

Deheteronormalizing through Duo-Ethnography on Transnational Queer Students for
Invisible Identity and Literacy

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

University of Washington

2024

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Education

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Abstract

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Increasing evidence indicates that scholarship on applied linguistics and teaching English to speakers of other languages has been centralized around the accumulating body of research on heteronormative frameworks. Immigrants and transnational teachers in identity construction and negotiation through self-transformation problematize monolingualism, predetermined identities, and bounded ecologies. However, while crossing geographical boundaries, studies on *transnational queer students* (TQSs) need to be developed, creating the possibility of queer literacy and resisting an oppressed identity in the U.S. heteronormativity. This study amplifies the need to illuminate how TQSs' linguistic repertoires are portrayed within heteronormative frameworks. Drawing on duo-ethnography, my aim is to disrupt the transnational heteronormative paradigms together with "one queer participant." I conclude by proposing a new lens, "*depathologizing gencialization literacy*," in the constant quest to go beyond transdisciplinary dimensions, with a call for queer literacy and research centering on TQSs.

Deheteronormalizing through Duo-Ethnography on Transnational Queer Students for Invisible Identity and Literacy

Superdiversity (Vertovec, 2019) challenges monolithic ideology and disrupts boundaries across multiple identities, further assisting us in revealing opportunities for interwoven complexity. However, heteronormative paradigms prevail in the construction of gendered identities and reinforce the voicelessness and underappreciation of transnational queer students (TQs). Transnational identities are forged through fluid discourse and social practices, whereas gendered elements, such as sociocultural practices, remain underdeveloped. An emerging body of transnational work on identity construction through self-transformation (Sánchez-Martín, 2020) grants a different layer of nuance to the shortcomings and fine-grained perceptions that complement the lacuna of literacy history, records, and practices.

This study's purpose is to advance a growing body of research that addresses the intricacy of how TQs negotiate their identities with a multitude of modes of transmission and shuttle between diverse boundaries (Omogun, 2018; Omogun & Skerrett, 2021) in the heteronormativity of the U.S. I have noticed that dominant paradigms tend to gravitate toward attention to racism, monolingualism, and heteronormativity, often overlooking uncharted arenas such as TQs. I argue that heteronormative literacy (HL) goes unchallenged when the reality of modern society follows an inherent gender-binary template and expectations in and outside of the classroom where sexual diversity is not recognized. However, the present study may yield insights into the way HL silences everyday gendered formations and practices while potentially unpacking the interlocking oppressions on "racialized subjects" as "inherently deficient" (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 632). Considering existing research on

immigrants' language and race, few studies have examined the context of TQSs' gendered identity construction. In this regard, the dual-ethnography methodology (Hughes et al., 2016) could disrupt the traditional framework as a space where situating the counternarratives of the [TQSs] seeks *reciprocal liberation* (Trinh & Méndez, 2020) in order to reframe invisible stories and identities, bringing attention to the overlooked aspect of the development of TQSs. As such, national borders have become increasingly vague (Motha, 2014), moving into a transnational worldwide framework. That said, [gendered] and racialized identities are the product of the translingual integral components of being constructed and moving across *unbounded geography* (Ayash, 2019). Settlers no longer linger on moving prescribed boundaries, whereas digital literacies, spaces, and resources have created state-of-the-art on-and off-life affiliations (Lam, 2013; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009), thereby demanding the need to address the immediacy of movements across the transnational scope in an ever-evolving context. Centralizing on multiple *hidden identities* provides transnationals, particularly TQSs, with the means to use what resources (e.g., funds of knowledge) are available for meaning making, acquiring a sense of voice, and embarking on ways of being. It follows from the preceding discussion that TQSs' symbolic resources are byproducts that reinforce awareness of the social construction of *gender, race, and language*.

The current frameworks we center offer a limited understanding that does not attend to racialized and gendered topics or consider the mobility that perhaps benefits constant back-and-forth movement in a shifting world. A growing tendency in the transnational literature on identity construction focusing on individual choice diminishes, rather than enlarges, our analytical horizons, resulting in the specific selection of *what can be seen, heard, and read* in the heteronormative market. This perspective, in turn, makes visible the issues that frequently go unchallenged owing to

oppressive discourse through sociocultural practices. Thus, the guiding questions for the analysis are presented below, with the aim to uncover silenced discourses as sites of struggles to cultivate contemporary multi-layered contexts, challenging previously untouchable heteronormative paradigms.

(1) How do counternarrative writings of two TQs unsettle heteronormativity through gendered and racialized identity formations in the United States?

(2) How do two racialized TQs showcase queer and gendered literacies in the heteronormativity of the United States?

In the following sections, I begin with positionality and review the extant literature on TQs' identity construction in heteronormative contexts. Next, I describe the theoretical framework based on translanguaging (Ayash, 2019), transmodalities (Hawkins, 2018), raciolinguistics (Rosa & Flores, 2017), and transraciolinguistics (Smith, 2022a, 2022b). I then present data collection to elucidate dual ethnography as a qualitative process to understand the identity construction in the U.S. heteronormative contexts. Finally, I conclude the study with limitations and propose "depathologizing gencialization literacy (DGL)," calling for awakening this oblivious domain.

Positionality

I was born and raised in Taiwan; my pronouns are he, his, and him, and I identify as a gay, non-conforming gender and transnational queer student and non-gender binary. All these terms have a common meaning, considering LGBTQ+ as the norm. When I arrived in the United States in 2016, my gendered identity was not the only impediment to my sociocultural exposure. Racial and linguistic elements were equally integral to my identity construction and recognition, thus placing the

intersection of gender, race, and language at the core of my research agenda. Despite intentionally engaging with an underappreciated population (LGBTQ+ people), I unconsciously made mistakes that resulted in harm and reproduced oppression. However, my academic positionality urged me to acknowledge my discursive identities and multiplicities, which criticize power structures and potentially deconstruct power and social justice hierarchies. Creese and Blackledge (2015) highlight that all resources and power are never equally allocated to all speakers; I refer to this as “truncated translanguaging.” Although I identify as a TQS, the resources and power I possess may create incongruence with others who identify as TQs. The aforementioned process can be understood as “reflexive ethnography” (Madison, 2005). This constant loop helped me counter the limitations of my life experiences and epistemology, thereby further galvanizing my reflexivity.

Literature Review

Transnational Queer Students’ Ongoing Identity Construction

As society compels us to a more hypermodern and super-diverse pool of identities, the prefixes bi-, multi-, and pluri- simply encompass the concept of arithmetic, which categorizes transmigrants (TMs) into quantifiable mobile sociocultural and sociolinguistic resources. Ayash (2019) reminds us that, as the aforementioned terms fail to elucidate the complexity of TMs’ resources, it is essential to note that the prefix transforms the boundary between the baggage of numerical addition and multiple linguistic resources in spatiotemporal communicative contexts and the life of the domain to forge all walks of life in the age of globalization. The unprecedented, uncertain, and unstable discourses percolate into contemporary

modernity; against the backdrop of monocultural and monolingual frameworks, many transnational scholars have used evidence of social movements to problematize the entrenched ideology in an evolving development of the centralization of trans-discourses and transdisciplinary in multilingual education (Ayash, 2019; Omogun & Skerrett, 2021; Sánchez-Martín, 2020). Rizvi (2011) paints a similar picture, stating that many people lie at the intersection of an emergent transnational world, intending to fashion their burgeoning identities. Thus, TQs maintain strong ties with other countries, drawing from sundry geographies to garner newly available resources through ongoing identity construction.

Multiple representations of one's identity across the globe seem to be an integral component of identity construction. Davin and Norton (2015) state that diversity invites us to consider shifting contexts and further affordances to reconstitute them in the ongoing process of resource allocation. One's identity toggles, as Zimmerman's (1998) transportable identities reveals, or as Freire (2000) eloquently argues, "it is our awareness of being unfinished that makes us educable. And the same awareness in which we are inserted makes us eternal seekers. Eternal because of hope" (p. 38). Our awareness provides insight that identity comprises sociocultural practices contingent on the spatiotemporal context shaping and defining one's social differentials (Zimmerman, 1998). Crossing borders pushes this sophistication further, unfolds opportunities for unfinishedness, and triggers hope (Freire, 2000) as perpetual thinkers, makers, and writers. Indeed, TMs urge us to take a close glimpse of the 21st century's multistranded possibilities and limitations. When we come into contact with incompleteness, semi-structured identity formation, and eternal hope, the eternal seekers, including TQs, beyond doubt, become the focal point of reference to constant (re)construction (Omogun, 2018).

Ayash (2019) further argues that monolingualism is “a shielded, homogeneous system that remains in a frozen state locked in the universal” (p. 27). Transnationalism serves as a departure from rigid ideology, steering us away from complexifying the repertoires of TQSs, revaluing resources, and decentering the concept of the center/periphery to be more inclusive. This perspective highlights evolving language practices and TQS’s impact on fashioning identities across cultural chasms. Similar concepts reverberate with the location of differences, which are no longer the point of transnational experiences. Instead, as Rizvi (2011) states, “the binary between ‘here’ and ‘there’ begins to collapse in the face of spatial reconfigurations” (p. 195). Transnational representations and identifications illuminate cross-boundary diversity, spanning an ever-changing kaleidoscope, shifting the global structures of flow and relationships, and further reinforcing the consciousness of transnational identity. Such a transnational identity could be understood as a lens for unpacking new worlds, redefining boundaries, and even amplifying marginalized voices through identity construction (Omogun, 2018) for TQSs’ ongoing reconstruction.

Navigating Transnational Queer Students’ Literacy In Heteronormative Contexts

Literacy and applied linguistics critique the constraints on understanding identity construction in the era of globalization in which immigrants are intimately wrapped in transnational processes and literacy practices (Warriner, 2007). As an increasing number of people cross frontiers, it is worth borrowing a term from Lam and Warriner (2012): we must unsettle the “transnational habitus” and transcultural communicative nuances and environments within the authoritative heteronormativity through daily sociocultural practices. Similarly, TQSs have the potential for transcultural mobility

across different geographies, further sustaining and fashioning translocal and transnational identities while bridging their sociocultural and sociolinguistic resources (De Fina & Perrino, 2013). In parallel with Skerrett and Omogun (2020), language and literacy are social practices entwined with transnational orientations that debilitate the monolithic ideology of racialized bodies, enabling them to shift within an emergent identity through transnational resources. As such, TQS's literacy is encoded in historical, political, and culturally charged activities, where the development of local-global interconnections, transportable relations, and identity transformations through the notions of "Lingua Franca English" (see Canagarajah, 2007), or what Nelson (2010) calls the "gay lingua franca," are equally important. In the parlance of Park and Wee (2012), "English is a language of inequality, supporting and renewing relations of power—including the capitalist relations of oppression on the global scale between the center and periphery" (p. 3). However, I remain troubled by the heteronormative biases that engender these discourses, in that the underlying framing of linguistic deficiency, isomorphic identity, and determined social relations go unchallenged and are exacerbated in *heteronormative contexts* against TQSSs.

Indubitably, movement across geopolitical borders creates the potential for discovering similarities, differences, or even opposition in identity formation (Bucholtz, 2009), while the standard English language or English language editing, as a gatekeeper, toggles TQSSs' privilege and marginalization (Park, 2017; Park & Wee 2012). The push for this impact has been brought to the forefront of TQSSs' attention. Situating multiple TQSSs' identities opens a window for the complexities of relational, nascent—oppressive, and opaque—discourses and heteronormative literacies through social practice and performance, as Bucholtz (2009) notes. On a more hopeful note, gendered literacy is a significant standpoint of departure and futurity through dynamic

TQs' identities in heteronormative contexts. I felt compelled to disrupt the tendencies of heteronormative paradigms. Gender diversity, therefore, calls for the need to give not only a voice to LGBTQ+ communities but also, as Alexander et al. (2004) indirectly argue, to urge transnational teacher-scholars to integrate a sexual understanding of its sociopolitical dimensions in the classroom. Implementing this idea furnishes TQs with a substantial tool to read given situations and contexts while articulating their self-representation inside and outside the classroom. Opportunity emerges through ongoing self-consciousness protection and "eternal hope" (Freire, 2000) under the heteronormative framework, illuminating the negotiation between gender binary assumptions and silenced identities and further diminishing the possibility of *gendered illiteracy* and identity deprivation. Cameron (2005) illustrates that gender diversity reflects gendered crossing and homosexuality. Male individuals "may use feminine-gendered pronouns, adjectives, and articles" (p. 495) to refer to social-gendered literacy and reclaim their hidden identities and dignity.

Theoretical Frameworks

Meaning-Making Through Translanguaging as Transnational Empowerment

Translanguaging serves as the communicative norm for diverse repertoires. Ayash (2019) reverberates the concept that languages are not about quantification, but about the *resources* they carry in exploring differences and constraints. García and Kleifgen (2020) argue that translanguaging refers to a social practice in which multiple literacies occur within transnational borders in which TMs possess transportable resources, valuable experiences, and optimistic hopes for learning themselves. By implication, owing to the variation of spatiotemporal contexts, or what Sánchez-Martín

(2020) considers residing in a constantly redefining ecology, TMs have the propensity to be agents of their intersectional identities. Simultaneously, inequalities have been shaped by the hierarchical structure encoded in daily social practices across nation states (García & Kleifgen, 2020; Otheguy et al., 2015). For instance, a phenomenon remains pervasive in global cultural flows, and “it is widely recognized that language can act as a gatekeeper precisely because it allows selective access to social goods and affects one’s social trajectory” (Park & Wee, 2012, p. 55). Based on this concept, English develops a burgeoning site of struggle that consistently co-constructs myriad modes of transmission (a later section will deliberate upon this aspect), further reinforcing asymmetrical power relations in meaning-making and identity deprivation. Expressed differently, language is a byproduct, while bodies and spaces are co-constructed across multiple identities and social categories to produce marginalization and privilege in ways in which the language of power toggles (Park, 2017). García and Gaddes (2012) argue that social and symbolic transactions emerge through the sociocultural world where meaning-making occurs, indicating that literacy can manifest in individual transactions through one’s resources and social power relations.

To engage in cross-pollination from the aforementioned ideas, reterritorialization, accompanied by deterritorialization, as Motha (2014) notes, casts a new lens on the transnational world through translanguaging. The former refers to the attachment of new cultural makers, whereas the latter refers to the detachment of cultural tokens. With the advent of globalization, TMs are bombarded with wide-ranging sociocultural and sociohistorical clashes and identity reconstructions. Translanguaging paints a new, promising orientation toward diversity in a moment-by-moment state where emergence is fostered. Unfolding repertoires of language learners, translanguaging encourages bi/multi/translingual users to avail themselves of newly

acquired resources for meaning-making (García & Kleifgen, 2020) and identity construction (Omogun & Skerrett, 2021) and renewing self as transformation (Sánchez-Martín, 2022). These discourses suggest a dynamic process in the transnational frameworks of encounter and exchange. Although inequalities cut across power differentials, translanguaging, as stated by Higgins (2010), constitutes a critical site to be problematized and voiced for TQs, thereby further epitomizing a weapon for self-empowerment to reject and complexify HL. This phenomenon opens scholarly boundaries for sexual literacy, forging new constructs and nuances for translanguaging TQs. Naturally, monolingualism is part of an ideologically racializing system (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Otheguy et al., 2015). A question, thus, arises: how does translanguaging act as a framework that not only addresses linguistic codes but also sustains or reconstructs TQs' gendered resources, literacy, and identities? I call for amplifying the invisible transnational research agenda while forging ahead, liberating, and heightening the voices of oppressed people. This stance illuminates TQs in this study, translanguaging windows into realities (García & Leiva, 2014), realities that can crack the gender binary template, revitalize fixed identities, and diversify the mesh of possibilities for TQs in the U.S. heteronormative contexts. Translanguaging empowers transnational gendered and racialized identities, while transnational gendered and racialized identities animate meaning making.

Social Practices Through Transmodalities

Literacy has always been at the center of multimodal practices, as contemporary literacy complicates what we learned from the New London Group (1996) more than two decades ago. As Cope and Kalantzis (2009) highlighted, the world is evolving and communicative surroundings' fluidity will depend on the degree to which learning

methods and teaching literacies are altered. New literacies echo these insights in the context of the ongoing process of dynamic transformation of the transnational world and its pressing, unprecedented, and precarious mode of communication, including “linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes of meaning becoming increasingly integrated [into] everyday media and cultural practices” (p. 166). Kress (2000) stands in solidarity with the view that “it is no longer possible to understand language and its uses without understanding the effect of all modes of communication that are [co-present] in any text” (p. 337). One can envision literacy as a social practice that complements the alignment of mobility, transnationalism, and globalization. Hawkins (2018) invites a glimpse into the advanced phenomenon where border crossing is the norm that contributes to the reality of “super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2019) and the transnational world (Omogun, 2018; Skerrett, 2012). TQs’ daily social practices are dispersed in geographical unboundedness as communication occurs at an ever-increasing speed across the globe among an ever-changing audience. At the turn of the 21st century, the repertoires of TQs, including language use, difference, and contact, potentiated and threw deep-seated monolithic ideologies into disarray. As Ayash (2019) maintains, while opening up opportunities, they stay beyond printed, written, and unidirectional approaches to the point of transmodalities. The concept of literacy practices, from multiliteracy to the notion of transmodalities, refers to decentering from the static of the constrained multimodal to the prefix *trans* of interactions and negotiations. Specifically, the concept calls attention to the movement and state of flux of semiotic resources across local/translocal, national/transnational, and boundless contexts and communities (Hawkins, 2018). This concept aligns with me as well as my participant’s oppressed transnational queer identities. Transmodalities lie at the intersection of language, race, and gender. Dynamic integration, bilateral informativity, and linguistic resources

transact in the spatiotemporal ecology within local and global encounters, interactions, and negotiations, thereby illuminating new sites for daily cultivation and practice.

Transraciolinguistics in Transnational Identity Formation

Language learning informs the understanding of differences, as globalization has pushed the envelope between subjects and listeners while creating a linguistic illusion of English (Higgins, 2003; Park & Wee, 2015). In other words, investing in language acquisition allows learners to garner more symbolic and material resources by participating more fully in society. The context of TQSs aligns with this concept and seems unarguable. However, the social illnesses of race and monolingualism remain inextricable and problematic across English countries (Jenkins & Leung, 2019). TQSs relocate to an English country, particularly from Asians in this study, implying that Rosa and Flores's (2017) raciolinguistic ideologies—racialized speakers, listeners, and non-human entities—oppress and disempower them, further entitling white subjects as superior and inviolable. Race has become a hallmark for differentiating center/peripheral perspectives (Motha, 2014), imposing them as inherently deficient (Rosa & Flores, 2017) and categorizing them as languageless subjects (Rosa, 2019). All these oppressive discourses have amplified the need for identity formation through racialized subjects' transnational experiences at the crisscross of race and language. However, the literature on gender in Asia within the framework of raciolinguistics remains to be developed. This study's intention is to complement this deficiency.

Looking through the lens of TQS contributes to the possibility of extending beyond racialized language, or what Smith (2022a) calls languaging, which supports racialized individuals through a relationship between power and race to position themselves to make meaning through the language they use, further transforming the

role of the racialized body and privileging one's language use across differences. This way of thinking symbolizes an opportunity for harmony with co-naturalization between race and language (Rosa & Flores, 2017) while disrupting racialized bodies on "the receiving end of marginalization" (Smith, 2022a, b, p. 113) and valorizing and serving as beneficial nutrition for [invisible] transnational identity and construction (Omogun & Skerrett, 2021) as being transracialized subjects (Alim, 2016). To pursue this further, Smith (2022a, b) crystalizes a new concept merging "trans" and "raciolinguistics" into *transraciolinguistics*, comprising the a) metalinguistic[s] that allows them to valorize transnational migrants' language differences and meaning-making through their linguistic awareness, b) metaracial [awareness] that affords their understanding of sociocultural racialized subjects, including other repertoires of languages and "Englishes," and c) metacultural frameworks that admit the cross-cultures portrayed in racialized contexts, thereby transcending the contexts of border-crossing of disparate boundaries. The transraciolinguistic approach shifts away from monocultural, monoracial, and monolingual assumptions when considering the resources across symbolic and geographic boundaries of immigrants and transnational students of color regarding race, language, and culture. However, underestimating the concept of *sexual diversity* as part and parcel of TQs' formation across the globe, as Nelson (2006) notes, further reinforces the consequences of gendered silence and the binary gender model. This might instigate a crescendo of homophobia and insecurity, both inside and outside the classroom. On a note of caution, Smith (2022a, b) overlooks the current phenomenon of sexual diversity, urging me to problematize the underappreciated *metagendered concept* that compounds established heteronormative assumptions about TQs. Nonetheless, this study serves as a way of bridging this gap that brings the metagendered concept into account of how the two TQs aim to foster sexual diversity

and literacy. This idea, therefore, puts forward the potentiality, reminding teachers, educators, and stakeholders to acknowledge that, in the identity formation of TQs, (Asian) students' identities are not only transnational but also challenge established assumptions about gender non-conforming racialized students in the classroom.

Materials and Methods

Data Collection

This study employs a new lens of what Ellis and Adam (2014) call “Reflexive, dyadic interviews” or what Hughes et al. (2016) call “Dual-ethnography” to shift away from a single subject approach to *dualistic subjects approach* that occurs between the researcher and the informant. Dual ethnography is manifested in allowing the “bridgebuilders” (Trinh & Méndez, 2020) to be self-reviews in a dialogical stance to mirror who they truly are (Madison, 2011) while serving as a liberatory space to bridge the cracks through multiple understandings toward each other's transnational worlds, narratives, and histories and social justice kindled from a change (Trinh & Méndez, 2020). Of note, dual ethnography precludes the potential risk of devolving into self-absorption through autoethnography, which Adams et al. (2017) warned about, while crystallizing invisible silence through TQs. Retrospective writing is interpreted as self-identification and healing while serving as a weapon to the transhistorical habitus and reclaiming one's gendered identities, racialized bodies, and silenced ways of knowing. Similarly, the quest for an identity requires ongoing exploration, illuminating the potential of negotiation and reconstructing one's sociocultural and spatiotemporal contexts (Sánchez-Martín, 2020) while pushing the envelope between the constraints and possibilities that shape and are shaped by social ills across the world.

To address the aforementioned guiding questions and capitalize on dual-ethnography as a qualitative orientation, I began the data collection by contacting some friends via social media (Instagram) and email and requesting participation from those who consider themselves as TQs and were willing to share and dismantle the repressed sentiments in this initial project. In this phase, I enlisted the help of six participants who volunteered to share. Amy was chosen as a TQ because of the complexity of intersectionality despite the sensitive topics (discomfort and insecurity) and personal risk-taking (re-traumatization); further, Amy was willing to destabilize heteronormativity against the backdrop of her personal trajectories to co-construct each other's (Amy and I) transnational queer worlds.

Amy (pseudonym) was born and raised in Japan. Her pronouns are she and they. Amy left her home country for the United States for high school education as an exchange student in Berrien Springs, Michigan when she was 16 years old. After finishing high school, she returned to Japan to continue her education; however, she could not find a school where she could study female sexuality. She eventually relocated to Seattle and (re) navigated her gendered identity as a queer. While defining as a queer, she said, "I am attracted to personality and a person's character, such as how emotionally close I feel to that person, not to their gender or body" (October 14, 2023).

At the beginning of the data collection process (Data Collection Timeline, see Figure 1), I used my gendered journal (GJ), capturing daily critical reflections in non-gender binary contexts. Next, I gathered Amy's personal journals (APJ) and her social media posts from Instagram and performed six interactive interviews complying with Merriam and Tisdell's (2015, p. 210) notion of *saturation*; these interviews lasted one hour for each meeting from September 2023 to December 2023. Interviews were conducted with Amy and I at 24 and 25 years old, respectively. Given the gendered

literacies, I utilized a) “photo-elicitation” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p 170), b) the picture book “10,000 Dresses” by Marcus Ewert, and c) an image taken by me (a crosswalk of a rainbow) at Capital Hills in downtown Seattle, a site of struggle and an unfolding heteronormative context in TQSs’ spaces.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed over six hours. For validation, the transcripts were returned to Amy for error corrections, misinterpretations, and modifications. Next, data analysis followed the procedures proposed by Creswell (2013): (a) organizing the data; (b) reading and memoing; (c) describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes; (d) interpreting the data; and (e) representing and visualizing the data. I gathered transcripts, all the journals, initial memos, and teaching field notes to proceed with the data codes. Through opening coding and axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), Duo-Transnational Queer Discourses (see Figure 2) came into being that situate TQSs as an ongoing contact zone of oppression and liberation for emergent identity construction in heteronormative contexts in more than one country, while disrupting heteronormativity to allow gendered identity construction and gendered literacy in the U.S. for TQSs. Next, potential categories (See Figure 3) or themes were rearranged and renamed. I compared, selected, and concentrated on ten sections dovetailing the posed research questions. In the following section, three themes emerge from the data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Unachievable and Unthinkable Goals

“It makes me feel that is ‘the goal’ I must pursue as a ‘woman’” (APJ). One of

the entry journals from Amy indicates that she does not belong to either a man or a woman and has no options to choose from when she came to the United States. This perspective resonates with our interactive interview: “My only option is to use a binary box, either male or female” (Chi, personal communication, October 08, 2023). Here, HL has become a framework anchored in (trans)local and (trans)national borders for “what we must conform, behave, do and not do in ways” (GJ), and has penetrated social and cultural reproduction across space and time. As mentioned earlier, Amy identified as queer, but *her body and appearance*, as well as mine, boxed us in a flesh prison. In Amy’s words, “the goal” as a woman is inviolable, implying that women have been portrayed as impotent, fragile, and inferior compared to men (Cameron, 2005), while reinforcing the gendered disempowerment that the binary template is the only option one can imagine and follow (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Despite the odds, Amy chose to be queer as a site of contention for the acts of being either a man or a woman and of fostering a sense of gender-fluid that gender is boundless. From this perspective, being a non-conforming gender (LGBTQ+) deprives one of human rights, although the goal of being a stereotyped gender *is never achievable and thinkable*. As illustrated in our journals: “My mother believes all women should not have any body hair, and she wants me to remove all of my body hair, which I think is ridiculous” (APJ). Similarly, “my mom wants me to act more masculine and sound less feminine, and always reminds me of my non-verbal behavior and voice when I speak to her” (GJ). Here, the ethnography’s results suggest that, at best, the heteronormative market will not respect and embrace us; at worst, homophobia casts on our gendered and racialized identities as *deficient language learners*. LGBTQ+ issues in our language classrooms remain uncharted, as Paiz (2020) notes; the current study might shift the overlooked traumatization of TQs and legitimize their agency and invisible identity concerning the

intersection of gender, race, and language. Within the context of the ongoing delegitimization of TQs inside and outside the classroom, the next section presents arguments that the heterosexual context has shaped what is to be believed, heard, and seen in heteronormative frameworks.

Unspeakable Silence of Disempowerment and Deprivation

Sometimes, non-LGBTQ+ people do not understand the importance of asking people for their gender pronouns, because these do not exist in Japanese. My gendered pronouns are she/they. It is challenging when people ask me what this means in Japanese, as we have words for she/her and he/him but not for them.

We also do not have a word to describe phenomenon/discrimination, so we do not talk about it because there are no words to describe the experience that some people face every day of their lives. (Amy, personal communication, October 08, 2023)

Japanese does not have words for non-gender binary pronouns. It is important to note that the gender binary has muffled certain oppressed voices and attempted to silence LGBTQ+ communities to eradicate sexual and gender diversity (Nelson, 2010). Gender is a social practice or the result of engagement in a community of practice and performance (Higgins, 2010). However, heteronormativity masks invisible communities, as in Amy's case in the U.S. Amy cannot find words to express herself more freely than cisgender female/male. Neuliep's (2009) microcultural context highlights this case.

Yet the language of the dominant group may not provide the words and symbols representative of the microcultural group's perceptions and experiences. Thus, because

such groups are forced to communicate within the dominant mode of expression, they become “muted” (p. 87).

Amy’s gender identity can be understood as a microculture attached to macrocultural words and worlds. Macroculture has become a site of access to power, knowledge, and rights, as Amy encountered while debilitating her empowerment in the usage of heteronormative contexts as a reference to expression and understanding. Her gendered identity brings with it particular challenges as well, emanating from the hopelessness and silence that serves as a non-engagement—as a tacit acknowledgment of heteronormative discourses and linguistic practices (Paiz, 2020). As Amy notes, “We will not talk about it because there are no words to describe the experience.” The lack of appropriate words in a language to describe specific experiences symbolizes not only non-existence but also the understanding that differences should not be the norm. The existence of sexual/gender diversity disturbs heteronormativity, which considers reproductive, monogamous heterosexuality as the only survival skill and culturally valued and allowable way of life, as Nelson (2006) argues.

For instance, Amy states, “However, my parents are unaware of my gender identity. It is my fault that I have not found enough courage to talk with them that I was a queer” (APJ). Similarly, “I remain unsure about how to tell my mother about my gender because I feel this is inappropriate as I have been manipulated by Taiwanese cultural beliefs as well as generational expectations as the only male individual in my family” (GJ).

Insecurity has overshadowed us thus far, and we feel suffocated and fail to fully express ourselves in the context of heteronormativity. The decision to come out continued to cause anxiety for us when we moved to the United States, partly because of homophobia, as we did not want to shame our family. Taiwan allows same-sex

marriage, but this does not guarantee that a homosexual person can get social equality. For example, if I had come out as gay to my mother, what would happen? She would say that I am crazy and that accepting and embracing it was unreachable and unthinkable. Cultural expectations are ingrained in our daily sociocultural practices, and this fear remains invincible to our gender/sexual identity. Owing to this ambiguity, we are unsure if we should take such risks. These findings imply that this emergent, uneasy feeling persists throughout the journeys of our unspeakable gendered identities, breathing with tensions amongst hopelessness and unsafety. It is important to recognize that imperceptible power differentials in both our spatiotemporal geographies are intertwined with gender and religion. Namely, gender is the consequence of one's engagement with communities across time and space that have shaped how we need to behave. Concurrently, the intersection of race coming into play might trigger a sophisticated understanding of how race and gender are social and cultural practices that emanate from heteronormativity. On the one hand, non-conforming gender has caused ongoing exclusion, and racialized subjects, on the other hand, are perceived as linguistic failure or "inherently deficient" (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 632) in the heteronormative framework. Building on these ideas, we next turn to racialized powerlessness with gender.

Racialized Powerlessness to Metagendered Awareness

In one of the entries, Amy wrote, "When I was in a small village in Michigan, I realized that I might not be the same as a White person and that treated me differently because my skin was not the ideal color" (APJ). Similarly, I state that "Being labeled as a multilingual speaker does not credit the tapestry of my identity as doubts are cast on my race and *unwelcomed gender identity*" (Chi, personal communication, November

24, 2023).

Racialized products and discrimination are interwoven with our minds, bodies, and languages that are worthwhile to worship, but turn out to be what Higgins (2003) and Park and Wee (2015) note in the linguistic illusion of English. Racial differences are further translated into underappreciated values, and questioning is afoot on the way through navigation in the United States. Racialized bodies are bombarded with interrogations that anchor the dichotomy between privilege and marginalization (Park, 2017) across time and space. This seems to touch on the parallel point suggested by Rosa and Flores' (2017) concept of "raciolinguistic ideologies," that TQs appear to be "languageless subjects" in the co-formation of interactional practices (Rosa, 2019) on the one hand, and the idea that unwelcomed gender identity reflects on the continuum of "internalized homophobia" (Cummings, 2009) on the other hand. As such, gendered processes have been encoded in a dualistic orientation (e.g., subject vs. object) with racialized bodies whose repercussions in indexicality in an ecological orientation must not be overlooked. Similarly, racialized subjects have been thrown into the web of social, cultural, and gendered reproduction moment-by-moment. As Higgins (2010) puts it, gender is "the result of one's engagement in a community of practice" (p. 376). Ignoring the elements of gender amounts to mere slipping service social justice. We must consider the embeddedness of racialized constructions traveling through metagendered awareness, indicating that gender is not static but a fluid concept while resisting the imposition of racialized and gendered categories to question monoracial/monogender toward "transracialization" (Alim, 2016, p. 45) and sexual diversity. In other words, combining sex and race requires a nuanced understanding of the two and should be seen in an ever emerging and asymmetrical manner. The findings suggest that metagendered awareness might cultivate a space for all students to

humanize and empathize with TQs across various identities, thereby ameliorating the urgency of homophobia and xenophobia (e.g., imposter syndrome).

Emergence of Gendered Literacies Through Digital Space

When it comes to breaking the norms of silence, I feel like sharing Japanese articles/posters with English lyrics or vice versa on Instagram stories. I need to talk about things that I care about more aggressively. However, I talked about how difficult and heavy it was to stand up in silence and then talk about things that no one wanted to talk about. So, it is like cheering for those things. (Amy, personal communication, November 08, 2023).

“Gender should not be used to decide who is better or worse, but should be used to understand who I truly am” (Chi, personal communication, November 08, 2023).

This empowering conversation took place when Amy acted for herself and *her Japanese audience* by addressing topics and words that were silenced between Japan and the United States. Interestingly, interpretation can act as a means of liberation from nonexistent words (e.g., queer) in Japan. In this manner, shuttling between Japanese and English windows into meaning-making through translanguaging (Ayash, 2019; García & Kleifgen, 2020) shows that writing embodies varied modes of transmission (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) while reinforcing gendered empowerment in literacy practices through translanguaging for TQs. As Canagarajah (2007) notes, meaning does not rely solely on language shifting to transmodalities (Hawkins, 2018), compelling mobility between gender, race, and language to epitomize resistance and lack of silence in Amy. Put another way, the node of heteronormativity has been cast into disarray, empowering TQs in the process of “self-transformation” (Sánchez-Martín, 2022) while

reconfiguring TQS's identity construction (Omogun & Skerrett, 2021) that writes into becoming and reads into existence for reclaiming power of few in hand. Here, Amy's resources are activated through her/their transactions (García & Gaddes, 2012) in transmodal spaces on "Instagram," which creates a space for visibility and gives voice to what she/they consider(s) essential to appreciate in translocal and transnational worlds. These invisible voices are often unexamined; however, gendered literacy emerges through the digital space (Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Lam, 2013). It is important to note that online and offline identity work should "not be parallel or separate but be intertwined" (Dovchin & Pennycook, 2018) to sustain and negotiate her/their gendered resources, identities, and repertoires in an every-reframing "contact zones" (Canagarajah, 2013). Simultaneously, you cannot see it once you see it (GJ). These findings imply that translanguaging and transmodalities could glimpse into a space where gendered literacies are rejuvenated, while digital space could revitalize TQs' identities, as I argue that *gender should not be used to decide who is better or worse*. However, digital space might immobilize one's identities and resources in the context of asymmetrical power relations.

Conclusion and Implications

This study's findings cannot fully epitomize overall linguistic and sexual diversity, as data collection was limited to two TQs. Thus, the intersectionality of each person comprises unique lived experiences. However, as Weiss (1994) argues, "we can expect the same behavior from any other group with the same dynamics and the same constraints" (p. 27). Equally significant, this study draws attention to the potential constraints of fluid and highly sensitive gendered topics in the context of crossing borders with digital spaces. This task encourages further study along the lines of the

following questions: a) What does gendered diversity mean in online and offline spaces? b) How can transnational teachers and literacy educators create a *safer* zone of online contact for TQs? c) Where cultural differences are the norm, in what ways can the safer zone of contact alleviate the crisscross of racism, internal homophobia, and xenophobia? Similarly, how can non-TQs get representation and identification to see and understand their own gender equally, both on- and offline, in the context of heteronormativity? We, therefore, need conscientious scholars to untangle these complexities and assist us in comprehending this uncharted area. However, this study aims to deheteronormalize the gendered system while liberating TQs from its values. This echoes the dual-ethnographic orientation, assisting us in a dialogical stance that sheds light on invisible TQs' identities and literacy in the U.S. heteronormative contexts. Equally important, the current study holds the potential to enrich the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages, applied linguistics, and literacy education. However, the TQ population remains to be studied; if we are to create a more just, inclusive, and safe world, we must not forget this. In this manner, depathologizing gencialization—as a combination of gender and racialization—literacy (DGL) can be a guide to this oblivious stage, both inside and outside the classroom.

DGL is a framework that encourages teachers and scholars to move beyond pathologizing to the intersection of *gendered, racialized, and linguistic* practices in literacy education. The DGL is composed of five steps (*to create, address, foster, maximize, and reflect*), and we can implement it in any English language classroom. In parallel, Ulla and Paiz (2023) call for imperative queer pedagogy in TESOL so that language teachers can grapple with the realities of modern society where a classroom is an opportunity to not simply recognize the needs of [TQs] but also to do justice for

[TQSS]. A variable state in which diverse repertoires of TQSSs shuttle between the home country and the settled country has posed unexpected challenges for transnational scholars who, in turn, are approaching social justice. Fluid, interlocking, and nebulous as borders have become, we should shift away from literacy education to *trans-literacy education*, elucidating contemporary phenomena, but more so, unpacking gendered complexity and embracing sexual diversity. However, as I have reflected on inclusivity, the current teaching pedagogy is not a panacea and gives little attention to the (queer) education system. This may reinforce the policies of heteronormative monolithic norms that remain uncontested. Teachers' avoidance of LGBTQ+ or queer pedagogy may put students in danger (Seburn, 2018) and fail to open engagement for invisible English learners (Paiz, 2020) by default, leading to a channel for exclusion and acknowledgment of heteronormative discourses and linguistic practices. Specifically, queer pedagogical inquiry empowers me with the instrument to explore, complicate, and unwrap the possibility of invisible transnational communities being recontextualized and reconstructed. This urgency urges me to take responsibility for our careless ignorance and exclusion. Partly because of my positionality, I consider that gendered identities are not only about fluidity but also about mutually inflecting other identities that are being underestimated and unexplored in ways; teachers and scholars should reformulate and take grave account of their teaching practices and materials. By extension, within the context of globalized communication and the forging of transcultural and transnational relationships, I initiate a clarified call to action: gendered identities are no longer only local but exist on a global scale, and the identity formation of language use, racialized representation, and gendered socialization have created a new form of insight into transliteracy. On this front, literacy educators should destabilize, derecognize, and decenter the uncomplicated process of all facts that have been entrenched in the

practices of the nation-state. As we move into the tapestry of languages, cultures, social contacts, resources, and ecologies, multiple forms of belonging, interaction, and participation in invisible transnational communities have become prevalent in the 21st century.

Creation

The first step is to create opportunities to discuss silenced related topics (LGBTQ+) in the classroom; DGL encourages us to examine the complexity of one's social, cultural, and linguistic identities, even if some teachers feel the risk of doing so. In other words, creating a space for teachable points or moments will lead to a more approachable method.

- Have we considered invisible identity features between daily socialization and interaction? If so, do we think about how to incorporate digital media into the classroom to foster a new mode of belonging, communication, and socialization?
- Do our curricular and teaching materials manifest gendered diversity that engages students in moving beyond the gender binary template toward a multisexual model?
- Where might there be opportunities to acknowledge this multiplicity and seek students' motivation and interest?
- Do we consider the names of students or pronouns in our class as representative cultural, sexual, and gendered identities that might (re)shape your sexual identity? Do we extend this idea outside the classroom and digital spaces to allow students to fashion multiple identities?

- How do we trace the transhistorical impact of students' recognition and awareness of gender, race, and language?

Addressing

The second step addresses the tasks and questions that demonize invisible communities in literacy practices, and further lays the foreground for sites of possibilities. We might take it as a space to further our understanding of ourselves. Only if we acknowledge our inner biases toward gender do we have the opportunity to foster a society of transcultural and transsexual literacy. Without this step, we might mire ourselves in a vicious spiral, where we are simply at the expense of those invisible gendered identities to be cultivated and turn out to reinforce oppressive discourses accordingly.

- Do we ponder whom those invisible gendered identities are centered on and address when framing learning tasks, activities, assignments, and discussion questions?
- How can the digital space of LGBTQ+ themes be incorporated into learning materials and practices?
- How do we disarm our biases regarding our and others' sexual identities?
- How do we approach invisible gendered communities to help our students understand the various norms that exist and should be appreciated?
- How is "LGBTQ+" to be represented in curricula and materials? Which characteristics will be included, and which will be excluded?

Fostering

The third step was to *foster* inquiries concerning LGBTQ+ themes in literacy practices, as we proceeded to the learning goal of the class. This inquiry allows educators to craft praxis in more productive ways to empower themselves to break down the multilayered ideologies encoded in practice. The multifaceted ideologies ingrained in the system where we reside raise our awareness of its existence and lead to the realization of possibilities and limitations in literacy practices, thereby leading the minoritized to a more just world.

- When LGBTQ+ topics arise, are they formulated in ways that turn inquiries on and off, create a multitude of representations and interpretations, and consider transcultural and transmodal intricacies?
- How do multi-layered ideologies in literacy practice transition into LGBTQ+ themes? How do they bear a transnational life?
- It is essential to ensure that LGBTQ+ themes are interpreted in ways that facilitate or handle the learning objectives of the class. Is this sufficiently clear for student learning?
- How do we open to the possibility of exploring literacy practices and identity work? When limitations come into function, how do we redress or refine the constraints we encounter?

Maximization

The fourth step is to *maximize* choices for ourselves and our students when we are in ongoing practice. This step requires teachers to push the boundary between the maximization and minimization of choices that may produce more profound

consequences. This step aligns with the operation of the problem-posing system of education and instruction (Freire, 1968); put another way, as we approach our teaching and learning, we must keep in mind that the centerstage is on students' needs, desires, and concerns about the instruction and pedagogy.

- When entering LGBTQ+ themes in class, do we pay heed to the students' reactions and responses as feedback to assist us in constructing or adjusting your lesson accordingly?
- Do students have the opportunity to make decisions about LGBTQ+ themes that offer them the opportunity to choose the extent to which they are to participate, including peer and group discussions, homework, and open-ended questions?
- Can they embody themselves in the class they desire to attend and practice other modes of transmission (this is not only the form in writing, but also trans/multimodality)?
- Does our class climate feel secure and sufficient for students to engage in the LGBTQ+ themes of literacy?

Reflection

Finally, we arrive at the last step, which is to *reflect* on our motivations, challenges, and concerns as we put our teaching practices into action, which endows us with opportunities for analysis and interpretation. The last step drives the tendency to censor the outcomes of LGBTQ+-related themes in literacy education. This provides us with powerful tools spanning gender, race, and language, which have permitted LGBTQ+ themes to be a perennial taboo, in and out of the students' learning journey. However, this is not, and should not be, the norm in transcultural, translingual, or

transsexual societies. As such, we must reflect on the following questions:

- What is the goal of integrating LGBTQ+ themes into online and offline learning?
- How do we construct or reconfigure your curricula, teaching materials, and instructions by referencing our accumulated education and experience?
- What are the motivations, discouragements, and concerns for us to simultaneously break potentially oppressive topics while taking resolution into account?
- Are our teaching practices accessible enough to navigate oppressive discourses for students who might benefit from them inside and outside the class?
- Should students have concerns similar to ours as they explore such discursive content and contexts? How do we structure the materials that will be applicable to them?

Author Note

Acknowledgements

I am sincerely indebted to Dr. Lakeya (Omogun) Afolalu for her early and supportive reading of this manuscript, as well as her and Dr. Cristina Sánchez-Martín's insightful feedback on earlier drafts of this manuscript in May 2024.

Declaration of Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Figure 1

Data Collection Timeline

Data Collection Timeline

2023 OCT

- Interactive interviews (2 times).
- GJ.
- APJ.

2023 NOV

- Interactive interviews (2 times).
- Photo-Elicitation: An image taken by me (a crosswalk of a rainbow) at Capital Hills in downtown Seattle.



2023 MAY-SEP

- Contacting some friends via social media (Instagram) and email.

2023 OCT

- Interactive interviews (2 time).
- Picture Book "10,000 Dresses" by Marcus Ewert.

2023 DEC

- Transcripts Check (corrections, misinterpretations, and modifications).
- Sharing GJ & APJ.

Figure 2

Duo-transnational Queer Discourses

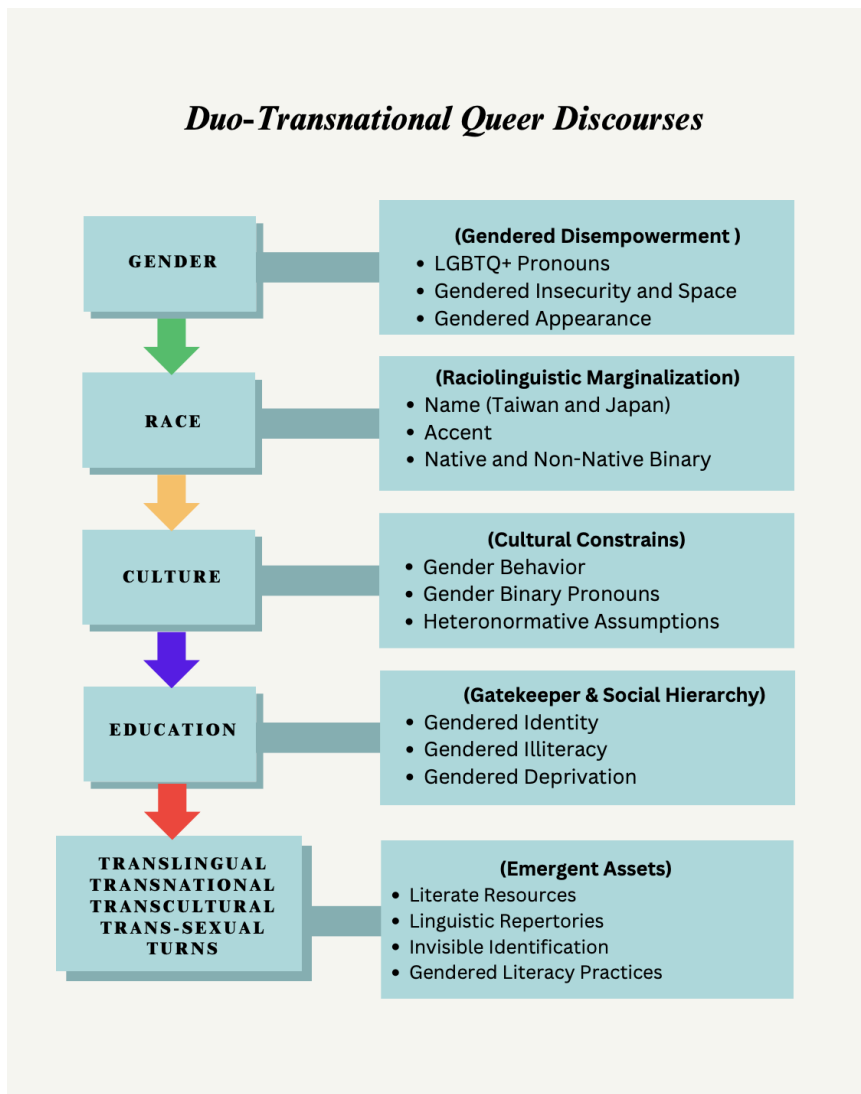


Figure 3

Potential Categories

