

Chapter # 2

INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF QUEER-THEMED CURRICULA IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

A narrative review

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ABSTRACT

The global discussion surrounding the social challenges faced by queer identities and the incorporation of queer-inclusive curricula in educator training is extensive. Queer individuals encounter queerphobia in their daily lives, which engenders adverse experiences for queer students within heteronormative educational settings. The investigation into the inclusion of queer-themed curricula has yielded promising and beneficial outcomes. However, there remains a gap in implementing pedagogical strategies, as there appears to be a disjunction between the experience of queer individuals and their prerogative to human rights, specifically equality, within the language classroom. Consequently, there is a pressing need for further information to equip educators with the pedagogical knowledge required to integrate queer-themed curricula effectively into the language classroom. The qualitative approach, with social constructivism (as the research paradigm) and textual analysis (as the research method), makes up the research methodology of this chapter. The results highlighted and discussed strategies educators could implement in their teaching and learning to include queer-themed curricula: addressing heteronormativity, “leaning in” to discomfort, including intersectionality, reading “straight” texts through a “queer lens”, including texts with queer characters, queering queer-inclusive texts, analysing high-caliber queer literary elements (e.g., themes and characters), and creating safe zones.

Keywords: inclusive strategies, language classroom, pedagogical knowledge, queer-themed curricula, queer identities, queer theory, social constructivism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore inclusive strategies for teaching and learning queer-themed curricula within the language classroom. Firstly, it begins by outlining key background information on queer identities and the role of queer-themed curricula in language education, establishing the broader social and educational context in which this discussion is situated. Secondly, the chapter introduces queer theory as the guiding theoretical framework, clarifying how its principles inform the pedagogical arguments that follow. Thirdly, the chapter explains qualitative research, social constructivism, and textual analysis to ground the discussion methodologically. Building on this foundation, the chapter, fourthly, provides a range of inclusive strategies that language educators can adopt to integrate queer-themed curricula into their classrooms meaningfully. The chapter concludes by identifying key areas for future research, highlighting the ongoing need for scholarship that supports equitable, affirming, and contextually responsive language education.

2. BACKGROUND

Rennick (2015, pp. 83-84) articulates that queer individuals presently encounter a multitude of social, economic, and political challenges. Kosciw Clarks, and Menard (2022, p. xv) and Staley and Blackburn (2023) affirm that schools are “hostile environments” for many queer students concerning anti-queer discrimination, language, and victimisation, resulting in violent consequences. These challenges serve as significant reminders of the necessity of providing students in the twenty-first century with meaningful opportunities to interact critically with diverse global perspectives. Nzimande (2015) and Page (2017) posit that numerous educators aspire for students to experience safety, comfort, and respect in their academic environments. Establishing a positive academic environment for queer individuals is imperative, transcending the scope of programmes solely focused on anti-bullying. Curricula inherently reflect the values and individuals esteemed within education settings; therefore, for sexual orientations and gender identities (i.e., queer identities) to be appreciated and/or accepted by students, it is essential for educators also to accept, appreciate, and embrace them, and not to have “a discourse of silence surrounding gender and sexual diversity in [...] schools and teacher education” (Staley & Blackburn, 2023, p. 1). Educators who demonstrate willingness to adapt curricula and address issues pertaining to queer identities significantly enrich their students’ educational experiences.

Glazzard and Stones (2021) claim that a queer curriculum aims to teach students the value of respect by legitimising queer identities that differ from the heteronormative norm. Students with non-normative orientations and identities run the risk of experiencing and being forced to deal with various types of victimisations, stigmatisation, and discrimination. Poklad (2025) reports that young queer individuals express that educational practitioners lack sufficient inclusive education training. Thus, educators might “require guidelines for selecting and teaching queer texts to their [students] since the content is sensitive” (Uys, 2020, p. 13). These guidelines pertain to contentious topics (such as rejection, queerphobia, heteronormativity, and privacy rights).

Accordingly, the research question for this chapter is: What inclusive strategies could educators consider and implement when teaching queer-themed curricula to create awareness and understanding of queer identities in their language classrooms? Language classrooms were specifically chosen due to all students receiving language education in one form or another, be it a home language, additional language, or foreign language. Language classrooms also focus on developing speaking, writing, reading, and listening as skills, which could be done by considering and implementing various topics and themes (Alhaider, 2023; Malindi, Ndebele, & Gobingca, 2023; Ye & Xu, 2023; Yin et al., 2022), such as queer identities (Uys, 2023).

Despite the possession of their own repertoire of effective and legitimate inclusive strategies, this chapter provides educators with a collection of additional queer-specific inclusive strategies that can facilitate the selection, teaching, and learning of queer-themed curricula. An example of a queer-themed curriculum can be viewed on pages 265-271 of Uys, M. J. (2023). *Inclusion of queer literature in a School for Language Education at a university: A framework* (Doctoral thesis).

The theoretical framework that underpins this chapter is Queer Theory.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Queer Theory

Queer Theory encompasses a constellation of critiques arising from a rich heritage of activism, while anticipating utopian futures (Acadia, 2021). Manning (2016) posits that Queer Theory does not constitute a singular theoretical perspective or a definitive set of propositions concerning gender and sexuality. Instead, it encompasses a multidisciplinary and heterogeneous array of influences, methodologies, inquiries, and frameworks that engage with numerous and sometimes conflicting viewpoints regarding sex and gender, serving as an analytical tool for interrogating power and power dynamics. Consequently, gendered and sexualised practices, which are deemed deviant within heteronormative contexts, are subject to exploration. Acadia (2021) articulates that Queer Theory functions as a mechanism for penetrating beneath superficial layers and endorsing unconventional interpretations that deconstruct normative assumptions. In the realm of education, there is an increasing interest in rendering teaching practices more inclusive of queer individuals and issues (Nelson, 2008). Thus, Queer Theory facilitates innovative and novel interpretations of both the living world and texts (Acadia, 2021).

The methodology for this chapter entails a qualitative approach, social constructivism, and textual analysis.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Qualitative Approach

Given (2008) elucidates that the exploration of novel phenomena typically employs the qualitative approach to encapsulate an individual's interpretations, feelings, and/or thoughts of processes and meanings. Strydom (2005) further expounds that non-human participant observation entails gathering data using a qualitative approach, which is typically impossible to quantify. Additionally, the qualitative approach assumes that a single researcher may gain a valid understanding of the material through experience.

Given (2008) further explains, however, that a researcher employing a qualitative approach recognise that the study and its objects cannot be fully understood in an objective or unbiased manner since they are both complicated and subject to change. Consequently, the researcher is invariably intertwined with their research, as the interaction between the observer and the observed constitutes a fundamental component of research.

Accordingly, the qualitative approach was applied in this chapter by interpreting scholarly texts and educational phenomena to generate a rich, descriptive, and context-dependent understanding of queer inclusive strategies for language education.

4.2. Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a vague and ambiguous philosophical paradigm in which researchers do not always determine what is generally accepted as right or wrong, good or bad, true or false. Consequently, this paradigm emphasises relational dynamics and upholds the role of the individual in the social construction of realities. Moreover, this perspective posits the existence of multiple truths and realities throughout the research process. Rather than aiming to create something, this philosophical paradigm exerts influence on the processes that facilitate formation (Galbin, 2014). It posits that all knowledge has been influenced or shaped by relationships with language, ideologies, religious beliefs, politics, and values (Given, 2008). Subsequently, individuals create their own realities based on their

views of the real world, and all constructions within the same universe are, therefore, different. Accordingly, language and communication are crucial to the interactive process by which people understand the world and themselves (Galbin, 2014).

Hence, social constructivism was applied by analysing queer identities, heteronormativity, and classroom meaning-making as socially constructed phenomena, and by proposing pedagogical strategies that rely on collaborative interpretation and dialogue.

4.3. Textual Analysis

Textual analysis concentrates on written materials and their contributions to the phenomenon under investigation. Documents function as agents in the research process, exerting enduring effects, given their perpetual availability for the manipulation of allies, mobilisation of resources, and/or neutralisation of opponents. Essentially, documents (electronic or printed) exist perpetually and can be analysed for research to address any problems and phenomena (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Given, 2008). Additionally, these documents can help create interpretations of a particular topic, whether they are positive or negative. Accordingly, documents are placed in a social context, considering the reasons behind the author's production and identifying the intended audience (Given, 2008).

For this reason, textual analysis was applied by examining academic, literary, and curriculum-related texts as data sources, interpreting their representations of queer identities and heteronormativity, and using those insights to provide inclusive pedagogical strategies.

4.4. Ethics

The North-West University granted permission for this study to be conducted, ethical clearance numbers being: NWU-01612-19-A2 and NWU-01053-21-A2.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Oxford English Dictionary (2025) defines “strategy” as “a plan, scheme, or course of action designed to achieve a particular objective, esp. a long-term or overall aim”. Accordingly, the following discussion entails inclusive strategies (i.e., a plan) for queer-themed curricula in the language classroom to create awareness and understanding of queer individuals (i.e., a long-term, overall aim).

5.1. Addressing Heteronormativity

The strategic consideration and implementation of a “cross-disciplinary pedagogical intervention” to challenge and address heteronormativity may serve as an approach for educators aiming to integrate queer-themed texts into language classrooms (Poklad, 2025, p. 2). Blackburn and Smith (2010) explore this issue of heteronormativity in light of their concern regarding the limitations on queer-inclusivity. A significant portion of texts is produced from a heteronormative viewpoint, which may be interpreted as prioritising heterosexuality over queersexuality. In essence, queer-themed texts tend to be overlooked, which fosters prejudice. Rothmann and Simmonds (2015, p. 124) note that educators’ narratives “may exacerbate discursive discrimination and objectification towards [queer]sexual individuals as significantly different ‘other’”. To counteract this heteronormative bias of otherness, the researchers advocate for educational institutions to introduce specific initiatives that “sensitise [educators] to the nature of heteronormativity, which could potentially redress [queer]phobia in classroom contexts”. For elucidation, Cohen (2005, p. 24) explicated heteronormativity as the accumulation of institutions and practices

“that legitimizes and privileges heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and ‘natural’ within society”. Similarly, Blackburn and Smith (2010) justifiably challenge the notion that heterosexual orientation, merely one among many gender identities and sexual orientations, is a normative orientation. Heterosexuality becomes imperceptible when acknowledged as “normal”, thereby rendering other queer identities as anomalous or unconventional. Nevertheless, both heteronormativity and the straightness-as-normal concept are flawed. The insistence on “boys and men behave in masculine ways, including but not limited to being attracted to girls and women, and that girls and women behave in feminine ways, such as being attracted to boys and men, among other expectations of girls and women”, results in “egregious civil rights violations against queer individuals and imposes restrictions on straight women and men” (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, pp. 626-627). Therefore, other individuals should not be subjected to limitations because of the presumptions of others, addressing heteronormativity as a result.

5.2. “Leaning in” to Discomfort

The strategy of “leaning in” to discomfort should be contemplated and applied when teaching queer-themed curricula. Staley and Leonardi (2016) and Poklad (2025) articulate that educational literacy scholars have identified numerous methods by which language classrooms, especially those incorporating critical literacy and queer-inclusive practices, can confront heteronormativity and celebrate sexual and gender diversity that deviates from normalcy. Lin (2014) posits that educators ought to approach the teaching of queer-themed texts with the same strategies as they would employ for non-queer texts. Staley and Leonardi (2016) and Staley and Blackburn (2023) further expound that individuals who intentionally strive to embrace and advance through their discomfort are well-positioned to become effective advocates for queer individuals.

Discomfort manifests in various forms. Specifically, from the perspective of heterosexual individuals, they might simultaneously feel discomfort due to an unwillingness to engage with different queer identities because of their belief systems. Conversely, queer individuals encounter discomfort stemming from experiences of marginalisation. In this context, educators and students, who either merely tolerate or reject queer individuals and related topics (perceived as taboo, aberrant, or sinful), may retrospectively engage with these topics to cultivate a mindset potentially oriented towards acceptance or celebration, which is beneficial for the collective advancement of society. Thus, emotional discomfort must be taken into consideration when using queer interventions in language teaching. Addressing the dynamics inherent to heteronormativity and queerphobia requires a strategy of “leaning in” to discomfort, which is regarded as an innovative strategy.

Staley and Leonardi (2016, p. 218) discuss a noteworthy aspect in the discourse on queerphobia: the role of shock. The researchers observed that educators and students entering the language classroom often possess “less prior knowledge and awareness of gender and sexual diversity than the dedicated disruptors, which may have contributed to their initial emotional pain” – this suggests that both educators and students demonstrate a deficiency in their understanding of queer individuals. Those who experience shock and discomfort upon encountering victims of queerphobia in real-life scenarios may come to the realisation that their engagement with gender and sexual diversity has been minimal. This exposure can lead to an acknowledgement of their duty to safeguard queer individuals, even when such realities appear incongruous with their own beliefs. Furthermore, they may develop an implicit desire to avoid replicating “the egregiously homophobic responses of the [oppressed queer individuals] they read about” (Staley & Leonardi, 2016, p. 219). (Importantly, it must be noted that the exploration of queer identities does not inherently result in increased tolerance,

acceptance, or celebration, but may culminate in further rejection, particularly if an individual is unwilling to further their understanding of queer individuals.) Thus, Staley and Leonardi (2016) posit that experiences of discomfort and pain can serve as creative and essential components in the endeavour to confront and address queerphobia definitively. However, it is important to note that “leaning in” does not signify the eradication of all discomfort and pain. By “leaning in” to discomfort, individuals are encouraged to pursue rather than evade suffering, subsequently exploring the potential lessons derived from impassioned responses characterised by discomfort, fear, and emotional anguish. These experiences should not be regarded as wholly negative; rather, they can serve as catalysts for engaging critically with the dynamics of heteronormativity and queerphobia. In this context, “leaning in” emerges as a pedagogical strategy for educators aiming to prepare both students and themselves for the emotional labour of unlearning ingrained knowledge and advancing toward queer-inclusive and anti-oppressive transformation.

5.3. Including Intersectionality

Poklad (2025) found that queer individuals experienced intersectional epistemologies to be erased. Therefore, the incorporation of intersectionality can present a methodological strategy for the implementation of curricula focused on queer themes. Prior to engaging with intersectionality, an examination of both unitary and multi-unit approaches needs to be conducted.

Blackburn and Smith (2010, pp. 630-631) delineate that the unitary approach focuses “on a single category of difference and universalises the experiences of those” within that category. This approach asserts the dominance of “one category reigns paramount among others and is therefore justifiably the sole lens of analysis” (Hancock, 2007, p. 68). Consequently, there is no accommodation for alternative categories or analytical perspectives. Blackburn and Smith (2010) further elaborate that this methodology fosters competition among focus groups and fabricates an illusory sense of unity within them.

Conversely, the multi-unit approach is based on an additive paradigm where several categories proceed parallelly. Similar to the unitary strategy, it also promotes competition among focus groups. According to Hancock (2007, p. 71), intersectionality is posited as a remedy to the deficiencies inherent in both the unitary and multi-unit approaches. This concept seeks to address “questions left unanswered” by facilitating a fair analysis of several distinct categories, elucidating their interconnections. It aims to promote an understanding of the dialogical relationships between individuals and institutions, with an appreciation of both variety and hybridity within groups.

For instance, heterosexual and queer individuals exhibit differences in orientation and identities; however, individuals within both categories may adhere to religious beliefs or not, as an example. Blackburn and Miller (2017) assert that intersectionality identifies and highlights diverse, fluid representations of queer identities, thereby facilitating the incorporation of queer-themed curricula while recognising students’ multiple reflections of themselves, including portrayals of various identity roles. This strategy allows heterosexual students also to identify reflections of their own multifaceted identities or to observe a broader spectrum of queer identity representations. In addition to advocating for the experiences and equity of queer identities, the use of intersectional strategies encourages activities and discussions that aim to improve the lives of all oppressed individuals. Hence, Blackburn and Smith (2010) and Staley and Blackburn (2023) argue that encouraging and applying an intersectional strategy at the centre of discussions is valuable concerning literacy practices addressing issues significant to queer individuals. One viable approach to achieve this involves analysing who is excluded and the reasons for such exclusion; for example,

queer individuals may be marginalised due to religious beliefs. Thought-provoking narratives (that specifically examine sex, class, race, etc.) can work as catalysts for conversations about intersectionalities since they encourage readers to consider the intricacies that reside within identities. The fundamental idea is that individuals should be recognised for the different facets of their identities rather than only being classified as heterosexual or queer. These shared aspects could serve as a bridge to queer identities, rather than highlighting the divergent elements among them.

5.4. Reading “Straight” Texts Through a “Queer” Lens, Including Texts with Queer Characters, and Queering Queer-Inclusive Texts

As suggested by Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan (2015) and Staley and Blackburn (2023), educators may develop pedagogical strategies to integrate queer-themed texts effectively into their teaching methodologies.

Subsequently, the practice of analysing “straight” texts through a queer perspective motivates educators to examine “straight” books – those without explicit queer characters – in a manner that, nevertheless, engages with themes of sexuality and gender. By critically analysing queer-themed texts that are already part of educators’ resources, the systems that normalise certain sexualities – while regarding others as deviations – can be scrutinised by examining how sexuality and gender are inherently present in conventional, non-queer writings. This approach is analogous to challenging heteronormativity. Thus, students can understand that these identities are not solely associated with queer individuals, but are rather fundamental components of how each individual moves through and lives in the world (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2015). Blackburn and Miller (2017) describe this strategy as “reading queerly”. Educators can encourage students to question heteronormativity and queerphobia by fostering conversations about power and visibility. Essentially, literary texts are interpreted through a queer lens that concerns identity, discrimination, and equality, and queer-themed curricula are incorporated into language classrooms by taking a political stance. Even though openly acknowledged queer identities might not be frequently represented, educators can meaningfully enhance the experiences of their queer students by incorporating queer readings of texts that are already present in their classrooms and syllabi. Reading queerly offers educators a means to foreground queer identities in both their pedagogical practices and classroom texts. An example that could be highlighted in this context includes Dorian Grey in *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, authored in 1890 by Oscar Wilde, whose beauty is esteemed by other male characters.

An examination of queer characters in literary texts challenges the misconception that only heterosexual individuals populate both real-world and literary narratives. Consequently, this allows students to be exposed to diverse perspectives. Literary texts can be studied independently or integrated into subject-specific lessons and curricula delivered by educators, catalysing dialogue on tolerance, diversity appreciation, and the prevention of bullying. This strategy enables educators to engage with a broad spectrum of reading standards and proficiencies, including inferential reasoning and understanding authorial intent (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2015). Instances of queer characters inhabiting heteronormative contexts include Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald in J.K. Rowling’s *Fantastic Beasts* series (2016-2022), who are explicitly identified as homosexual, LeFou in Disney’s live-action adaptation, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), and Gobber the Belch in *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010; 2025), where they are presumed and subsequently confirmed to be homosexual. Such representations invite educators and students to engage in discussions regarding the rationale for including queer characters within heteronormative frameworks.

Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan (2015) propose a strategy termed “queering queer-inclusive texts” to address queer issues within literary works. This strategy involves the provision of texts, which are inherently queer inclusive from a queer perspective, to students. By applying a queer perspective to these queer-inclusive texts, one can highlight heteronormative narratives, enable readers to observe the intersection of alternative aspects of privilege associated with queer identities, and counteract prejudices of queer individuals perpetuated by traditional portrayals. Among these various examples of queer-themed texts, Brent Hartinger’s 2004 novel and 2013 film adaptation, *Geography Club*, Bill Konigsberg’s 2013 novel, *Openly Straight*, and Jeanette Winterson’s 1985 novel, *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*, are noteworthy. These literary works, which highlight the challenging experiences of queer individuals in heteronormative societies, are suitable for analysis in language classrooms (Uys, 2023).

5.5. Analysing High-caliber Queer Literary Elements (E.G., Themes and Characters)

An alternative strategy for the incorporation of queer-themed texts is advocated by Bacon (2016), Batchelor, Ramos, and Neiswanderet (2018), Blackburn, Clark, and Nemethet (2015), Cart and Jenkins (2006), Lord (2014), Sanders and Mathis (2012), and Poklad (2025). These researchers recommend that, in the selection of queer-themed texts for inclusion in language curricula, it is imperative to evaluate their content for elements – such as themes and characters – that necessitate recognition and dialogue about queer issues counteracting heteronormativity. The objective of engaging with queer-themed texts should not be merely to expose readers to additional perspectives, as mere interaction with literary works featuring queer characters does not inherently ensure that students will cultivate empathy for or an understanding of queer individuals. Rather, it is essential to recognise that incorporating these perspectives in texts presents an opportunity for comprehending queer identities and fostering empathy for queer characters and their experiences.

Themes as a literary element encompass topics such as displaying normalcy, family inclusion, the search for identity, stereotypes, queerphobia, prejudice and abuse, coming out, tolerance and acceptance, and religious zealotry (Sanders & Mathis, 2012; Uys, 2020). Accordingly, themes hold a pivotal role in texts. Engaging with texts can impart life lessons to students and assist them in connecting pedagogical content to real-life experiences. Through the lens of fictional characters or by indirectly experiencing the narratives of others, valuable insights can be attained. When students focus on themes, they start to assess the authors’ motivations for narrating these stories critically. Authors possess the liberty to explore themes, particularly because they resonate universally with individuals. Literary themes can serve as a mirror (for introspection) and a window (for gaining new perspectives) to aid readers in the development and affirmation of their identities. Heterosexual and queer readers alike can gain insights into the experiences of fictional queer characters within heteronormative environments by engaging with themes prevalent in queer-themed texts. Practically, these themes assist students in forging connections between a specific text, other texts, their experiential worlds, and the broader community, facilitating the combat against queerphobia and heteronormativity (Bacon, 2016; Batchelor et al., 2018; Lord, 2014).

Another literary aspect worth examining is the portrayal of fictional queer characters, which can be employed to confront analogous challenges, similar to how literary themes can be leveraged to address queer social issues within heteronormative societies. Characters are subjected to analysis and scrutiny concerning their universal depictions of physical appearances, actions, and personalities of a specific class or type (Drabble, 2000; Lutrin

& Pincus, 2020; Sutherland, 2011). Cart and Jenkins (2006) assert that there exist four distinct categories of fictional queer characters.

One such character is one who either voluntarily reveals or is involuntarily revealed as queer; this occurs when the character tells others around them that they are queer or when another character does so without their permission. An example of such a character is Jeanette in *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* (Winterson, 1985), as well as Russel in *Geography Club* (Hartinger, 2004; 2013).

Another type of character examines their queer identity within both non-queer and queer contexts; this category engages in various scenarios to determine their queer identity. Instances of this can be seen in Rafe from *Openly Straight* (Konigsberg, 2013), Jeanette from *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* (Winterson, 1985), and Russel from *Geography Club* (Hartinger, 2004; 2013).

A third category encompasses heteronormative contexts within non-queer texts that incorporate queer characters, exemplified by figures such as Albus Dumbledore, Gellert Grindelwald, LeFou, and Gobber the Belch. Another example is Ben in *Openly Straight* (Konigsberg, 2013).

The initial three categories of characters are typically prominent in queer-themed texts, whereas the fourth category is less commonly represented. Furthermore, scenarios or characters can be analysed from the perspective of fictional queer characters. Queer characters exhibit unique moral codes and worldviews. Conversely, another character's perspective can be employed to comprehend the queer character. By engaging with the queer character's struggles or witnessing the process of them coming out, readers can gain awareness of issues affecting queer communities globally. Through queer texts' evolution, their representations have become more nuanced and expansive. Characters that defy conventional expectations regarding queer behaviours and same-sex attraction have become increasingly prevalent, encompassing lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Other characters may also challenge traditional gender norms by eschewing traits and behaviours typically correlated with the opposite gender to assert their gender identity, including transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, and intersex individuals.

5.6. Creating Safe Zones

A supplementary strategy to consider in the pedagogy of queer-themed texts is the recommendation by Blackburn and Miller (2017, pp. 7-8) and Poklad (2025) to establish "safe zones". Students are prompted to identify correlations between literary texts and their personal experience, particularly about themes of discrimination, compassion, and equity. This approach facilitates dialogues on the establishment of "safe zones" – defined as environments in which individuals may articulate their perspectives without apprehension – in the classroom setting, while also encouraging students to endeavour towards reforms. While the classroom may not be completely devoid of insecurity, creating a sufficiently secure atmosphere can afford students the opportunity to be brave and engage with, analyse, and value queer-themed texts. This environment can significantly support numerous queer individuals who encounter adversarial conditions, fostering a sense of inclusion within the classroom. By integrating this approach, instructors can effectively mitigate heteronormative and queerphobic elements within language education, thereby cultivating a conducive space for students to engage in discourse on queer subjects. Additionally, this strategy may also serve to confront heteronormativity and queerphobia beyond the confines of the language classroom, as students can incorporate their learning into their daily lives in broader societal contexts. Kosciw et al. (2022) mention that queer students who experience safety and support at schools have better educational outcomes and experiences. It is, therefore, imperative to create safe and affirming learning environments.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

To enrich the findings, empirical research could be conducted on educators implementing these inclusive queer-themed strategies and reflecting on their effectiveness to create awareness and understanding of queer identities in the language classroom, as this chapter only entailed a textual analysis (i.e., a narrative review), which could be considered a literature review for future empirical research.

7. CONCLUSION

Staley and Leonardi (2016) argue that heteronormativity fosters bullying, harassment, and other coercive enforcement methods, in addition to promoting queerphobia. Consequently, it is recommended that educational institutions critically address this heteronormative paradigm, equipping educators to affirm students' queer identities within the language classroom.

Inclusive strategies for the teaching and learning of queer-themed curricula, to create awareness and understanding of queer identities in the language classroom, have been provided in this chapter. The following are possible strategies educators may consider and implement:

- addressing heteronormativity;
- “leaning in” to discomfort;
- including intersectionality;
- reading “straight” texts through a “queer lens”;
- including texts with queer characters;
- queering queer-inclusive texts;
- analysing high-caliber queer literary elements (e.g., themes and characters); and
- creating safe zones.

Educators might require assistance in recognising the elusive yet powerful strategies in which queerphobia and heteronormativity shape their perceptions of appropriateness, should they aim to be inclusive concerning sexuality and gender. This recognition necessitates meticulous attentiveness to their pedagogical decisions and instructional strategies. Blackburn and Smith (2010, p. 625) elucidate that the incorporation of queer-themed curricula results in “patterns of acknowledgment (and subsequent astonishment) on the part of straight allies”. A limited number of individuals (such as educators and students) possess a comprehensive awareness of the extent of their involvement in queerphobia. Therefore, to address queerphobia both globally and in the language classroom, there is a requisite for a dedicated focus on developing anti-queerphobic strategies that are theoretical and practical, while concurrently supporting straight allies.

Concludingly, this chapter integrated queer theory into language education in a structured, pedagogically actionable way; it combined affective, cognitive, and analytical dimensions (e.g., discomfort, textual analysis, and intersectionality); it applied social constructivist principles to both research and teaching methodology; it operationalised textual analysis as a research and teaching tool; it provided concrete strategies and examples with global relevance; it expanded queer-inclusive pedagogy to emotional labour, safe zones, and ethical responsibility. As a result, the chapter's originality lies in its holistic, multi-dimensional, and practice-oriented approach to queer-inclusive language education, grounded in theory but explicitly actionable in language classrooms.

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KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Queer identities: queer identities encompass a diverse range of sexual orientations (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other) as well as a spectrum of gender identities (such as transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, and additional).

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