually (pp. 15-16). Rose (2001) further states that "All visual representations are made in one way or another, and the circumstances of their production may contribute towards the effect they have" (p. 17). Based on this statement it is possible to interpret that visual images and representations may not convey meaning beyond generating some sort of impact on the reader. This way of looking at the visual representation may therefore be important to keep in mind when carrying out a close critical analysis of the literary texts for this study. Perhaps it does not lie in the images themselves, but simply in what they

generate to the reader, identifiable as an important concept to have in mind when reading *Gender Queer* (2019).

Maia Kobabe writes eir memoir as a graphic novel, showing the readers emotions and experiences growing up, not only through words, but also through real life drawings. When reading the graphic novel, the illustrations are not necessary for the understanding of the text, and the story is a story that could have stood alone with merely text in a memoir. Nevertheless, the emotions and reactions that the drawings generate within the reader does make the memoir deeper with clearer images of what eir have experienced. Rose (2001) discusses how visual images can have a social significance and offer meanings about the world (pp. 14-16). The way Kobabe illustrates the world through the drawings, it is possible to state that eir views of how eir felt as gender-queer living in a society with certain gender roles, being socially excluded (Rose, 2001, pp. 14-15). This is an example of what illustrations can provide and will be further analyzed in the analysis part of this study. Second, to analyze *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020), a literary analysis will be used to do close reading of the written text within the books. Analyzing the two books through a close critical analysis is important for this study on behalf of showing how and what they can do for the EFL classroom in a beneficial way. And through literary analysis the details, the means and the structures to the text will be analyzed, focusing on what function the parts and means have in the whole.

3.4.2 Comparative analysis

During this study the comparative analysis is used for explanatory purposes, which according to Mello (2022) is used to formulate the relationship between something (p. 19). In this case, the relationship between the two different literary devices will be compared to explore how they either differ or resemble each other regarding their advantageousness in EFL classroom implementation. The arguments of how the books are beneficial and how they can be compared to one another will be complemented by the integration of various theoretical strands (Mello, 2022, p. 19).

3.4.3 Pedagogical analysis

Analyzing material pedagogically in this study means breaking up the literature and the curriculum both logical and systematical from the point of a pedagogue to see the purpose of its applicable proceeding. Das (2020) states that "Pedagogical analysis is a tool in the hands of a teacher which helps the teacher to plan classroom teaching and implement it successfully and can evaluate the learning outcome of the students" (p. 272). Further, doing a pedagogical analysis of the selected literature in addition to the Norwegian curriculum is done for evaluating the outcome of it, considering how the analyzed material is meaningful and relevant for pupils' learning.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

While reading the two books and working with the methodology chapter for this thesis, some ethical considerations have happened. The main consideration has been thinking about my positionality regarding working with the topic LGBTQ+, as I identify as a cis woman. While trying to find my validity and reliability within the area of study, some repeated questions have appeared repeatedly. These questions involve whether I have the right to be a part of the LGBTQ+ representation study or not, if I am using the right

terminology, and if my positionality is clear for the readers of the study. However, thinking carefully about terminologies, how to use it right, and how to be both aware and humble of the limitations to this study and of my positionality, I believe that I can gain validity. Because of my humility and reflections about how to do this right, the literature included in the study are authentic books. Additionally, I think that my voice is important too, and I hope that my voice, if hopefully positioned right, can be seen as important and respected by people defining as within the LGBTQ+ community as well.

Another consideration has been the interviews, shaping the questions to gain the greatest possible quality and depth in the participants answers. When the interview-guide was sent to NSD for approval, the questions added were written in English, which I further started considering as a limitation for the interviews with the participants. The reason why this was considered a limitation is because of how the teachers might feel when they get asked questions in English concerning a topic, they already might find it hard to express themselves about. Because of how this can be a reason for vague answers during the interviews, the interviews will happen in the teachers' language of choosing, and I will just have to try to avoid the teachers' answers getting lost in translation.

Finally, I have reflected upon how this study is a small ethnographic case study, and how the answers attained throughout the interviews cannot be generalized. Choosing to perform a case study might also hinder the validity and reliability of the thesis, based on how the answers can be hard to recreate and cannot be generalized. However, this study has the possibility of becoming the start of larger research projects on the inclusion and usage of queer narratives in the EFL classroom across Norway. Based on this it is possible to state that although this study is a small study, the impact it can do as well as the work it can further encourage is huge.

4 Critical analysis

This section critically analyses and deconstructs two authentic texts that are written by authors who identify within the LGBTQ+ community. Literature can reflect human experiences back to the implied reader; it can make it possible for the reader to see themselves and their experiences as validated and justified within the society. Moreover, literature can help to help recenter queer characters so that their identity no longer is shadowed in the margins of society but have a valid space to exist within. Readers often seek books that reflect themselves somehow, looking for mirrors which further makes reading "a means of self-affirmation" (Bishop, 1990;2015). Through reading literature about others, many can develop their own identity and get to know themselves, as well as learn more about the world and those who live in it.

Taking away the opportunity for young people and children to reflect upon themselves in literature can therefore be seen as a message for how their values and identities are not included in hegemonic structures of the society. Egner (2019) used hegemonic structures to explain "discourses that promote practices of assimilation and/or normalization where normative ways of being (specifically as it pertains to ability, gender, and sexuality) are understood as ideal" (p. 141). This shows the importance of Bishop's (1990;2015) article where she states that people from dominant social groups always have found their mirrors in the books that they read, but that they have also suffered from the lack of availability of books that represent others, their windows into the lives of people that differ from them. Bishop (1990;2015) further states that if people from dominant social groups only read books that reflects on themselves, "they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world-a dangerous ethnocentrism" (p. 1). This further connects to how this thesis topic researches how EFL learners will benefit from reading authentic, own voices literature through mirrors and windows to both see their valid space in society, but also to gain understanding of others from yourself.

The first book that will be analyzed is the graphic novel *Gender Queer* (2019) by Maia Kobabe. *Gender Queer* (2019) is a memoir written in the form of a graphic novel that explores gender identity, centered on coming out to friends and family. The author is a non-binary, gender queer, asexual protagonist who prefers the pronouns e/em/eir. I will be analyzing the book through the lens of Bishop's article "Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors" (1990;2015) as well as through Rose's critical visual methodology and the concept of #OwnVoices. Furthermore, the composition, perspective, and visual semiotics of the graphic novel will be focused on. Through illustrated panels in the graphic novel, readers can learn about Kobabe's up-growing in Northern California where e was feeling different already from a young age and not being able to openly express it. In an interview about the graphic novel, Kobabe stated that "I wrote it sort of towards an audience who I knew, like, loved me and supported me and knew me and was very sympathetic to me, and I think that let me write without any, really, fear" (Martin & Advani, 2023).

The second book that will be analyzed is the Pocket Change Collective book *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) written by Alok Vaid-Menon. This book is a nonfiction book where the author deconstructs, demystifies, and reimagines the gender binary in an educational way including authentic experiences, gender-theory, and facts about laws and other "legal ways of discrimination" of the LGBTQ+ community. The internationally acclaimed author, poet, comedian, and public speaker Vaid-Menon uses the pronouns they/them and are a transgendered person of color. Moreover, I will be analyzing the book through Bishop's article "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors" (1990;2015) and further connect the concept of #OwnVoices and authenticity to the book itself. Lastly, as well as with *Gender Queer* (2019), the composition, perspective, and visual semiotics of the book will be centralized in the analysis. Through both the visual and informative aspects of *Beyond the Gender Binary*, readers can understand and learn about other possibilities of gender, rather than the heteronormative gender binaries. The author uses personal experiences to openly express how people's unthoughtful comments can be harmful, and how the society deliberately and undeliberately discriminates people who define as transgendered or gender queer. The book is written as the author "hopes for a future beyond the gender binary, and for greater understanding and acceptance" (Schafter, 2022).

According to Rutherford, Johanson and Reddan (2022), authentic voices of diverse authors are important in the Own Voices movement, and that through own voices "when an author is writing from their personal experiences in a marginalized group" it is possible to make sure that everyone feels represented in fiction (p. 575). Own Voices authors from marginalized communities can attribute visibility and possibility to their books for the readers, building a connection between the author and the implied readers when the implied readers can mirror themselves with the author. The Own Voices movement and the authentic voices connects to the two books I have chosen to analyze for this thesis as they are both written by authors who defines as being within the LGBTQ+ community, as well as the book include the authors' personal experiences. Both Kobabe and Vaid-Menon define themselves as being queer, a group that is marginalized. This makes *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) authentic stories within #OwnVoices literature because they are both written from the authors' personal experiences of being queer and their journey of self-identity.

4.1 Analysis of *Gender Queer*

The graphic novel *Gender Queer* (2019) was on the top of the most challenged books list curated by the American Library Association (ALA), thus becoming the most banned and restricted book in schools in America in the 2021/2022 school year. The association has been the main voice of libraries for more than 140 years, working towards the promotion of learning enhancement and ensuring access to information for all through the teaching profession and the library's role in facilitating literary access. The ALA state that the reasons for challenging, banning, and restricting *Gender Queer* in American schools was because the content was "conflicting with a religious viewpoint" and "not reflecting the values of our community" (ALA, 2022). Further, the book was considered to have "sexually explicit images" which made conservative media figures and parents complain (ALA, 2022). Additionally, most of the books banned and challenged in 2021/2022 were related to LGBTQ+ topics where most of the books were written by black or LGBTQ+ authors.

Reading and analyzing LGBTQ-themed literature provides students with a starting point for “creating tolerance for individuals with varying sexual identities”, as well as it gives a great opportunity to discover the explicit and implicit methods of silencing “others” (Burke & Greenfield, 2016). In this case, discussing how *Gender Queer* (2019) is labeled as one of the most challenged books being banned and restricted in 2022, the lack of presence of LGBTQ+ individuals in literature can be seen as societies way of banning not only the literature, but also the people. This connects to one of this thesis’ aims which seeks to investigate the potential benefits of using *Gender Queer* (2019) in the EFL classroom to promote inclusion, seeing how “literature means more to readers when they see themselves in a story” (Blackburn & Buckley, 2005). Reading *Gender Queer* (2019) can help with including individuals who self-identify with Kobabe and eir experiences into the society.

For children, the possibility of seeing themselves reflected in the texts they read and the images they see is important for their understanding and acceptance of self. Based on this it is important that it must not be presented as something that is “distorted, negative, or laughable” (Bishop, 1990;2015). When children are not able to mirror themselves in the literature they read, it becomes a powerful experience about how society does not accept them (Bishop, 1990;2015). Through reading *Gender Queer* (2019) the implied reader is exposed to a literary and visual text about an individual who exists outside the heteronormative expectations of society, and who feels different because there is nothing or no one to identify with. The implied reader gets an insight into how Kobabe tries to position eir gender and physical feelings in society.

The opening of the graphic novels explores Kobabe’s earliest memories up until eir enrollment in high school. E was more interested in catching snakes than thinking about gender-roles, making eir the target of humiliation. In one instance, Kobabe is at the beach with eir class when e decided to take of eir shirt to enjoy the sun as e saw eir dad do. Eir classmates started shouting “Look! Maia took her shirt off like a boy!” (p. 25), and Kobabe was then forced by eir teacher to put the shirt back on, even though e did not feel like e had done something wrong (Kobabe, 2019, pp. 24-26). Kobabe’s experience of not being allowed to behave in the way e found naturally can be an image of how society’s gender roles are built, where Kobabe was labeled as a girl and acted inappropriate according to how society consider that the particular gender should act. Knowledge about gender, sexuality and identity are, as Barker (2016) states, “(re)produced” through language (p. 223), and that texts have the ability to challenge binary understandings of sexuality and gender (p. 230). This ties back to how Foucault and Butler states that power regimes heterosexism and produce it, but, that sexuality is not something that clearly can be defined. How culture and society inform our understanding of biology, and that gender is performative and repetitive, being signified by the society at each moment. This moment where the author is told to put eir shirt back on, the societies understanding of biology and gender is clearly displayed through how this is perceived as a thing only boys are allowed to do.



Figure 1.1 Maia taking eir shirt off at the school trip (Kobabe, 2019, p. 25)

Using literature to gain knowledge can help change gender roles, which according to Butler are learnt and not innated. Butler (2006) further states that we should move away from gender because it is not a useful way of categorizing people, and that they are based on cultural stereotypes (pp. 8-17). Kobabe challenges how eir childhood was characterized by how other people though e should act according to society's gender roles, not recognizing eir feelings of being beyond the gender binary.

The graphic novel is written in chronological order, starting at Kobabe's earliest memories where e is only three years old and up until 2019 when e was 30. *Gender Queer* (2019) displays all Kobabe's emotions and thoughts through both written text and visual drawings. It includes personal moments of eir life, the uncertainty e has gone through, all the questions e has asked eirself, and the most sensitive memories through descriptive illustrations. The colors are resilient throughout the graphic novel, painted in soft pastels and earth tones conveying a range of emotions to the implied reader. As Rose (2001) states, no image is innocent, they display the world in particular ways. Colors are a part of this visuality, and refers to how we see, which in this case is a colorful story that the author wants to tell in a soft and calm way, hence the colors. An example of an illustration where the reader gets an insight into a sensitive moment of Kobabe's life is where e illustrates a sense of uncertainty, baring all these questions about "What am I?" (Kobabe, 2019, p. 75).

In the illustration, Kobabe is sitting inside something that looks like a snail shell, which is often seen as a symbol of impotence, power, and gender (Myers, 2019). Further, Myers (2019) states that the snail can be seen as something that is “hard on the outside, soft on the inside, and spiraling inward to the secrets at its core”, which the author does in the illustration when writing the words spiraling inward to eir deepest thoughts and questions. The image is symmetrical to the text that is presented, spiraling in the same way as a snail shell. This builds a connection between what Kobabe is feeling and how eir feelings are drawn, feelings that are spinning in eir head, making it a bit more difficult for the implicit reader to read the questions that the author holds at eir core. In addition, within a species, some of the snails can mate with any other snail, and can even reproduce asexually, which in this case connects to all the questions that Kobabe has within this snail shell the e is sitting inside. The authors way of telling the world eir most painful secrets in a beautiful and artistically way remains personal and clear all through the graphic novel. As Ciornei and Dina (2015) states, the use of authentic texts can help improve one’s communicative and cultural competence (p. 275). Furthermore, Bishop (1990;2015) argues that through authentic voices, stories are believable and that texts can help us “understand each other better by helping to change our attitudes towards difference” (p. 2). Books that can act as both mirrors and windows help the implied reader to see that both our differences and similarities are parts we can celebrate, we just need enough available books to teach everyone (Bishop, 1990;2015, p. 2). Seeing how Kobabe has drawn the images in the graphic novel eirself, deciding how eir genuine feelings and memories should look through illustrations makes eir authentic voice in the story even louder.

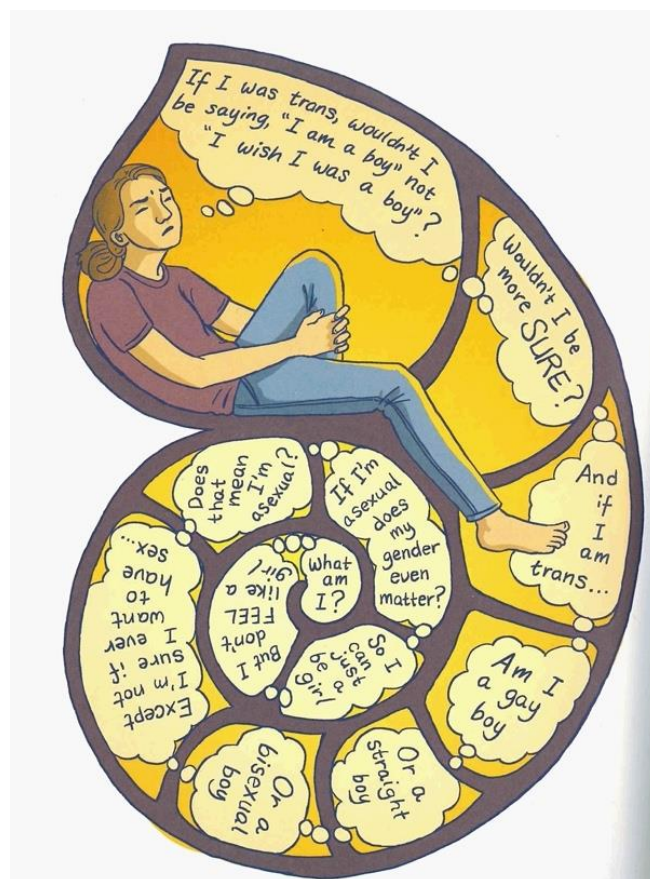


Figure 1.2 Maia inside the snail shell with all eir thoughts (Kobabe, 2019, p. 74)

The graphic novel starts with Kobabe's gender-memories at a three-year-old age, showing the implied reader how gender and gender-roles can be confusing already at a young age. As mentioned, Butler (2006) states that gender roles are learnt and not innated, explaining why Kobabe struggled to understand why e could not do what e personally felt was the right thing to do (pp. 8-17). Further in the graphic novel, Kobabe displays what e describes as eir first memory related to gender where the two girls next door borrow one of Kobabe's dresses to put on their three-year-old brother. Watching the girls laugh at the boy in a dress did not make sense to Kobabe, not recognizing why a boy in a dress was humorous. The story that the author is telling, lets the reader know how e felt, feeling like there was no place for eir in society, missing pieces of knowledge that e felt everyone else had. In addition, the book includes illustrations that gives the reader an opportunity to become more aware of how the exclusion felt for Kobabe through the visual imagery e gives.

If the implied reader only studies the illustrations in the novel it is possible to see how the "visual images can be powerful and seductive in their own right" (Rose, 2001, pp. 10-11). The illustrations signify the social difference in Kobabe's up-growing and depict the constructions through visual form, which in themselves tells a story. Some of the experiences and emotions Kobabe writes about are also visual only through the illustrations. Removing the text from the story still makes eir memories open for readers to access. Rose (2001) stated that we interact with the world mainly through how we see it, and that the reality of societies becomes easy to trace through visual images (pp. 6-8). Kobabe's strongest feelings and emotions are portrayed in illustrations that are descriptive enough to stand unaccompanied by words. Both facial expressions, colors, and signs of a segregation between boys and girls are used in the illustrations of the graphic novel, clearly creating convincing images of the authors feelings for the implied critical reader to recognize.

Furthermore, during the first part of the book, Kobabe discovers how e feels left out of the common knowledge everybody around eir seems to have. An example of this can be seen where Kobabe is the only person at eir birthday party that has not shaved eir legs. The images clearly show eir expressing doubts about eir appearance not only in relations to eir birthday guests but also in relations to everyone around eir that seems to have information e lacks. Kobabe looks at eir "growing leg hair" and further feels grumpy and embarrassed, "yet another thing I was apparently supposed to know but didn't" (pp. 29-30). The image shows Kobabe sinking eir head down in the water of the hot tub with her eyebrows frowned in irritation and eir eyes looking sad.

In addition, the hot tub that they are sitting in are colored pink, which might point to the gender-stereotyped colors. Since 1920, gender-stereotyped colors have existed in the United States and is common from as early as infant-age where female infants often are dressed in pink and male infants in blue (LoBue & DeLoache, 2011, pp. 656-657). As Kobabe further states in the interview about the graphic novel, eir teenage years and early 20 was very confusing, trying on clothes that e felt did not fit. Moreover, confusing because of the questions e had to eirself "[...] what am I? Where do I fit in all of this?" (Martin & Advani, 2023). The pink hot tub might therefor be a signifier of how Kobabe felt like an outsider from the rest of the girls in the hot tub, where it looks like Kobabe felt that the girls were confident in their sexuality with knowledge about how to be

"pink". Through using the hot tub as a signifier for girls who were confident in their in their sexuality, the author also signifies eir feelings of gender dysmorphia.



Figure 1.3 Maia in the pink hot tub at eir birthday (Kobabe, 2019, p. 30)

Furthermore, when e realizes that e has gotten eir first menstruation, although e thought that it would never happen to eir, the readers can not only read about how frustrated and confused Kobabe felt but also witness the confusion and chaos that must have been going on internally. The images in the book that includes menstruation are drawn in dark, blue, and neutral color, making the image where there is blood on around the toilet and on Kobabe's thighs and pants stand out (p. 39). In contrast to the other images from the graphic novel, which are drawn in light colors, the images where Kobabe is moving towards eir first menstruation only gets darker in color. This illustrates Kobabe's darkness of not knowing whom e was at the time, experiencing something e was sure e was not going to experience because e thought it was a normal thing for young teen girls to get, which e did not identify as (Kobabe, 2019, p. 35). Philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz (1994) states that:

[...] menstruation, associated as it is with blood, with injury and the wound, with a mess that does not dry invisibly, that leaks, uncontrollable, not in sleep, in dreams, but whenever it occurs, indicates the beginning of an out-of-control status that she was led to by the body itself, staining the subject, is a "normal" condition of infancy, but in the case of the maturing woman it is a mark or stain of her future status, the impulsion into a future of a past that she thought she had left behind (p. 205).

Grosz (1994) states that menstruation can impact gender identity for trans and non-binary people, discussing how trans and non-binary people must contest their identity with the socially constructed female body when menstruating. Furthermore, Grosz (1994) states that bodies change in the social life and are interpreted based on the socially embedded signals. The binary assumptions are influenced by the symbols and meanings of gender that is preceded, being an obstacle to trans and non-binary people and their bodies in interactions. This connects to gender congruence and incongruence. "Gender congruence is the feeling of harmony in our gender" and when how we see ourselves does not connect with our physical body it influences our life satisfaction (Jones, Bouman, Haycraft & Arcelus, 2019, p. 267). Seeing how gender identity and sexual orientation are two distinct aspects of self, "Gender identity is our internal experience and naming of our gender", and "can correspond to or differ from the sex we were assigned at birth" (Gender Spectrum, 2019). As Jones, Bouman, Haycraft and Arcelus (2019) found during their research, gender incongruence include how we don't connect with our "genitalia, chest, other secondary sex characteristics, and social gender role recognition" (p. 267). Based on this, Kobabe's gender identity is in incongruence to eir biological sex, making eir feel disbelief and traumatized when starting to menstruate. This can also be the reason as to why eir nightmares to this day involves menstrual blood (Kobabe, 2019, p. 39).

As mentioned in the theory section, Butler (1990) states that "[...] gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis" (p. 273). Through social, familial, and legal rules, we are forced to conform to the hegemonic, heterosexual structures of society and standards for identity. Capturing how Kobabe know e was entering womanhood at this time, eir experiences of not having privacy within bathrooms, bathrooms which were either marked with signs of men or women clearly shows the heteronormativity that lives within society. The implied reader gets a stronger sense of Kobabe's thoughts of having to being either or, and eir strong, sad emotions of learning of how e was changing into a female form, a form e did not identify within. To supplement Kobabe's feelings signified through the illustrations, e states that "to this day a huge number of my nightmares involves menstrual blood", demonstrating that getting eir menstruation felt and still feels like a nightmare (p. 39).

4.2 Analysis of *Beyond the Gender Binary*

Beyond the Gender Binary (2020) is an intersectional book written by Alok Vaid-Menon, a 31-year-old gender non-conforming writer, performance artist and public speaker. The book is written for the "hope for a future beyond the gender binary, and for greater understanding and acceptance" (Schafter, 2022). The 64-page pocket guide is written to dare the world to see gender not in black and white, but in full color (Vaid-Menon, 2020). Through using this type of literature that authentically represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary in the EFL classroom, the pupils can learn through mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors.

Furthermore, the author uses the pronouns they/them and explores themes of trauma, belonging, and the human condition in the work they do. On the French Flap of the cover, Vaid-Menon states that they wrote the book *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) to show the world how gender is a flexible and creative form of expression where the only

limit is your own imagination, providing their own perspective, experiences, and responses to common misconceptions about gender non-confirming people (Vaid-Menon, 2020). The book can be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary, and additionally enhance learning, knowledge and understanding among the pupil group.

As early as at the cover of the book the implied reader can see that this is a person who uses the pronoun "they", as Vaid-Menon has included a quote that states "Call me they" (Vaid-Menon, 2020). The cover-art signifies a world beyond the gender binary of man and woman, already inviting the implied reader to see gender not in black and white, but in full color from the author's own voice and authentic story. The cover depicts an image of the author in purple and a visual image of the author themselves in the middle, dressed in aesthetic clothes, earrings, and nails, as well as wearing colorful makeup and pink hair. In addition, the visual image of the author is surrounded by colorful flowers and other aesthetical objects. The cover of the book can therefore be seen as a signifier for how something, or someone look like on the outside, but that you need to know what's inside to get the full story. This can draw the implicit outsider's attention into what lies within, giving the implicit reader a signal for what is to come, or what lies within the colorful and aesthetic cover of the book or the person who is displayed. As queer theory challenges sexuality- and gender-based normativity, the importance of looking beyond the gender binary is signified through the book's cover. The cover provides a challenge for the reader into how we perceive gender, sex, and sexuality, which is a central aspect of queer theory. Moreover, as mentioned, gender-stereotyped colors and signifiers of gender have been provided by power throughout history, something the author confronts through the colors and visualities of the cover.

The cover also includes quotes, where some words are written in black rather than white, such as at the back of the book where the author asks the question "Is it really a choice when you don't get to select the options you are given to begin with?". Within this question, the words "choice", "options" and "given" are written in black in contrast to the rest of the texts which is written in white. The words written in black stands out more than the rest, signifying that these three words are what the author wants the implied reader to focus on, also being words that are central in the introduction of the book where Vaid-Menon states that we are only **given** the **choice** of being "boy or girl, man or woman, male or female" and that we deserve more **options** (p. 5). Furthermore, the book is a small pocket guide, but the title of the book is written in a big, bright, and bold font, signifying that this is a small book with big ideas and great importance. It is a book where Vaid-Menon provides an accessible primer to gender fluidity in a short, effective, and informative way, something the cover of the book also signifies in its small size with a big title.

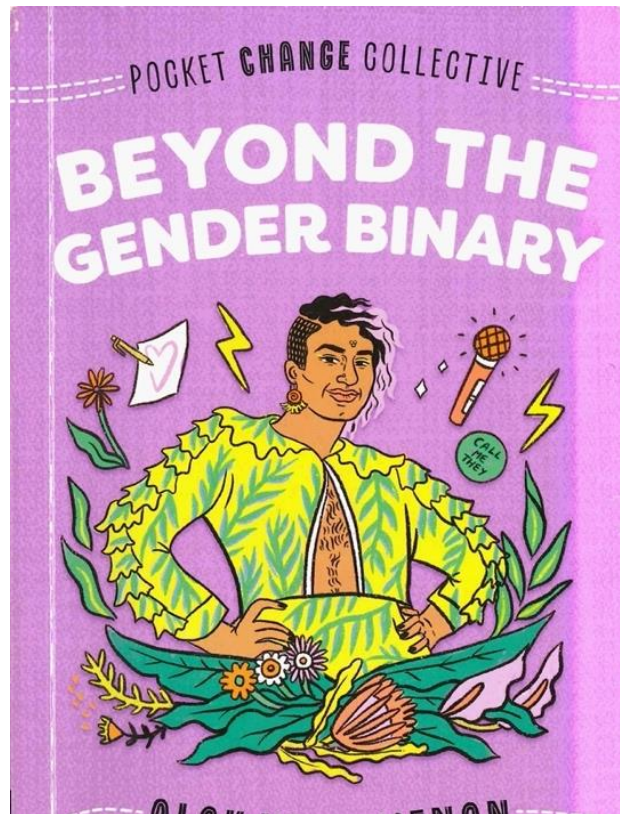


Figure 1.4 The cover of the book (Vaid-Menon, 2020)

The book begins with examples of situations of how Vaid-Menon has been/is treated in the society by bystanders, how they are being discriminated, and how the society allows the discrimination. They include examples of this discrimination in the book, such as “when the Department of Justice announced that trans and gender non-conforming workers are not protected by civil rights law”, and “in 2018, when the Department of Health and Human Services attempted to define gender as fixed and binary in a memo that was later leaked” (Vaid-Menon, 2020, p. 15). Further, Vaid-Menon includes the attempt of prohibiting LGBTQ+ from the curriculum, preventing LGBTQ+ people access from health care, and banning LGBTQ+ people from public accommodations (Vaid-Menon, 2020, p. 14). As the author states, the list of federal level discrimination keeps on going, granting the society permission to let people’s biases and discrimination flow freely through harassment of LGBTQ+ people.

Vaid-Menon uses a lot of examples to show how they have been excluded from human rights, laws, education, and healthcare because of how they do not fit within the hegemonic structures of society. The author states that “The best way to eliminate a group is to demonize them, such that their disappearance is seen as an act of justice, not discrimination”, letting the implied reader know how brutal the neglect and exclusion of people the society see as others are (p. 6). Vaid-Menon is an internationally acclaimed author, poet, comedian, and public speaker that works towards a greater understanding and acceptance of people beyond the gender binary through sharing their story (Schafter, 2022). In an interview conducted with the author, they state that “I didn’t come out of the closet, I came out of the library” (Schafter, 2022). It is further stated that reading became an escape for Vaid-Menon, and that books gave them a window into a world they could exist (Schafter, 2022). This connects to Bishop’s article, where she states that “Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek

their mirrors in books" (p. 1). Additionally, Bishop (1990;2015) states that it is important for children to find themselves in the books they read to see a reflection of themselves and to further learn a powerful lesson about how they might be devalued in the society they are a part of (p. 1).

The bolded quotations from individuals who said shameful/provocative/uninformed comments about queer identities signify the psychological harm that can be inflicted on those who exist beyond the gender binary. Just like the bolded lettering presented in the book, the comments themselves imprint onto the mind of the affected individual which could cause serious issues relating to their gender identity. However, Vaid-Menon presents informative and reflective passages after each negative quote to show how the individuals who state such harmful comments lack knowledge and are ignorant when it comes to understanding queer identities. An example of this is when Vaid-Menon (2020) includes this harmful quote: "You want to be different to draw attention to yourselves. Hurt feelings aren't real discrimination" to further discuss how "This outright ignores the disproportionately high rates of murder, physical violence, job discrimination, homelessness, and health gaps among gender non-confirming people" (p. 41). Next, the author includes a survey called US Transgender Survey to show how high the percentages of discrimination, mistreatment and oppression of gender non-confirming people are, further discussing how feelings and violence does not have to be either visible or physical to be existing, concluding their argument by including a toll that states that 40 percent of trans and gender non-confirming people have attempted suicide because of constant invalidation (p. 42). The author refers to both believable sources and to true feelings to show how these bolded quotations with shameful/provocative/uninformed comments are truly dangerous and harmful, making the book even more authentic. Butler (1990) discusses how particular performances/identities become acceptable, recognizable, and thus comprehensible within the frame of dominant hegemonies. Those performances/identities that are not consistent with these dominant hegemonies may be marginalized and excluded, most often those who transition, transgress, or resist gendered binaries of identities. Furthermore, people within the LGBTQ+ community are sometimes situated of having to incorrectly identify themselves to be recognized and to access legal and medical treatment. Vaid-Menon shows the importance of representing difference, in terms of how certain groups are privileged, marginalized, or made unintelligible through these processes.

In addition, by using bolded quotations to show harmful comments that individuals have made the author signifies that there are these comments that stick with the individuals throughout their lives, rather than all the supportive and appreciative comments. Psychologist Laura Carstensen stated in an interview that people tend to notice the negative more than the positive, and that it has adaptive value for survival purposes, stating "that our brains can apply that knowledge when a similar situation presents itself in the future" (Caren, 2018). However, harmful comments can stay imprinted within people over a long period of time, and as mentioned, Vaid-Menon implies that being exposed to harmful comments repeatedly over a period time can lead to serious issues, and in worst case suicide. Caren (2018) states that the worst time in life, emotionally speaking, are the twenties and thirties, and that we pay more attention to the negative when we are young. The bolded quotations in Vaid-Menon's book stand out in relation to the rest of the content, signifying how the negative comments become more central and highlighted within individuals rather than the positive ones. Having the negative

comments and quotes stand alone in bold gives the reader a visual image of how the comments might stay imprinted within individuals, making the implied reader aware of how the one negative comment we make can be memorized in a greater extent than the ten positive ones.

The language within the book is both descriptive and informative and gives the implied reader a mental image of the author's experiences of different discriminating situations described in the book. In addition, the book is separated in two parts where the first part of the book is about Vaid-Menon's personal experiences, their story about growing up and being gender non-conforming, whereas the second part is an informative part about the four categories that the author states are the "strategies that people use to make the gender seem like a given, not a decision"(Vaid-Menon, 2020, p. 36). These categories are separated into what looks like chapters, and are called "dismissal", "inconvenience", "biology", and "the slippery slope" (p. 36). Separating the book in these two parts can be seen as a signifier as to how being beyond the gender binary differs from how ignorant people in the society see those who define as gender queer. Seeing how the author has written the book in a way that gives the two different parts the possibility to stand independent parts can be seen as a symbol for how the society and people of power secretes those that define as gender queer because of the society's lack of knowledge. That these are divided parts on the basis of who a person actually is and who unenlightened people choose to see.

Additionally, it is within the bolded chapters, "dismissal", "inconvenience", "biology", and "the slippery slope" that the bolded, harmful comments are placed. The comments connect to the topics of the chapters and seems intentionally placed to show how the comments often connects to the information lacking within those who state them. An example of this is where Vaid-Menon (2020) includes the harmful comment "**You must have gender dysphoria and pursue medical transition to be legitimately trans**", to further discuss how standardizing only one way to be transgender is reductive and how some transgender people experience incredible distress from gender dysmorphia, and some does not (p. 53). The author makes clear connections between how society treats the non-binary and trans community with solutions for a change. Writing this pocket guide can be seen as a movement from the author towards changing the fact that many gender non-conforming people cannot go outside without fear of being attacked. Displaying that attacks does not have to be physical, but also verbal. Reflecting upon how the author grew up within an Indian community in America with a lot of homophobia and transphobia, with no space to be themselves, the inclusion of the harmful comments can be seen as a method used to save queer people from experiencing the same thing as them through educating the implicit reader on the topic and clearly visualize what harmful comments are (Upadhye, 2022). Heteronormativity is wrapped in a discourse of tolerance and acceptance, where culture, power, and society play a big part in the priority of gender (Butler, 1990). By being exposed to the diversity, awareness and tolerance can be build, and people can learn how to live in our world, a world that includes LGBTQ+ people.

5 Discussion

Literature can enhance and complicate our understanding of its contemporary culture, and my findings from the analysis of *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) are proof of that. The books offer two different stories of queer identities as well as different ways of reading and learning about the history and the living conditions of those who define as gender queer. Importantly, another similarity between the two books is that they represent authentic stories, which according to the #OwnVoices movement is important because they represent real life characters from underrepresented and marginalized groups. The difference between the books are how the authors' stories differ, as well as to how they have chosen to tell their story through different genres in literature. Kobabe's book is a graphic novel that displays eir biography through visuals, and Vaid-Menon's book is a nonfiction book that uses their personal experience integrated with facts, history, and other examples to explicitly teach and inform the reader.

Smestad (2018) states that an issue in classrooms, including the EFL classroom, has been a lack of diverse materials, and more specifically, LGBTQ+ representation. Similarly, Bishop (1990;2015) states that all children have the right to see themselves within a book. Through including LGBTQ+ literature into the classrooms, a positive trend can evolve, and the EFL classroom can be a start of breaking the heteronormativity that is wrapped in a discourse of tolerance and acceptance. A positive trend in my findings is that all three teachers have used literature to teach in their EFL classroom. Although they have not used literature to teach the LGBTQ+ topic, this is a positive trend that can be used to include such topics as well. The chosen texts can potentially be used by the teachers going forward as literature is already availed of in their classrooms. Both books chosen to analyze for this thesis have characters that pupils can identify with and can moreover be used in the EFL classroom to provide both mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors. As studies have found both LGBTQ+ pupils and non-LGBTQ+ pupils report feelings safer at schools with a LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, as well as they report less bullying and harassment as well as better pupil achievement (Gartley, 2015, p. 145).

The discussion will try to comprehend the data collection in connection to the included theory and the curriculum in an attempt of answering the questions. My research questions ask how fiction and non-fiction texts can be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary, if in-service teachers are including such literature in the EFL classroom, and if the curriculum's implied vagueness can be damaging for both people outside of and within the LGBTQ+ category.

5.1 The availability of LGBTQ+ texts and literature

The first research question this thesis ask is "*How can fiction and non-fiction texts be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary?*". As mentioned, the availability and/or lack of availability of LGBTQ+ literature affect pupils in multiple ways. As Bishop (1990;2015) states, children

need mirrors to reflect upon themselves and to see that their values and identities are included in society. However, children also need windows into the lives of people that differ from them to increase tolerance and acceptance, as well as to not amplify a sense of their own importance in books that only mirror themselves. The aim for this thesis is to research if queer literature is included in Norwegian schools and EFL classrooms, as well as to why, why not, how can it be done, and why is it dangerous to not include it. Further, I wanted to explore if the implied vagueness of the Norwegian curriculum is part of the inclusion or exclusion. All three teachers interviewed state that the school does not have many LGBTQ+ books, and that they must find alternative ways to teach such texts. Further, participant 2 stated that although LGBTQ+ literature is more available now than before, the teachers at this school usually work in alternative ways because of there is a significant lack of such literature, and that they rather use week six, or as they call it in Norway, "week sex", to implement the topic in the classroom. This is the week where Norwegian pupils shall learn about body, love, sexuality, limits, and gender roles. Participant 1 stated that she mostly uses subject texts, and that if she wanted to use fiction books that focus on the topic, she would have to spend more time searching for it. This tells me that finding fiction books that include LGBTQ+ topics are not important for her, and that if she had an interest in teaching through fiction, she would put time down to find these books.

Both *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) are authentic books that can be implemented in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary. These are books where the protagonists identify as within the LGBTQ+ category, and where they disclose their own, authentic stories and experiences. The books cover several aspects within queer theory, which further provide opportunities for several entrances and ways to implement the LGBTQ+ topic into the EFL classroom. When teachers lack knowledge about which books can be included, the search for this type of literature can also become more difficult. Looking for literature to include in your teaching which deals with topics that you know little to nothing about can be difficult, because you might have no basis, experience, or knowledge that can help lead you and inspire you to choose authentic, non-single-story books. Participant 3 stated that she has not included LGBTQ+ literature in her teaching, and that the school library has next to nothing to offer on such literature, and that if it did, she would have to research how to find it herself, which is extremely time-consuming. There are websites where university libraries in Norway recommend LGBTQ+ fiction books to teach LGBTQ+ themes, gender, and sexuality, such as the University of Oslo Library. Further, by doing online searches there are several webpages that recommend LGBTQ+ literature, giving the reader information about the books and including a short summary of what the books are about. Boktips.no, Bokklubben.no, and Norli.no are great websites for finding LGBTQ+ literature in Norway, which also include articles from authors, people defining as queer, and other reviewers of literature. Teaching through reading and discussing the various panels and events from *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) can help both teachers and pupils to look beyond the single stories.

The two books analyzed have similarities and differences as *Gender Queer* (2019) is a graphic novel, and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) is a nonfiction book without in-text images. However, the nonfiction book has visual elements, such as visual semiotics in the way that text is written in different ways to signify different meanings. The cover of the book is also analyzed as it communicates the colorful nature of the author and their

story. Both books are descriptive and informative, and, although *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) does not have images, the implied reader can build a mental image based on the figurative language that the author uses. As mentioned in the methodology, Mello (2022) states that comparing one book to another is to formulate the relationship they can have to each other. For this thesis, I state that both books are beneficial to use in the EFL classroom for different purposes. The benefits I found through analyzing is how both books removes the single-story literature that might exist in Norwegian EFL classrooms (which according to Adichie (2009) is beneficial as it can help avoid a creation of untrue and incomplete stereotypes of people who differ from ourselves (13:04-13:13)). The books are authentic, which according to Bishop (1990;2015) is important when creating believable stories and providing help to understand each other better, changing our attitudes towards difference (p. 2). As mentioned in the theory section, studies have found that a LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum leads to less bullying and harassment of both LGBTQ+ pupils and non-LGBTQ+ pupils. Pupils feel safer at school and achieve better when they experience an inclusive practice of LGBTQ+ people in their learning and in the curriculum (Gartley, 2015, p. 145). In addition, both books can be used to challenge the hegemonic structures of society, using examples from the books to discuss how the heteronormative expectations of society function to make us believe that heterosexuality is the only natural and acceptable option (Butler, 2006). Participant 2 stated that he is reluctant to include books that represent LGBTQ+ people in his classroom because of criticism of the topic within the pupil group. On the other hand, he stated that literature plays an important part when trying to situate pupils in each other's positions, and that the classroom is important because of the conversations that can occur about a topic, and because of how some pupils are unwilling to read at home. Participant 2 stated that "If we have had such books at our school, the pupils would not have chosen them themselves", he further added that "I know there are a lot more literature about the topic now than before, and I know, based on my pupil group, that I would have to be the one to include these books if I want to achieve these conversations". This can also be seen in connection to what participant 1 stated about how she wants "everyone to have knowledge about the topic, preferably by reading books that deal with it, this is a great way to get information". Participant 1 further stated that "Such books, which are written differently to non-fiction, can make it easier for pupils to get information through a history or a narration". Lastly, she asked how much to push, and asked "the literature is freely open, but do the pupils find these books?". Reading the mentioned literature (*Gender Queer (2019)* and *Beyond the Gender Binary (2020)*) together with your pupils can help generate great conversations about binary understandings of sexuality and gender and (re)produce knowledge about gender, sexuality, and identity (Barker, 2016, p. 223). These are books teachers can read together with their pupil group. The pupils' choice of literature does then not become a problem as the teacher already have chosen.

Even though both authors and protagonists identify as queer, they have different orientations, and their experiences and stories differ from each other. Again, the teacher can use both books to show that those who identify as queer does not fit into a single story or cultural stereotypes and that you cannot categorize queer people as parallels. As Butler (2006) states, using literature can help gain knowledge and further participate in a change of gender roles, which Butler (2006) states are learnt and not innate. This connects to a question from my teacher interviews where I asked the participants how they would include literature that represent LGBTQ+ people, especially literature that investigates gender as something that cannot be seen in black and white in their EFL

classroom. All three teachers answered something similar, however, none of the participants talked about how they would include literature, rather how they would include the topic. Participant 1 answered that she would try to include the topic in a way that defuses it. Further, she stated that she would try to naturalize the topic so that those with possible prejudice or other thoughts concerning the topic also build tolerance and acceptance. Participant 2 answered that he would talk about LGBTQ+ history, both the history in the world and specifically in Norway. He further stated that he would use the tragical event that happened in Oslo to show how a person's attitude, mindset and categorizing can lead to repulsive actions. Participant 3 answered that "I would include it during topics that discuss puberty or diversity, but further I feel like it can be a difficult topic to include, and that it can be challenging for teachers to do so". On the one hand, the participants found the LGBTQ+ topic valuable to include in their teaching. However, on the other hand, they avoided talking about how they would have included literature that deals with it. Participant 1 also stated as an answer to my question that questions around the LGBTQ+ topic often occurs and that "if there are conflicts or conversations that concerns this topic, then you take it then and there". This ties back to Grey (2021) who states that it does not require specialist knowledge about the topic to teach it, and is important for teachers who are unused to, or who feels cautions about working with LGBTQ+ literature should be aware of. Using *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) to teach the topic opens possibilities to discuss every aspect of what the teachers interviewed stated are important for them in their teaching of the topic as the books have components of tolerance, acceptance, LGBTQ+ history, attitudes, mindset, categorizing, puberty, and diversity. For the three participants in my study, their avoidance can be seen in connection to this feeling of not having enough knowledge on how to teach the LGBTQ+ topic through literature, and further not having done it before.

5.2 The inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom

The second research question for this thesis is "*Are in-service teachers including such literature in the EFL classroom?*", and ties back to the availability of LGBTQ+ literature discussed in the section above. Since the first research question are leading towards a discussion of the second, it is important to discuss if the teachers are using such text in their EFL classroom. Including LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom gives advantages such as discussion, allowing for opinions on the subject, sharing opinions and experiences which provides conversations that can help the pupils expand each other's perspectives. Using multimodal books such as *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) can open the possibility for more pupils to be engaged and partake in the conversations around it. The images, visuals and semiotics within the books gives the pupils the opportunity to analyze and reflect upon how the different elements of a text work together for various reasons. As Bishop (1990;2015) states, pupils need books that can act as both mirrors and windows to help the implied reader to learn how we can celebrate both are differences and similarities (p. 2). Further, Bishop (1990;2015) states that to make this possible we need more books. Including the books analyzed in this thesis can help with the amount of literature to include in the EFL classroom that can help provide the mirrors and windows that Bishop (1990;2015) states are important (p. 2).

Participant 1 stated that "I do not put brakes on the pupils' exploration", however, she also stated that "I have not taught or provided my pupils with queer literature before". The two other participants answered that they want their pupils to read, but that they have not included LGBTQ+ representative literature either. Ciornei and Dina (2015) state that authentic texts can help improve one's communicative and cultural competence, (p. 275). Since both *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) are authentic books, they both can be implemented in the EFL classroom to provide LGBTQ+ literature for their pupils. As stated in the analysis, Kobabe also drew the images in eir graphic novel, making the feelings and emotions of the characters more authentic, and eir voice in the story even louder. The graphic novel can be deployed to look at how images tell stories as well as text can, moreover, as Rose (2001) state, we interact with the world mainly through how we see it (pp. 6-8). Furthermore, having the pupils read the graphic novel, analyzing the connection between text and image, and further looking at the images themselves can help the pupils see the reality of societies, which according to Rose (2001) is easy to trace through visual images (pp. 6-8). Through reading Kobabe's graphic novel the pupils are provided with opportunities to experience the homogenic structures of society, as well as build tolerance and acceptance through conversations and analysis.

The main, noticeable difference between Kobabe's graphic novel and Vaid-Menon's nonfiction book is that the second book does not include images. However, as stated, the book has illustrations, visuals and semiotics that are both descriptive and informative when analyzed. In my analysis I discussed how Vaid-Menon's book can represent feelings and experiences through not only text, but also through the way that the text is written and represented in the book. The author signifies negative remarks and experiences through highlighting quotes and placing harmful comments alone in bold. Furthermore, Vaid-Menon uses their own experiences and events to further discuss why and how certain mindsets, actions and behaviors are influenced by power and society. In addition, the author uses queer theory to explain and educate the implied reader on how gender is something that cannot be seen in black and white, and that ignorance and lack of knowledge is the main reason for peoples' resistance and intolerance against LGBTQ+ people. Including this nonfiction book in the EFL classroom can provide both teachers and pupils the opportunity to learn about certain things; queer theory, queer history, power and society's influence, and how harmful peoples' mindsets and actions can be. This can help to build awareness within the pupils of how negative comments have the ability be memorized in a greater extent that the positive ones. Through analyzing *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) in the EFL classroom, pupils can explore how text too can be used as visuals and to signify meanings beyond only text.

Participant 1 answered my question about the availability at their school with her own question, stating that "the teachers at this school let the pupils choose their own books, but do the pupils find these books, or even look for them?". She believes that the interest of including LGBTQ+ literature lies on the interest of pupils choosing these books, and how much the teacher pushes them towards reading such books. Further, she stated that it can be exhausting because you want all pupils to have knowledge about the LGBTQ+ topic, and that literature is a great way of ensuring this. I argue that the teachers do not need to push pupils into reading, rather lead them towards the literature by reading books together as a class. As Bishop (1990;2015) states, teachers need to be able to recognize what role literature has in the process of how all children are entitled to books that mirror their own images, as well as to books that open worlds that are less

familiar to them. When teachers are thinking about why and how to include LGBTQ+ literature and representation in to their EFL classroom, the teachers have to be able to evaluate books that can provide mirrors and windows for their pupils (Bishop, 1990;2015). Participant 3 even stated that she does not know if the school library has available LGBTQ+ literature, but that she, however, would want to include it in her teaching. Teachers not including or researching the available literature that exists can be seen as ignorant of how single-stories can be a problem and are further ignorant to how they participate in prompting heteronormativity within their classrooms through only including those single-stories. Not being aware of what literature can offer pupils, as well as to not being aware of what excluded literature can take away from them is dangerous considering that ignorance might prompt heteronormativity. As Vaid-Menon (2020) discuss in their book, the harmful comments and ignorance within people can be seen as a symbol of how the society and people of power secretes those that define as gender, mostly because of their lack of knowledge and because of how unenlightened people are. This can further be seen in light of how the curriculum is vague in connection to not directly mentioning those who belongs within the diversity of society which further will be discussed in the next part.

The second research question for this thesis is "*Are in-service teachers including such literature in the EFL classroom?*", and ties back to the availability of LGBTQ+ literature discussed in the section above. Since the first research question are leading towards a discussion of the second, it is important to discuss if the teachers are using such text in their EFL classroom. Including LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom gives advantages such as discussion, allowing for opinions on the subject, sharing opinions and experiences which provides conversations that can help the pupils expand each other's perspectives. Using multimodal books such as *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) can open the possibility for more pupils to be engaged and partake in the conversations around it. The images, visuals and semiotics within the books gives the pupils the opportunity to analyze and reflect upon how the different elements of a text work together for various reasons. Further, as Bishop (1990;2015) states, pupils need books that can act as both mirrors and windows to help the implied reader to learn how we can celebrate both are differences and similarities (p. 2). Further, Bishop (1990;2015) states that to make this possible we need more books. Including the books analyzed in this thesis can help with the amount of literature to include in the EFL classroom that can help provide the mirrors and windows that Bishop (1990;2015) states are important (p. 2).

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This can further be seen in light of how the curriculum is vague in connection to not directly mentioning those who belongs within the diversity of society which further will be discussed in the next part.

5.3 The damage that vagueness can do

As stated earlier, the visibility of LGBTQ+ identities should not be separated from the curriculum but rather be included to build skills through reading literature (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013). This section of my discussion will try to answer my third research question; *Is the curriculum's implied vagueness damaging for both people outside of and within the LGBTQ+ category?* In Norway there has been done a lot of work to try and ensure the safety of LGBTQ+ people and people with gender incongruence. After the horrific incident aimed to hurt queer people that happened in Oslo in 2020, the Government moved fast towards building a plan that extend LGBTQ+ rights in Norway. In the description of what the plan is made to do, Bakke (2022) states that it "will have a special focus on improving the quality of life for LGBTQ people, protecting their rights and fostering greater acceptance of gender and sexuality diversity". I state that this acceptance can be built up by including literature in the EFL classroom that represent those within the LGBTQ+ community. The two books analyzed in my analysis are books with queer identities that represent two authentic stories, and further can provide both mirrors and windows for pupils. The mirrors in these two books are not only for those who identify with the protagonists, but also for those who might identify with the unenlightened and ignorant people surrounding the main characters. Using the selected books for this thesis can offer help to pupils in the way that they can see themselves from an outside perspective and through further discussions and analysis on why the mindsets of some of the people in the stories are dangerous, and further proof of why we need knowledge regarding the topic. Discussing how studies have found that an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum leads to better pupil achievement, pupils feeling safer at school, experiencing less bullying and harassment, the curriculum's implied vagueness offers teachers to remove LGBTQ+ inclusion in their teaching.

When asking the participants if they think that the curriculum is clear in its description of inclusive and diverse representation in the EFL classroom, their answers vary. Participant 1 answered that she thinks that the core curriculum is clear, talking about diversity and inclusion, however, she stated that the subject level of the curriculum is weaker. She mentioned that there is no focus on topics to include in the literature brought in to the EFL classroom. Participant 2 stated that he likes the curriculum, but that is very much up to the teachers how to use it, and that in all subjects there are topics teachers can choose to leave out, because the curriculum does not state that it must be included. He additionally stated that this leads to the risk of including only topics that the teachers themselves feel are important, maybe unwillingly fronting your opinions on different topics. The third participant clearly states that she does not think that the curriculum is clear in its description of inclusive and diverse representation in the EFL classroom. She believes that the curriculum includes many important topics in general, however, not the LGBTQ+ topic. How teachers can choose to leave topics out and exclude people from the diversity and inclusion is furthermore brought up in her answer, and she stated that the way the curriculum gives possibilities to leave important topics out annoys her. The English subject curriculum states that the EFL classroom shall contribute to the development of the pupils understanding of the world. Further, it states that the EFL

classroom shall open for the pupils to learn that there are multiple ways of interpreting the world, as well as contribute to the pupils' curiosity, engagement and help prevent prejudice. In the English subject curriculum, texts stand as a core element and state that:

By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns. They shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context (Ministry of Education (2019).

This statement from the curriculum clearly demonstrates that the pupils need different texts to learn about different people and mindset. However, stating that pupils need to learn about different ways of living and thinking does not directly mean that the pupils must learn about all the different ways of living and thinking. This way of phrasing leaves the curriculum open for interpretation, and therefore, open to leaving several important topics out. Researching how YA literature such as *Gender Queer* (2019) and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) it is possible to state that such literature can deal with important topics and further be used in critical and inclusive pedagogies that call for teaching methods that help build inclusion and resistance towards the set norms of society. As defined in the theoretical framework, queer theory challenges sexuality- and gender-based normativity, further studying how society defines the concepts of heterosexuality, homosexuality, gender, and sex identities. When teachers choose to leave the LGBTQ+ topic out of their classroom and out of their teaching they signify that this is not an important topic to include, and further implicitly build heteronormative norms within their classrooms. Participant 2 stated that he uses literature to teach different topics, and that he would use queer literature to teach the LGBTQ+ topic as well. Based on how both books analyzed in this thesis are authentic literature, the teachers further support the #OwnVoices movement through including these books in their teaching. Since EFL learners will benefit from reading authentic, own voices literature to both see their valid space in society, but also to gain understanding of others from yourself, pupils can, through reading the aforementioned books learn about LGBTQ+ issues, and the teachers further participate in putting a stop on the invisibility of transgendered and bisexual people that still is a problem in Norway (Smestad, 2018, p. 4).

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to answer the following three research questions:

1. *How can fiction and non-fiction texts be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer and/or being beyond the gender binary?*
2. *Are in-service teachers including such literature in the EFL classroom?*
3. *Is the curriculum's implied vagueness damaging for both people outside of and within the LGBTQ+ category?*

To do so, I have analyzed *Gender Queer* (2019) by Maia Kobabe and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) by Alok Vaid-Menon, and further discussed the benefits of using queer literature in the EFL classroom to encourage critical thinking within pupils. Through my theoretical framework I have deliberated on the importance of mirrors and windows on behalf of what queer theory and queer pedagogy state. This is done to show how people within the LGBTQ+ community are social minorities that have suffered from norms constructed by power and society, heteronormativity, harassment, and bullying. As the Norwegian curriculum state that school shall be a place where pupils form their identities within a diverse and inclusive culture, I state that the LGBTQ+ topic can no longer be avoided and concealed in the work put down by teachers and schools to obtain the goal of a diverse and inclusive classroom and education. During my analysis I found multiple benefits of including LGBTQ+ literature within the EFL classroom, such as increasing pupils' awareness of hegemonic structures created by power and society, as well as critical thinking to courage pupils into re-seeing gender and sexuality. Hopefully, by raising the pupils' awareness and critical thinking in conjunction with the topic, pupils can become agents of change. As presented in the introduction, teachers still lack knowledge within the field, something they feel is necessary for their confidence when teaching the topic. Studies show that the trend seems to be improving, which my thesis aim to be a part of through providing awareness, knowledge, and research within the field of study.

In the section above my conclusion, I discuss my research questions in conjunction with my analysis, findings, and the curriculum. What I found is that fiction and non-fiction text can be used in the EFL classroom to represent people defining as gender queer/and or being beyond the gender binary in the way that it can lead to awareness and critical thinking within the pupil-group. There are different aspects of the books that can be brought forward to discuss LGBTQ+ issues in the EFL classroom, such as hegemonic structures, heteronormativity, gender signifiers, and so on. However, it is important to discuss how every story is different, that the experiences of the two authors cannot be generalized and how stories are personal and differ from every individual in the world. Secondly, the teachers interviewed in my study are not including LGBTQ+ literature in their EFL classroom, or classroom at all, although they state that they would have no problem doing so. All three participants stated that they find diversity and inclusion of social minorities important topics to teach in school. Furthermore, they all stated that they would want to include LGBTQ+ literature, but, that the school has no such literature available and that it would be time-consuming to look for these books. I state, based on this, that the teachers' attitudes are somewhat positive, however, their lack of knowledge and interest in finding these books might be a sign of how they don't find it important enough. Through discussing research question three I found that all three teachers think that the curriculum could have had more explicitly stated who those within the diversity are to provide guidelines on who should be included. Furthermore, the curriculum opens for the possibility to exclude those within the diversity through not stating who they are.

Teachers that find topics less valuable or avoid topics because of the discomfort it might bring, can, because of the curriculum's implicitness, choose to not include them. Leaving people out of the minority, such as those within the LGBTQ+ community, can lead to individuals feeling alone, unworthy, and unvalued. Furthermore, as Gartley (2015) states, studies have found that schools with a LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum have pupils report less bullying and harassment as well as feeling safer and achieving better. The implied vagueness of the curriculum can be damaging because pupils are not introduced to culturally diverse characters with both similar and different experiences and emotions that can strengthen both their distinct cultural identity and their understanding. Moreover, when pupils are not introduced to books where they find diverse characters that are like them, they have no mirrors and no sense of belonging (Bishop, 1990;2015). Lastly, those who need books that work as windows instead of mirrors are not exposed to diverse characters which further lead to them not seeing their lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Visibility in, and access to LGBTQ+ text in the EFL classroom grants all pupils the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the books they read and should be explicitly stated in the curriculum.

Since I identify as a white, cisgendered woman, my positionality has been important throughout my thesis. I have tried to be as humble as possible in my use of pronouns and terminology to show the respect within my study as it aims for a positive change for those within the LGBTQ+ community. My background for this research is that I want to be a teacher that include those within the LGBTQ+ community in the diversity, and further encourage other teachers to see the importance as well. Reflecting on the LGBTQ+ representation through history gives me motivation to become a teacher that values everyone within the diversity, includes them, and further creates safe spaces for pupils to explore their own identity. Teachers shall be part of building good foundations in pupils' lives, and I state that a good foundation cannot be built without equipping every pupil with the tools they need to become the best version of themselves.

However, my study also has its limitations. The main limitation is how this is an ethnographic case study, which often are studies seen as narrow and not generalizable. Case studies' validity and reliability is often questioned, however, the aim for my thesis is not to specifically generalize. Since the scope of my thesis is quite narrow, my study aims to put my findings out in the study field in hope for it to be the start of a larger research project. Because of how my study only incorporates an interview of three teachers, I cannot state that all Norwegian EFL teachers do not include LGBTQ+ literature in their teaching and do not know how to do it. However, I have used the participants' answers to supplement my theoretical frameworks and statement of an implied vagueness in the curriculum. Based on how I have chosen to bring the different sections of my thesis together, my methods, data analysis, findings, and theoretical framework, my study is harder to recreate. In addition, I stated in my introduction that my knowledge within the field of study originates from my teacher training at NTNU, which worked towards raising awareness and making students' interested in studying difficult topics. Though I was introduced to the topic in my English subject education, my knowledge within the topic was minimum, and I started writing my thesis with little presumptive knowledge. Another goal of mine was to gain more knowledge, understanding, and educational benefits of teaching the LGBTQ+ topic through literature. By reading, interpreting, and fully comprehending the theories chosen for my theoretical framework I have expanded my field of knowledge and feel confident in why and how LGBTQ+ is important to include in a diverse and inclusive teaching practice. Furthermore, why it is important for all teachers.

I hope that my thesis can highlight the importance of the points mentioned and be valuable in the turn for a positive change.

Lastly, to counteract the potential limitations this study has, I would like to outline my study's possibilities for future research. My study focused on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ literature in the EFL classroom in Norway, analyzing two authentic books from two different genres where both authors identify as queer, where the author Maia Kobabe use the pronouns e/em/eir, and Alok Vaid-Menon uses they/them. Furthermore, I interviewed three teachers from a school that had pupils from grades 1-10 to both get their perspectives on the topic, and to get an insight in to their thoughts on the curriculum's implied implicitness. The teachers interviewed only taught grades 5-10, and using literature to teach LGBTQ+ issues, encourage critical thinking, and build awareness is still relevant at younger ages based on how the topic can be taught before prejudices occur and how pupils can from early on learn to be the positive change. Moreover, it would be interesting to do interviews on a bigger scale than my study compasses to gain more valid results. Conducting questionnaires as one of the data collection-methods could also be part of achieving a broader insight in teachers' choices and mindset. Finally, the possibility of a research project in a Norwegian EFL classroom(s) can be done using the suggested literature as materials to teach LGBTQ+. In my future career as a teacher, I would try to use the two mentioned books in this matter, and further see if, and how my study achieved its purpose, and can therefore be interesting to research further.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guideline

Appendix 2: Information and Letter of Approval

Appendix 3: NSD Approval

Appendix 1: Interview Guideline

Practice

1. What kind of literature do you include in your teaching? Why?
2. Do you include literature within the LGBTQ+ category, especially investigating how gender is not something that can be seen in black and white?
 - a. Why? /Why not?
3. Does your school library include and own literature about people who identify within the LGBTQ+ category?
 - a. If not, why?
 - b. If yes, how accessible are they? How are the books displayed?

Socio-cultural influences

1. In your opinion, is the curriculum clear in its description of inclusive and diverse representation in the EFL classroom?
2. Do these external factors impact the choices made in terms of queer-inclusive literature?

Perspectives and Beliefs

1. If this is an area you want to include in your teaching, but have not yet, how would you do it?
2. If teaching LGBTQ+ became a demand in the Norwegian curriculum, how would you implement it in your teaching?
3. In your own teacher training courses, were LGBTQ+ texts included in the course literature?
Were you introduced to this topic as a potential teaching discourse?

Appendix 2: Information and Letter of Approval

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

«I full farge: Undersøker lærernes holdninger til den litterære representasjonen av kjønnskeivhet i EFL- klasserommet»

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å finne ut om litteratur innenfor LGBTQ+ temaet blir inkludert i den norske skolen, om læreplanen er tydelig nok på hvem som skal bli inkludert, og hvilken/hvordan litteratur blir brukt. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

I dette forskningsprosjektet ønsker jeg å finne ut hvilke holdninger, erfaringer og fullført praksis du har innenfor LGBTQ+ temaet i skolen og i klasserommet. Forskningsprosjektet er min egen masteroppgave, og jeg ønsker å utforske hvilke tanker du som lærer i grunnskolen har rundt det valgte temaet. Videre ønsker jeg å bruke deg som en del av forskningsprosjektet mitt ved å være et intervjuobjekt jeg vil bruke til å innhente data. Din del innebærer et intervju jeg gjennomfører med deg, som videre vil bli anonymisert. Jeg har tre hovedfokus i forskningsprosjektet:

1. Undersøke hvordan LGBTQ+ (mer spesifikt gender queer/beyond the gender binary) litteratur kan innlemmes i skolen og i klasserommet, og dens pedagogiske implementering.
2. Utforske hvilken litteratur som blir brukt i klasserommet, og om LGBTQ+ er en del av den brukte litteraturen.
3. Drøfte om den norske læreplanen er direkte nok når det gjelder inkludering av alle i vårt mangfold.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelig universitet (NTNU) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta i denne masteroppgaven fordi du er en lærer i den norske skolen som jeg ønsker å innhente data fra. Grunnen til at du er utvalgt er fordi du er lærer på den skolen jeg gjerne vil innhente data fra.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Jeg kommer til å ha med meg en lydopptaker fra NTNU som vil ta lydopptak under intervjuet. Spørsmålene vil jeg ha foran meg på ark, men jeg håper på en flytende samtale hvor jeg får dypere svar utover de generelle spørsmålene. Jeg er interessert i å høre om dine egne erfaringer og egen praksis, i tillegg til opplevelser knyttet til å undervise eller inkludere LGBTQ+ temaet. Intervjuet innebærer åtte generelle spørsmål, med oppfølgingsspørsmål.

Hovedtemaene for intervjuet erfølgende:

- Egen praksis som lærer
- Sosiokulturelle påvirkninger
- Egne perspektiver og holdninger

Intervjuet vil foregå på norsk, men videre vil det bli transkribert til engelsk da masteroppgaven skrives på engelsk. Tiden intervjuet tar er frem til vi føler at alle spørsmålene er blitt besvart så godt og utdypende som du selv føler.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Prosjektet vil ikke påvirke din praksis eller jobb ved skolen, og informasjonen du oppgir vil ikke bli delt med noen.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det er kun jeg, Guro Bratlie Brevik og min veileder Jade Dillon som har og vil ha tilgang på dataen som innhentes.
- For å anonymisere intervjuet vil både en fiktiv skole i Trøndelag bli brukt, slik at å gjenkjenne personopplysninger vil derfor ikke bli mulig.
- Selv vil du heller ikke kunne bli gjenkjent i en eventuell publisering, da du som deltaker også anonymiseres med enten andre navn eller deltaker.
- Lagring av innsamlet data vil være i NTNUs OneDrive, hvor kun jeg som student har tilgang med eget brukernavn og passord.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 25. mai 2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med personopplysninger i tillegg til opptak bli slettet.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra NTNU har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Forsker i prosjektet:
Guro Bratlie Brevik
46953080
gurobrabre@hotmail.com
- Prosjektansvarlig Jade
Dillon
73592141

Jade.dillon@ntnu.no
- Vårt personvernombud
Thomas Helgesen

93079038

Thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen
Guro Bratlie Brevik
Forsker

Jade Dillon
(Forsker/veileder)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet [*sett inn tittel*], og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i et intervju
- å delta i at data fra intervjuet blir brukt denne masteroppgaven

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 3: NSD Approval

[Meldeskjema](#) / [In Full Color: Investigating teachers' attitudes towards the literary re...](#) / Vurdering

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer
891779

Vurderingstype
Standard

Dato
01.12.2022

Prosjekttittel

In Full Color: Investigating teachers' attitudes towards the literary representation of gender queerness in the EFL classroom.

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for lærerutdanning

Prosjektansvarlig

Jade Dillon

Student

Guro Bratlie Brevik

Prosjektperiode

01.01.2023 - 25.05.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 25.05.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#)

Kommentar

OM VURDERINGEN

Personverntjenester har en avtale med institusjonen du studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personver regelverket.

Personverntjenester har nå vurdert den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at behandlingen er lovlig, hvis den gjennomføres slik den er beskrevet i meldeskjemaet med dialog og vedlegg.

VIKTIG INFORMASJON TIL DEG

Du må lagre, sende og sikre dataene i tråd med retningslinjene til din institusjon. Dette betyr at du må bruke leverandører for spørreskjema, skylagring, videosamtale o.l. som institusjonen din har avtale med. Vi gir generelle råd rundt dette, men det er institusjonens egne retningslinjer for informasjonssikkerhet som gjelder.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til den datoen som er oppgitt i meldeskjemaet.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

Personverntjenester vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelige angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med

<https://meldeskjema.nsd.no/vurdering/6363947c-84dc-4f25-8c7b-f3c230ed709>

1/2

Personverntjenester (art. 27 e), ved at det kan behandles opplysninger som er beskyttet, konstante og ikke forrige for formålet med prosjektet

· lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Personverntjenester vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1 f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Ved bruk av databehandler (spørreskjemaleverandør, skylagring eller videosamtale) må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. Bruk leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

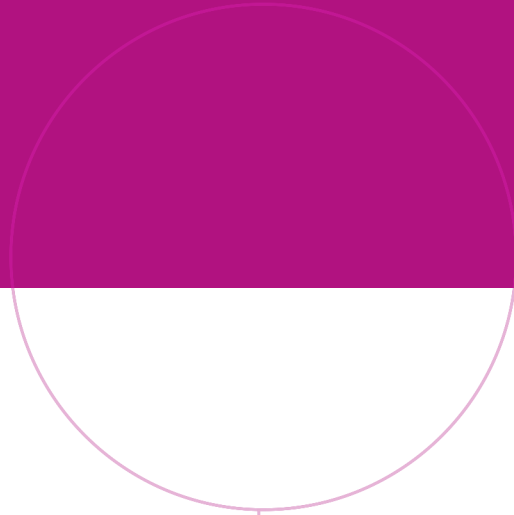
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: <https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema>

Du må vente på svar fra oss før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

Personverntjenester vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!



Norwegian University of
Science and Technology