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Title	LGBTQ+ Language Teacher Educators' Identities and Pedagogies: Testimonio and Duoethnography	
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LGBTQ+ Language Teacher Educators' Identities and Pedagogies: Testimonio and Duoethnography

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Abstract

In the call for diversity and social justice in language teacher education, it is necessary to explore the identities and pedagogies of LGBTQ+¹ identified language teacher educators. In this article, we (two teacher educators, one from Chile and the other from the United States), through a testimonio-based duoethnographic study, explored our LGBTQ+ identities and pedagogies, and our experiences in initial teacher education. From our experiences and reflections shared through conversations and writings, we identified themes to envision LGBTQ+ initial teacher education: pedagogies from identities, making visible as LGBTQ+ teacher educators, intersectionality of LGBTQ+ with other issues of oppression, and non-LGBTQ+ allies and teachers. We conclude that initial teacher education must make LGBTQ+ more visible in education and the school curriculum. We further pose an ethical responsibility on LGBTQ+ language teacher educators as agents of change toward achieving social justice. Finally, recommendations for further research on LGBTQ+ language teacher identities are presented.

Keywords: Teacher identities, duoethnography, testimonio, LGBTQ, pedagogies

1. Introduction

Teacher educators, understood as university educators who work in initial teacher education, play a fundamental role in preparing new teachers. Their pedagogies must meet the needs of schoolteachers working in a changing, diverse, and globalized world (Johnson & Golombek, 2018). However, their pedagogies are not isolated decisions. The intrinsic interconnectedness between their identities and work context informs their teaching practices and pedagogical decisions (Barkhuizen, 2016; Varghese et al., 2005). Thus, exploring and understanding the identities of language teacher educators are pivotal due to their influence and mediation on their pedagogies (Percy et al., 2019).

In English language teaching (ELT), acknowledging and studying the identities of those LGBTQ+ identified language teachers and teacher educators responds to the current call for diversity and social justice in the field (Hastings & Jacobs, 2016; Percy et al., 2017). LGBTQ+ is an emerging area of study in teacher education (Brant & Willox, 2021; Miller, 2016), a predominantly dominated field by heterosexual and cisgender professionals (Gray et al., 2013). LGBTQ+ issues are often marginalized in initial teacher education, perpetuating heteronormative teaching practices (Dykes & Delpont, 2018; Gorski et al., 2013) and depicting the language classroom as monosexual or sexually neutral places (Connell, 2015; Nelson, 2006).

Halliday (2021) and Lander (2018) recognize that ELT has subordinated LGBTQ+ teacher identities. Coda (2019) and Fredman et al. (2015) point out that LGBTQ+ identities are usually absent from the language teaching curriculum and pedagogies. The latter is critical as LGBTQ+ teachers face difficult and complex relationships between sexualities and schooling (Ferfolja, 2014). Schools have become desexualized spaces where LGBTQ+ teachers are expected to act without expressing their identities (Greytak et al., 2015; McGovern, 2012) due to the institutionalization of heterosexuality in education (Neary, 2013; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). In this context, Dykes and Delport (2018) and Robinson and Ferfolja (2001) advocate for including LGBTQ+ in initial teacher education, whereas Brant and Willox (2021) signal teachers and teacher educators as foci of attention and study.

Studies on the identities of LGBTQ+ identified language teachers and their realities are under-discussed despite the growing research in applied linguistics (España, 2021; Halliday, 2021; Varghese et al., 2016). Therefore, investigating the identities, perceptions, and experiences of LGBTQ+ teacher educators can provide a valuable source of knowledge for integrating LGBTQ+ issues into the school's curriculum (Antonelli & Sembiente, 2022).

Addressing LGBTQ+ from the voices of teacher educators is an act of social justice in education. The LGBTQ+ gap needs immediate attention in education, for there are societies and communities that are transitioning to a more inclusive, tolerant, and respectful stance on issues and aspects that have traditionally been considered taboo or of a conservative nature. Therefore, examining identities and pedagogies becomes critical in identifying obstacles and opportunities to increase the presence of LGBTQ+ in initial teacher education and ELT.

In this article, we explored our LGBTQ+ identities and pedagogies, two language teacher educators (one from Chile and the other from the United States), and how we have navigated our work in initial teacher education. This article focuses on our personal and professional experiences, how our identities have permeated our pedagogies, and how we understand initial teacher education toward LGBTQ+ as an excluded element in teacher education and social justice. Our research was: How do our teacher educator identities intersect with our pedagogies and envision LGBTQ+ in initial teacher education?

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Language Teacher Identities

Varghese et al. (2005) first theorized the concept of language teacher identity as transformational and transformative. Identities are a phenomenon that is not fixed, stable, unitary, or internally coherent but rather multiple, shifting, and in conflict. They can be (re)constructed by mediating factors or the subjects' agency exercised in their practice. Varghese et al. (2005) expanded that teacher identity is "not context-free but is crucially related to social, cultural, and political contexts—interlocutors, institutional settings, and so on" (p. 23). They are shaped by the teachers' context, bound to other socio-cultural and political elements of the environment, and are "constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse"

(p. 23).

More than a decade later, Varghese (2016) re-addressed the definition of language teacher identity as formed by a set of individual experiences and material resources that change and evolve as teachers go through their teacher preparation programs and into the school context. This definition explains that identities can be (re)constructed in teaching and working contexts. Varghese (2018) also explained that these identities interact with how language instructors understand themselves and how they practice their profession. Varghese's (2016, 2018) definitions underscore teachers' practices and contextual factors as crucial for enacting and developing identities.

The previous definitions of teacher identity can be transferred to language teacher educators. Considering the theoretical underpinning of teacher identities, the identities of language teacher educators can be varied. For example, they can be language teachers, learners, teacher educators, or education scholars (Peercy et al., 2019). By understanding teacher educators' identities, it is possible to understand their pedagogies. Varghese et al. (2005) posited that it is necessary to "have a clearer sense of who [teachers] are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them" (p. 22) to understand teachers' practice. Hence, understanding the identities of language teacher educators implies inquiring about their professional biographies, contexts, ideologies, practices, and experiences, i.e., the socio-cultural contexts and mediating factors that permeate their roles as educators.

2.1.1 Studies on (LGBTQ+) Language Teacher Identity.

Studies on language teacher identities and those identified as LGBTQ+ are increasing (Barkhuizen, 2019). Being an LGBTQ+ identified language teacher in schools may cause stress and identity conflict. These teachers negotiate their identities according to the workplace (Meyer & Ouelette, 2009), impacting their experiences and identities (Sutter & Perrin, 2016). Henderson (2019) points out institutional heterosexuality assumptions exacerbate the historically discordant relationship between sexualities and education, affecting teacher identities. Henderson further explored the layered temporalities of how LGBTQ+ teachers negotiated their identities in the past, present, and imagined future to give accounts of their professional practice. The teachers expressed that identities were reinforced and informed by their past experiences as students, the heterosexual environment in their schooling, and popular culture and media. In this context, if schooling were heteronormative, teachers would act as such since they were socio-culturally influenced.

Heteronormativity in education has resulted in teachers concealing their LGBTQ+ identities (Gray, 2014; Harris & Jones, 2014; Martino, 2008). Some have hidden or denied their sexuality or gender to act as role models for their students in a heteronormative environment (Henderson, 2019). Coda (2019) narrated that because of the intersection of gender and professional identity as a teacher, he had to perform in a gender and sexually correct manner to avoid normative policing by others. Sands (2009) found that other teachers hid their identities because of homophobia, heteronormativity, and harassment, remaining closeted in schools.

Hiding their identities or performing restrictively due to their heteronormative school climate is what Varghese et al. (2005) cited as identity renegotiation. Halliday (2021) explored the professional identities of LGBTQ teachers, finding that teachers formulated multiple potential

professional personas within their discourse. The author concluded that LGBTQ teachers constructed their accounts in a manner that diverged from the prevailing conventions of heterosexuality. However, they still drew upon the dominant cultural narratives of non-conforming sexuality rooted in Western traditions, particularly those that emerged from the political activism of the gay liberation movement. Connell (2015) also identified a renegotiation and reconstruction of identities. Connell studied gay and lesbian teachers, finding three types of identities: Some teachers kept their sexuality separate from their jobs as teachers; another group brought their gay or lesbian identity into their teacher identity; and a last group left the profession because they could not separate or combine their gender identity with their professional identity. As seen, heteronormativity is a significant component of LGBTQ+ teachers' identity renegotiation and reconstruction.

The research has also recognized the consequences of teachers showing their LGBTQ+ identities related to their workplace. According to Wright and Smith (2015), LGBTQ+ teachers frequently encounter adverse outcomes when they openly express their sexual orientation, including the possibility of job termination, wage inequity, and reassignment by school administrators. España (2021) found that the heteronormative workplace climate hindered LGBTQ+ educators' identities in Colombia. They perceived their workplace climate as troubling, unsafe, and unsupportive. Some of their participants reported experiencing harassment, rumors, lack of civil protections, and unequal benefits compared to their heterosexual colleagues. España concluded that LGBTQ+ identified teachers were compelled to not only compartmentalize their sexuality from their professional life but also to conform to heteronormative standards to present as heterosexual for the various challenges they face.

Similarly, Hooker (2018) found that LGBTQ+ teachers feared disclosing their sexual orientation, impeding their possibility of being authentic in the classroom. Reasons included job termination, criticism, harassment, or isolation. In Hooker's (2018) and Haddad's (2019) studies, teachers' decisions led them not to teach at their total capacity and authentic selves. However, had they been out would have meant feeling honest and no longer fear of being outed. Finally, one study explored the opposite spectrum of identity negotiation. Lander (2018) studied the experiences of LGBTQ+ identified teachers. Specifically, Lander explored the connections between queer identity and English language teaching identities. Unlike other studies described, Lander found that all teachers lived their queer identity alongside their language teacher identity with ease in schools despite instances of homophobia suffered in schools.

2.2 Queer theory

Queer theory is essential in recognizing and accepting LGBTQ+ identities in education and society. This theory questions and rejects the traditional categories of gender and sexuality, which have imposed limitations on interpreting realities through arbitrary binary distinctions (Murray, 2015). Queer theory advocates for heteronormative disruption to challenge hetero-oppressive practices (Luhmann, 1998) and the "traditional understandings of gender and sexual identity by deconstructing the categories, binaries, and language that support them" (Meyer, 2012, p. 20). Consequently, it enables a critical examination of the individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender instead of their integration and the institutional practices that reproduce

heteronormativity. These queer identities are viewed as a social construct product enacted from an individual's daily interactions and discourse rather than being inherent and unchanging truths (Nelson, 1999).

In education, queer theory permits recognizing heteronormative practices and investigative inflexible normative classification to transcend binary constructs (Meyer, 2007). It provides individuals with the tools to deconstruct societal matters of sexuality and amplify the viewpoints of those belonging to the community (Dilley, 1999). Furthermore, this theory offers a prospect for educators to bring about transformation within education by advocating for the recognition and validation of diverse identities. It also contributes to contesting heteronormative discourses that may lead to inadvertent or intentional harm and marginalization to eliminate gender-based harassment and discrimination (Meyer, 2007). Particularly, and similar to Brant and Willox (2021), we adopted queer theory to understand the role of heteronormativity in our lives and experiences as teacher educators, offering an opportunity to transform individual experiences into constructive and valuable tools for classroom discourse.

3. Methods

This study employed two qualitative methods emerging in language teacher education and social justice: testimonio and duoethnography.

3.1 Testimonio and Duoethnography

We employed testimonio (Pérez Huber, 2009) and duoethnography (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). Both methods have been used in anti-racist research and the intersectionality of identities (De Costa, 2015; Vasquez, 2011). These methods allowed us to explore socially responsible and social justice topics from the identities and pedagogies of language teacher educators through dialog and questioning (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2021).

Testimonio is a method that seeks to break the apartheid of knowledge that has been promoted in academia (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). One of its goals is to create new knowledge on social and racial justice in communities of color (Pérez Huber, 2009), for example, the African American or Latino people living in the United States. Testimonio has generally been used to document oppressed groups' oppression and denounce injustices (Booker, 2002). It is a verbal journey of one's life experiences with attention to the injustices and effects an individual has suffered (Brabeck, 2001). It allows the individual to transform experiences of past and personal identity to create a new present and a better future (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983). Testimonio can also be a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal racial, class, gender, and nativist injustices that other groups have suffered from healing, empowering, defending, and supporting a more human present and future (Pérez Huber, 2009).

In testimonio, data is collected as the participants present themselves sharing their selves in several ways: a listener and a narrator, or a reader and a speaker (Reyes & Rodriguez, 2012). These testimonios are a deep and strong form of storytelling that tells stories through narrations, paintings, art, and artifacts (Cruz, 2012). For this study, testimonio helped us reveal our experiences

and reflections as LGBTQ+ teacher educators. In addition, testimonio empowered us to identify moments and episodes in which we felt injustices due to our identities in higher education.

We used duoethnography as a complementary method in this study. Duoethnography consists of two or more researchers juxtaposing their life stories to deliver multiple ways of understanding the world (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). This method uses narratives to explore the history and professional experiences of teaching principles and class interactions (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019) through dialogs where researchers are the study's subjects (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). Duoethnography permits identifying how the intersections between gender, sex, and race, among others, can influence the professional identities of teacher educators and their teaching practices (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). Duoethnography is essential in this context since it helps make visible dominant discourses in society to remove personal, institutional, national, and transnational structures that impoverish, disenfranchise, enslave, empower and humiliate people (Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

Duoethnography, however, holds some shortcomings. One is "parallel talk" (Breault, 2016, p. 782), as the participants may resist challenges when presenting their narratives without interacting with others. Another shortcoming of duoethnography is "theory confirmation" (Breault, 2016, p. 781), which implies that participants position themselves as representatives of a theory without justification. Lawrence and Nagashima (2019) recognize the presentation of data as another shortcoming, as this method reconstructs the raw data into comprehensible and scripted conversations which may appear inauthentic. A final shortcoming of duoethnography is that there may be few or no conclusions (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). Duoethnography is a complex method as it distances itself from the ways of presenting discussions and conclusions with traditional methods. As a result, writing with a traditional approach may feel insincere or somewhat restrictive (Burleigh & Burm, 2022). In this line, "generalizability does not rest with the researcher; rather, readers take what they read and generalize from particulars in one context, create a universal parallel connection, and apply these generated meanings to their contexts" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 93).

3.2 Participants

As part of using testimonio and duoethnography, it is necessary to introduce the participant-researchers for the readers to have contextual information and understand our experiences and the nature of our ideas. We, the participants are two teacher educators: Michel and Longoria. Michel is a 38-year-old cisgender gay man, and Longoria, 41 years old, identifies as non-binary and gender queer. Michel is Chilean, and Longoria is American. Michel chooses the pronouns he/him/his, while Longoria takes they/them/their.

Michel and Longoria met while studying doctoral programs in the United States. Specifically, the two met at a diversity and inclusion graduate student office, where Michel was a program coordinator, and Longoria served as a member of the office's advisory board. Bringing our identities, we worked together to set various LGBTQ+ initiatives to include this group in the office's mission. It was a professional and personal milestone where interacting with others helped us recognize who we are today. After that experience, we continued our collegiate collaboration,

strengthened relations, and reconstructed our identities. We did it in person until 2019 and have done it virtually since 2020, when Michel returned to work in his country of origin after living and studying in the United States for eight years.

Currently, we both work as university professors. Michel has worked as an assistant professor and head of pedagogy at a Chilean university for three years, and Longoria as an associate professor and chair of secondary education at an American university for five years. In addition, Michel prepares teachers of English as a foreign language, and Longoria prepares secondary education teachers.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

As testimonio and duoethnography use dialogs and narratives, we used several means to collect the data. The first one was four conversations via Zoom. We prepared two questions to discuss during the meeting, which varied from our experiences and identities in initial teacher education and how they intersect in LGBTQ+. The conversations lasted approximately one hour each and were recorded. The second means was conversations through WhatsApp chats where we followed up and reflected upon situations regarding our identities and pedagogies. The third means was writing a one-page reflection on how we perceived initial teacher education and LGBTQ+ in teacher education program curricula in Chile and the United States. We later discussed the reflections in the Zoom conversations.

The questions for the Zoom conversations and written reflections were personally created and not based on previous research. Table 1 illustrates the questions asked during the Zoom conversations and written reflection.

Table 1. Questions for data collection

Means of data collection	Questions
Zoom conversations	Who are we as teacher educators, and what characterizes our teaching practices?
	How have our identities intersected with our pedagogies preparing teachers?
	What challenges have we encountered as a gay/genderqueer teacher educator in your program?
	What challenges do we see in initial teacher education and the LGBTQ+ in our contexts? How are they different?
Written reflection	How do I perceive initial teacher education and the LGBTQ+ in teacher education program curricula in my country/context?

Note: WhatsApp and follow-up questions on the reflections were not included as they were unplanned and happened organically.

Following the data collection, we analyzed the data using thematic analysis (Miles et al., 2014). After transcribing our testimonios and conversations, we read all the data gathered. Then, independently following the ideas of trustworthiness, believability, and transparency (Le et al., 2021; Sawyer & Norris, 2013), we looked for the most repeated themes and the themes we had spent more time conversing about. We registered our initial findings on an online document. Once we finished the independent analyses, we met virtually to discuss these themes. We reflected upon, compared, and grouped the themes with similar characteristics and categorized them according to the narratives we wanted to share according to our research question.

3.3.1 Addressing trustworthiness

Duoethnography shifts and evolves from the tradition of qualitative research, distancing from credibility, triangulation, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In duoethnography, "the research process itself promotes researcher engagement in self-reflection and personal as well as social change" (Sawyer & Liggett, 2012, p. 630). Duoethnographies do not claim the validity of the interpretations. Norris and Sawyer (2012) state that truth and validity are irrelevant since knowledge is fluid. Breault (2016) explained, "What is important is the believability and trustworthiness of the research, and that can be determined by the rigor of the collaborative inquiry that is made explicit in the study itself" (p. 779). Ensuring believability and trustworthiness depends on the trust between the co-researchers, as very personal topics are shared (Le et al., 2021). A study becomes trustworthy "when researcher reflexivity becomes apparent [...] duoethnographers situate themselves centrally within the meaning of the text they are creating, thus promoting the inquiry goal of researcher/reader self-reflexivity" (Sawyer & Liggett, 2012, p. 630).

In this sense, the friendship and confidence of the co-researchers allowed us to honestly share our experiences, reflections, and narrations around our identities and pedagogies as LGBTQ+ teacher educators. We attempted to portray this closeness when describing ourselves in the participations section. Even though we also used testimonio as a research method that recognizes trustworthiness as in traditional qualitative research, we decided to follow the research perspective from duoethnography.

4. Findings and Discussion

Working on the LGBTQ+ issue and accepting gender identity is undoubtedly a cultural and social issue. The current changes in diverse communities and societies show greater openness, cultural acceptance, and validation toward people with different gender identities. We, teacher educators, have a unique and historic opportunity to make changes to our education systems. Our conversations and reflections revealed four themes based on our identities and pedagogies (Table 2).

Table 2. Categories and descriptions

Categories	Descriptions
Pedagogies from our identities	How our identities have permeated our pedagogies and understanding of initial teacher education
Making ourselves visible as LGBTQ+ teacher educators	Importance of becoming models as LGBTQ+ teacher educators
Intersectionality of the LGBTQ+ with other issues of oppression	How intersectionality is reflected when the LGBTQ+ and other symbols are combined in education
Non-LGBTQ+ allies and teachers	Relevance and support from members who do not identify as LGBTQ+ and their impact on education

4.1 Pedagogies from Our Identities

We argue that an approach to change initial teacher education must be through our pedagogies and actions in the classrooms, schools, and universities. We noted that our identities significantly mediated our teaching practices. This was the case when Longoria narrated how their current work as a researcher and instructor incorporated various queer themes in teacher education, or as Michel declared,

I usually include one or two readings addressing various social justice issues when I teach. One of the texts has to be connected with a teacher or a student being gay. I want them to know the experience of someone gay, as it was my case.

We claim that LGBTQ+ teacher educators must maintain their identities and be themselves. In our practice, our goal has been to be ourselves in the same line as Lander's (2018) study. We agreed that we have not responded to a hegemonic context or patterns, as many other studies have found (Dykes & Delport, 2018; Henderson, 2019). Instead, our narratives showed that we have decided to stay true to who we are and thus contribute to teacher education. However, comparing both stories, Longoria has long advocated for LGBTQ+ teacher education. For instance, they have taken on leadership roles in the queer education interest section group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and published more on the field than Michel. This difference does not mean one is better than the other regarding LGBTQ+ knowledge. We have both developed and constructed our identities bound to our settings and time.

Similarly, we identified that the difference between our roles and identities is due to the context in which we resided or grew up. Longoria felt they have lived in a context where being gay or queer is considered more accepted than Michel (i.e, in Chile). Like Barkhuizen (2016) and Varghese

et al. (2005), our contexts have mediated our LGBTQ+ identities. Nevertheless, despite this disparity, we acknowledged that teaching from our identities has been relevant to cultivate better conditions for our students, people, and the LGBTQ+ community. We believe that the more exposed students are to these identities, the more heteronormativity will be questioned. Longoria expressed that,

We are preparing future teachers who will impact and influence their students with topics and behaviors. If I go back to when I first arrived at Western [Washington University], I know that my actions have impacted students and am convinced that we will continue to impact everyone. Everyone will do it regardless of their gender identities.

We also recognized that we should teach future teachers to know and handle LGBTQ+ issues in education as these matters are in hidden curriculum. Research has shown that LGBTQ+ is usually omitted in the language classroom and education (Coda, 2019; Fredman et al., 2015). Nonetheless, future teachers must expand their perspectives on the education spectrum and connect them to daily school situations. Longoria pointed out that,

As teacher educators and regardless of our identities, we must be aware that to carry out this pedagogical approach, we must go beyond our areas of expertise. We must recognize that sometimes, as specialists in disciplinary areas, for example, in language, mathematics, or science, we do not address these topics.

Michel added to Longoria's idea,

If we think about English, we are usually concerned with teachers using the language well, communicating well, or having the competencies to teach this foreign language; however, the focus might not necessarily be on LGBTQ+.

Our pedagogical decisions became a personal challenge about incorporating these topics in courses or subjects, not of the discipline. As teacher educators, we concluded that we must reflect on our practices and contest what research has identified as monosexual and heteronormative ELT classrooms (Connell, 2015; Nelson, 2006.).

We also asked ourselves how we could approach LGBTQ+ from our pedagogies. Our experiences indicated that we had done it through an explicit curriculum, from the educational material we use in our teaching to the activities we conduct in classes, as was exemplified by Michel at the beginning of this section. Moreover, we have also done it through a hidden curriculum called LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum. This curriculum is "an umbrella expression to mean the inclusion of LGTBQ topics in curriculum and across multiple content areas" (Antonelli & Sembiente, 2022, p. 5). It means being literate on these topics (Nelson, 2006), as Fredman et al. (2015) demonstrated. We have used readings with LGBTQ+ topics or information, such as graphics or data, to make our students reflect on these diversity issues.

Michel brought up an important issue about this curriculum. He acknowledged that "with these practices, we can also promote understanding and respect for these communities." Dealing with these topics should promote future teachers' self-reflection and analysis of their teaching practices. As proposed by Brant and Willox (2021), future teachers have to "examine their own

preconceptions about sexuality and gender, understand the connections between those conceptions and homophobia and gender oppression, and think critically about how they enact change in their classrooms, ultimately queering the gaze of future teachers” (p. 3). When LGBTQ+ teacher educators discuss LGBTQ+ topics in conjunction with their own identities helps students learn around their own identities (Conrad, 2020) and combat heteronormativity in schools (Haddad, 2019).

As we conversed, we also identified that internal conflicts might emerge for LGBTQ+ teacher educators who are in the process of accepting their identities. Michel recalled,

When I taught in high school, I never wanted to mention the word gay with my students. I avoided, at all costs, even conversations with my students or their parents. I wanted to support them, but then I was not even ready to support myself.

We acknowledged that before making those decisions, we had to think and reflect upon them to decide later whether we would feel comfortable making ourselves visible or “returning to the closet.” We understand that many teacher educators, teachers, and future teachers might be afraid of showing their gender identities, as research has shown (España, 2021; Haddad, 2019; Hooker, 2018). From their positionality and experience in teacher education, Longoria pointed out that,

If we [teacher educators] continue in fear, it will mean slowly disrupting the progress that we have made as an LGBTQ+ group. We are at a time when there is hope, and we must include these changes in our plans and actions in the classroom. We should not see hope as in Disney movies but as something that empowers us to make changes. Hope is not a utopia but a force that encourages and helps change.

Longoria’s idea addressed one of the goals of queer theory: breaking heteronormativity. Of course, there is a challenge in making these changes, but as we have demonstrated so far, our pedagogies are the first step to making LGBTQ+ present in the language classroom.

4.2 Making Ourselves Visible as LGBTQ+ Teacher Educators

Visibilization of our identities was another category that emerged from our data. In contrast with other studies in which LGBTQ+ teachers did not show their identities (Greytak et al., 2015; McGovern, 2012), we contend that positioning and visibilizing our identities as LGBTQ+ teacher educators brings benefits to the profession and has advantages of other identity aspects on teaching proficiency and curriculum practices (Antonelli & Sembiente, 2022). Our dialogs, in the words of Longoria, summarized this idea:

We must not fear or adjust to the hegemonic and homogeneous identities of the dominant culture in the school or university since it is in the classrooms where we are, have been, and will be a reference for our students. We came out before them, reconstructed our identities, learned about ourselves and the LGBTQ+ challenges, reflected on our actions and experiences, and started acting personally and professionally. As a result, we bring a more conscious, human, and pedagogical experience on this subject to the classrooms that future teachers and students can learn from. I think we have a lot to offer to our students.

Longoria illustrated that identity reconstruction and negotiation are part of being an LGBTQ+ teacher educator and has advantages for our students. Longoria depicted how resisting heteronormative identities has positive effects in acknowledging and respecting who we are. Besides, Longoria extensively talked about being available for our students, colleagues, and the community. This means that LGBTQ+ visibility becomes a tool to acknowledge the existence of these identities, in contrast to what generally happens in education and the language classroom: LGBTQ+ identities and issues are usually omitted or oppressed (Halliday, 2021; Lander, 2018).

Additionally, similar to Conrad (2020) and (Henderson, 2019), our study revealed that our visibilization helped us become role models for our students. Longoria explained that,

If we make ourselves visible, we become models. Our bodies and our presence in the classroom are a spark toward visibility. By being visible, we make a pedagogy with our body and make changes unintentionally as another way to implement a hidden gender curriculum. Our visibility influences various spaces of the university and schools, for example, by participating in activities, school fieldwork, or supervision of practices. I do this on purpose, and I have students come up to me to thank me because they feel more confident to be themselves. Now, visibility is also a possibility for students to identify and see that they are not alone and that someone like them could help them. For example, imagine the impact of a practicing LGBTQ+ teacher who has lived through a gender transition process and how they could contribute from their experience to the community and their students. I think there is a lot of power to be visible, and that is our responsibility to produce the first changes in our educational system. We must naturalize this reality.

Through this visibility, teachers and students can reinforce their connections and relationships, benefiting students (Harris, 1990; Henderson, 2019). Michel, for example, recalled that in his second year as a teacher educator, he finally felt confident to be visible to his students and talk about himself and his identity:

I noticed more students, gays, trans and non-binary, stopping by the office and telling me their dramas or stories. This has really strengthened our student-teacher relationship. I feel they can also be them, and I think they feel more supported in the [teaching] program.

However, this visibility might be complicated for a teacher who is in the closet or still developing or reconstructing their identity. From our experiences, we know it is a challenge not to show ourselves in front of our students or colleagues because of several cultural or social factors. As a result, many questions can arise, especially how to come out or make oneself visible inside the classroom, in workspaces, or in front of other co-workers. Michel shared the following:

As a Chilean who grew up in this heteronormative society, I bring certain preconceptions that, in one way or another, lead me to think about whether what I am doing is good or not. I get conflicted and think, "Am I imposing an agenda on my students?" I start thinking from these preconceptions "What are my students thinking? Do they think I am imposing certain themes on them in my subjects?" Today, for example, I used a presentation sheet with the colors of the rainbow flag. Yes, I did it on purpose, and I wondered if they got the message without me explicitly telling them.

The previous excerpt exemplified an internal conflict that led Michel to reframe his pedagogy and to renegotiate his identity and sense of agency for a positive achievement of LGBTQ+ in education. From our experiences, being visible began internally by knowing, accepting, understanding, and loving each other with humility and compassion. It has been a process about feeling comfortable and in tune with us. In this process, we shared that teacher educators must identify and analyze the moments when our identities are in conflict. Michel added,

I think if we are able to identify these moments of conflict, we can achieve a certain level of inner harmony. If we do it, we can produce or manage changes in education.

Moreover, when writing this manuscript, Michel acknowledged experiencing an internal conflict from a professional standpoint. Although irrelevant for some, for Michel, writing this article meant to come out again but to an academic audience. He understood this moment as another experience of personal growth. In this case, reflecting upon our narratives, we felt identified with the teachers from Lander's (2008) study, in which we have both learned to be us and be visible to others.

It is impossible to force someone to express their identity, as it was challenging for Michel. It is an internal work that each person must develop with themselves and thus achieve harmony with who they are. Longoria pointed out that,

If other teacher educators or we failed to show ourselves, we would be reproducing what we want to change, heteronormativity in the educational system.

Longoria's quote implies that if we do not react and act, we would be against rejecting the binary gender system questioned by queer theory (Meyer, 2007; Nelson, 1999) and perpetuating heterosexual and cisgender identities as the default in education (McWilliams & Penuel, 2016; Meyer, 2012). However, promoting this naturalization or normalcy of who we are has pedagogical and social justice implications for our students and their future students.

Finally, visibility could generate social and institutional tensions and ruptures in structures. Longoria added, "With our presence, we can change attitudes and perceptions by presenting and being ourselves." Michel complemented this idea by stating that,

I noticed that after speaking out about me being gay, I've seen some resistance about including LGBTQ+ with some of my colleagues. I guess it's because they are not used to dealing with this issue at the academic or collegiate level. My university is now working toward a gender equity perspective, and that's huge progress. But I think more needs to be done for us, and my workplace is not ready to deal with it yet.

We both accepted that changes can be accomplished at the structural level if we make ourselves visible. Contrary to the research in which some teachers have gone through drawbacks while being out (Haddad, 2019; Hooker, 2018; Wright et al., 2019), we believe we have impacted our workplaces. Longoria has become a referent for some of their students and colleagues and has been recognized for their scholarly work and how they enact their pedagogy. However, the changes are still to come for Michel at his institution.

4.3 Intersectionality of the LGBTQ+ with Other Issues of Oppression

As teacher educators, we must know the value of intersectionality in the systems of oppression to which the heteronormative, hegemonic, and dominant culture subjects us. Michel posed that,

I think because I am gay and also a man, I have gotten a certain voice and some "benefits." I think I'm being heard more and asked more opinions in terms of diversity and inclusion. I like to think that being gay adds extra value to my role as an educator. This is a completely different mindset than I had when I was a high school teacher, and I did not want to reveal I was gay for fear of discrimination.

What Michel narrated is what Crenshaw (1989) described as intersectionality. Intersectionality is a framework that acknowledges the interrelatedness of various social identities, encompassing but not restricted to race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, and explains how the same gender, when converging with different identities, can cause gaps or differences. An example of an intersection between gender and race is when a woman of color suffers more discrimination than a white woman since people of African descent have historically been more discriminated against than other groups. In Michel's excerpt, his intersectionality had a positive outcome as a teacher educator, but he feared it could be a negative one, if he had been a schoolteacher.

Intersectionality also makes it possible to pinpoint the locations where power dynamics converge, link, and collide and offers a way to comprehend the intricate interactions between many oppressive types of power. Longoria reflected that,

In our community, intersectionality is also present, for example, when racism and gender identity encounter. A queer person already has suffered some type of discrimination, but when this same person is dark-skinned, the discrimination doubles.

Longoria explained that by combining both identities, an LGBTQ+ black individual might undergo greater violence as the systems of oppression overlap. Racism becomes present as another oppressing element that we can see in both the United States and Chile that interplays in the intersectionality of individuals. Therefore, racism is positioned as a significant challenge to addressing intersectionality in LGBTQ+. Longoria commented:

Not only am I a non-binary person, but I am also a Latin, Latinx, and Chinese person. I am part of a group of people who are not white in America. I don't have an Anglo-Saxon heritage, but I have other identities. Like me, there are several, and we all are experiencing some kind of oppression. We are fighting each other by being subjected to some kind of oppression – the white gay fights with the black gay. This disrupts the progress toward change in societies.

We contend that Longoria's progress is a great challenge in our classrooms today, that of focusing on all oppressions and intersectionality. This task would be similar if we consider other identities, such as those who belong to indigenous peoples or are immigrants. Our conversations reflected our thinking on this matter in that teachers and educators must work and deal with an amalgam of situations in the classroom.

We posit that the ELT or any other classroom is an opportunity to incorporate discussions and actions. Racism is as important as LGBTQ+; thus, education must consider addressing all forms of oppression. As educators, we noted that our work has involved raising awareness and promoting change so our future teachers can do it in schools. Longoria stated: "I like to have these conversations in which we take everyday life experiences and take into reflection in my class." We agreed that we must deliver an education that leads to change so that it touches and transforms other people's hearts. To end, as Longoria shared:

Teachers already have a lot on their shoulders, but working on the intersectionality of racism and LGBTQ+ right now is central to their efforts to attack oppression and achieve social justice.

4.4 Non-LGBTQ+ Allies and Teachers

Sometimes, LGBTQ+ teachers and teacher educators can use their agency to bring about changes. However, we also know we cannot change everything as LGBTQ+ teacher educators in initial teacher education, as many contexts are at play in our schools and universities. Michel recalled,

I remember when I was at the office of diversity in Seattle and heard the words "diversity ambassador" and "ally." Coming from an international context, those two terms didn't make sense to me. First, the folks from the office wanted me to recruit to be an ambassador, but then when we "expanded" the office to serve LGBTQ+ students, I came to understand and use the term ally. I have rarely used it in Chile, but I think I should.

An ally is a person, whereas a teacher, counselor, or staff member is someone who creates a sense of community to ease the struggle for LGBTQ+ students (Wimberly et al., 2015). In addition, they support activism and the fight for an educational paradigm shift toward LGBTQ+ in social relations and the educational curriculum. In our narrations, we both identified the relevance of the ally in helping us make societal and educational changes. For example, Michel recollected a story from a colleague who once had a gay student. This colleague had accepted the student's identity and sexual orientation; however, she noticed the student was left out and did not know what to do. When this happens, Longoria replied to Michel, it becomes:

A precise moment to help, encourage, and motivate other teachers and teacher educators to get out of their comfort zone and become open to understanding and dealing with the diversity in our classrooms to avoid exclusion and discrimination.

Additionally, in the context of initial teacher education, for example, law and politics lead the agenda in the United States. Longoria shared that individuals cannot be right without referring to the law and that without politics or political acts, they cannot make substantial changes. Nevertheless, thanks to allies, changes have been taking place in the school culture, classrooms, and social beliefs due to the political acts of activists.

Longoria was a serious advocate of relying on the figure of the ally from our identities. They pointed out that "from our identities, we can also help our non-LGBTQ+ allies, educators, or teachers. In education, we are inserted in a space where social relationships occur". We discussed that supporting allies becomes healthy and necessary for ourselves, the ally, and the students.

From a practical approach, Michel retold an exercise that he uses whenever he meets a new group of students and that our allies can use:

At the beginning of any course, I administer a questionnaire that allows me to understand my students' expectations concerning the course and know them a little more. For example, one question is, "Is there anything I need to know about you to support you?" This question has encouraged some of the students to talk about their identity, at the same time, it has helped me be better prepared before entering the classroom.

What has been relevant for us as educators is our agentive role when it comes to allies. We have decided to speak more and include others to help us in our educational settings. Longoria explained that it is up to us to develop and design other means to strengthen the knowledge of our allies and be actors in educational change. Despite our sense of agency, advocacy for allies should be at the institutional level to be more effective (Clark & Kosciw, 2022). Nonetheless, this advocacy has been true for Longoria in their U.S. institution but not for Michel in Chile.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we have explored how our LGBTQ+ identities have intersected with our pedagogies and how we envision LGBTQ+ in initial teacher education. Diversity opens possibilities for new paradigms regarding gender and culture in education. Teacher educators must know and understand LGBTQ+ to help future teachers change our educational system and society. Therefore, our job and that of our allies is to introduce and integrate issues of oppression and identities into our teaching practices or hidden curriculum.

Teacher educators and teacher education programs must systematically carry out and cultivate introspection to identify, analyze, reflect, and change our decisions. In this way, it will be possible to help modify all contexts of tensions for LGBTQ+ people. Teacher educators must put aside the attitude that nothing has an identity in education since there is a universal and varied context that would be invisible. Instead, we must judge what we teach and how we teach, reflecting upon who we are. Identity is part of everything, and if we only replicate what is hegemonic and dominant, what change can we achieve? LGBTQ+ teacher educators have the challenge of recognizing ourselves and what we are doing. We all must understand our gender identities and how they intersect with other identities of our own or others while impacting our pedagogies.

The future of LGBTQ+ in initial teacher education needs attention and development. Even though we know that promoting LGBTQ+ topics in a subject or course might be a first step, all teachers or teacher educators of a program must agree to transversally work together toward a clear and concrete objective so that it has a greater effect on the future teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Moule, 2005; Zeichner, 2009). The work must be ongoing and systematic to impact the achievement of social justice. This is necessary if we want to produce curricular improvements toward an inclusive perspective of concrete and critical action in the formation of our teachers. All teachers or educators need to offer examples of oppression and its causes for our students to reflect on and be able to face these realities. This action can influence or generate changes, especially in future teachers.

We must also be humble in making profound changes in our professional contexts. In LGBTQ+, not everything is rainbow colors. There are dangers on the roads of life, and generally, those of us who belong to this group are at risk of promoting changes. Moreover, this model responds to a revolutionary act; if we let it win, we will deceive ourselves if we do not discuss this. There is a danger in changing lives and minds. However, we have an ethical duty and a duty of conscience and empathy from initial teacher education. As several authors in queer studies have stated (Longoria, 2021; Muñoz, 2009), futurism must be built into the type of education we are currently providing. We must orient our work toward the image we want to achieve, including and incorporating LGBTQ+ and gender identities in initial teacher education for a future without oppression. We should not look at this as a utopia. It must be based on reality, moving from discourse to actions, which is a significant step to moving forward in initial teacher education.

In this article, we wanted to portray our experiences and reflections, but we also wanted to make an act of social justice. We desired to propose and present LGBTQ+ in initial teacher education from an activist approach, from which we can do something to help our students and other teacher educators or teachers who may conflict with their identities in the classroom, in their workplaces, or in other professional contexts. Likewise, we would like to invite other actors involved in the teaching exercise who do not identify with or know the LGBTQ+ community to learn about our experiences and the challenges that arise in initial teacher education. We claim that it is essential for initial teacher education programs and teacher educators to look at their curriculum, their study programs, their work context, and their students to recognize the importance of approaching this topic which is socially and educationally relevant to the current times. Educators must break the heteronormative schemes that traditionally define what and how to act in teaching.

5.1 Implications

One of the implications of this study is the relevance of exploring LGBTQ+ language teacher educators' identities and pedagogies to inform the preparation of teachers. Identities are connected to classroom practices, reflecting the pedagogies of language teacher educators (Barkhuizen, 2016; Peercy et al., 2019). The exploration done through our testimonios and narratives revealed the powerful impact of our identities and pedagogies in elucidating the needs in teacher education regarding LGBTQ+. In addition, other education-related themes or needs may be elicited from the identities and pedagogies of teachers and teacher educators following the research methods employed in this study.

Another implication is that testimonio and duoethnography can be used as resourceful methods to address immediate issues in education and promote reflection on teacher educators' practice through engagement with colleagues (Huang & Karas, 2020). These methods allow identifying educational, socio-political, socio-cultural, or socio-responsible issues to be included or addressed in initial teacher education. Through our narrations as teacher educators, we identified the lack and potential of incorporating an LGBTQ+ focus in initial teacher preparation.

A last implication of this study is shedding light on the challenges of initial teacher education in Chile and other educational contexts. Curricular revisions must be made at a policy level. The Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) has mandated guidelines to include lesbian, gay,

bisexual, trans, and intersex students in the educational system (MINEDUC, 2017) and guarantee their right to gender identity (Superintendencia de Educación, 2021). Nonetheless, these guidelines only pertain to how school administrators, teachers, and teacher aides and supports can strengthen a respectful culture toward human rights. Little is advised on teaching or dealing with these topics in the language classroom. Therefore, the task of including LGBTQ+ belongs to initial teacher education programs but also to everyone involved in the education of K-12 students.

5.2 Limitations

This study has some limitations. One relates to the controversy of the confirmation theory in duoethnography (Breault, 2016). We were the sole participants and researchers of this study. We tried to justify our thinking and statements with previous research and theorists, which we believe might sustain our claims. We relied on our knowledge and positionality as researchers in this decision to frame and conduct this study. A second limitation concerns the focus of our conversations. We intentionally addressed the LGBTQ+ topic and did not consider the inclusion of other issues that affect education. An open dialog without an established topic would have allowed us to reveal our concerns regarding other matters in initial teacher education, which must be addressed to provoke social changes.

5.3 Future research

As diversity and social justice have arrived to stay in education, we suggest designing other studies to investigate education-related issues from the identities and pedagogies of teachers and teacher educators. We believe other matters can derive from testimonios and narratives that might help improve education in initial teacher education programs and K-12 settings. We propose using these methods with student-teachers or novice teachers to learn about their preparation as teachers as opportunities for reflective teaching and social responsibility.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

Endnote

ⁱ We used LGBTQ+, as this includes the identities of the two participants and researchers. The acronym LGBTQ+ describes gender communities and can be expanded to LGBTTT-SIPQQAAA. These letters describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit (double spirit), intersex, pansexual, queer, questioning (in question), asexual, agender (no gender), androgon (Airton, 2019).

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