

Developing Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Primary English Teacher Instruction via Picturebooks

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Abstract

This paper focuses on how mediation around contemporary children's picturebooks contributes to developing Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in primary English teacher instruction. It discusses picturebooks from a gender perspective, introduces queer pedagogy to articulate with gender and sexual diversity and elaborates upon creative teaching ideas with a focus on language learning, art and critical thinking on identity construction.

Keywords: Picturebooks – Queer pedagogy – English – Primary - CSE

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza el desarrollo de competencias para la educación sexual integral (ESI) en la enseñanza de inglés en primaria dentro de la formación docente a través de libros álbum contemporáneos. Se analizan los libros álbum desde una perspectiva de género, se articula la pedagogía queer con la diversidad sexual y de género y se presentan propuestas áulicas creativas y artísticas que vinculan el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera, el arte y el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico en relación a los procesos de construcción identitaria.

Palabras claves: Libros álbum – pedagogía *queer* – Inglés – Primaria – ESI

Introduction

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is a curriculum-based programme which covers all aspects of sexuality, including the cognitive, the emotional, the physical and the social. It intends to prepare children and teenagers to be critical citizens, to look after their health and well-being in relation to sexuality, to have respectful social and sexual relationships and to learn to protect their rights (UNESCO, 2018b). Within CSE, the development of respectful attitudes towards gender and sexual identity construction becomes relevant through all levels of education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child covers all aspects of the child's life and highlights the right of non-discrimination which applies "to every child whatever their race, colour, gender, language, religion, ethnicity, disability or any other status" (Article 2, UNCRC, 1989), which grants children the possibility to thrive in life without fear of persecution.

In Argentina, since our national law (26,150) was passed in 2006, which enforces the creation and implementation of a national CSE programme and ensures the right of all learners to have sexual education in all the educational levels and institutions across the country (Banegas, Jacovkis & Romiti, 2020), local English teacher education programmes and schools have started to include CSE in their curriculum, and a great number of articles, classroom experiences, case studies, resource material and lesson plans have been published and made accessible to all so as to contribute to equipping student teachers and in-service teachers with tools and strategies to work with CSE in the classroom (Accardo, 2020; Banegas & Lauze 2020; Cossu, Brun & Banegas, 2021).

This paper examines how CSE teaching in primary English teacher education, mediated by picturebooks, fosters inclusive practices around sexual orientation and diverse gender identities. It explores the teaching potential of two picturebooks which are used to delve into CSE in the primary English classroom among children aged 6 to 12: *King & King* (2000) by Linda de Haan & Stern Mijland is a ground-breaking work in the field which revisits traditional fairy tales with a queer twist

and *Julián is a Mermaid* (2018) by Jessica Love is a story of creative gender identity construction. Both picturebooks share the same ethos, the development of empathy, understanding and respect for diverse gender or sexual identities.

Pedagogical framework

Based on a human rights and gender perspective, CSE intends to be transformative and prepares students to develop skills needed to make healthy choices in their lives, such as empathy, citizenship rights and responsibilities, respect, acceptance of every human being, regardless of their ethnicity, race, social, economic or immigration status, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics (UNESCO, 2018b). These variables influence identity construction and may affect the learners' access to education. A transactional view of these layers shows the dialectic of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2015) and urges society to act upon discrimination to dismantle it. In multicultural societies, for example, one child in primary school may have several (under)privileged characteristics as they may be a girl who belongs to an ethnic minority group, is a speaker of a minority language and has a physical disability, among others. These interrelated layers of discrimination and prejudice, may affect the child's self-esteem and school performance, and deprive them from access to high quality education, since overlapping disadvantages erode education opportunities (UNESCO, 2020).

With regard to diverse gender and sexual identities, queer pedagogy (Merse, 2015; Paiz, 2019) creates spaces where dialogue and critical discussion about the sociocultural relevance of these identities can be carried out in a manner that is respectful of all identities and subjectivities. It challenges binary thinking to include diverse gender and sexual identities in the classroom, questions the homosexual versus heterosexual binary, understands human subjectivity as fluid, fragmented and changeable and individual subjectivity as a dynamic construction of possible sexualities (Trujillo, 2015). It exposes the practice of making non-heteronormative identities invisible at school and how binarism fosters multiple exclusions, also affected by other intersectional identity factors that combine and create unique modes of discrimination and privilege (Collins, 2015). According to Paiz (2019), sexual [and gender] identities may become salient in the classroom and influence language learning and acquisition processes. He also highlights that both curricular materials and teacher education still need "additional scholarly attention" (Paiz, 2019, p. 2).

In this regard, feminist pedagogy (hooks, 1994; Adichie, 2014) makes a significant contribution to this frame since it focuses on how patriarchy and gender stereotyping affect the construction of healthy and self-confident female identities and it educates on gender equality by means of deconstructing gender stereotypes. In dominant heteronormative contexts, boys and girls are educated within clearly delineated patriarchal gender roles (hooks, 1994; 2000) and gender creative learners often experience bullying at school, which influence how learners behave in society, the relationships they build and their academic choices. Such patriarchal gender roles may be spotted by a close observation of our everyday classroom routines: Who is asked to do the chores in the classroom, such as tidying up, cleaning the board or sweeping the floor, whether teachers discriminate toys and playground games for boys or girls or, whether in school performances, boys are, per chance, given a female role to play. These actions, among others, such as how bullying is dealt with by the school, may be relevant indicators of the level of gender bias in our educational contexts.

CSE gives a close look at the teaching materials we use in the classroom, since, as Bland (2019) clearly explains, in contexts where English is not the majority of school language, the main sources of children's language input are the teachers themselves and the materials they use in the classroom. As English classes are mainly organized around coursebooks, they become central to introduce the topics to work with. Both feminist and queer pedagogies put coursebooks under scrutiny to disclose how gender is (mis)represented (Gray, 2002). They highlight how gender stereotyping and the absence of queer texts silence and make invisible learners who do not conform to the gendered social expectations or whose family environment is different from the institutionalized norm (Gray, 2013; Merse, 2014).

Global (primary) ELT coursebooks, due to sensitivity to cultural inappropriacy in international contexts, offer a “sanitized” view of the world which avoids including a number of topics, summarised as PARSNIPS, which stands for Politics, Alcohol, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, Isms & Pork (Gray, 2002). The inclusion of a CSE perspective offers a serious challenge to these coursebooks since issues related to gender diversity and sexual and reproductive health are part of PARSNIPS.

Addressing appropriate teaching CSE material is vital, and children’s picturebooks, other than the already mentioned global ELT coursebooks, have become the much-preferred resource (Reckermann, 2020). Reasons for this choice are multiple. Picturebooks are not urged to follow PARSNIPS rules, are age appropriate and accessible to the children. Via picturebooks, cultural practices such as storybook reading and storytelling, which are part of children’s everyday life, can be very beneficial in ELT. Picturebooks become quality input for language learning since they enlarge vocabulary through curiosity-inviting language, multi-items chunks, phonological repetition and lexical repetition. They provide comprehension support, through a motivating story and stimulating images, increase motivation for dynamic and genuine interpersonal communication, stimulate playing with words and create opportunities for bringing different worlds into the classroom and diverse ways of living so that children learn to discover and make sense of the world. Literature invites teachers to explore the humanistic and educational potential of texts which contributes to the development of cognitive skills, creative thinking and critical citizenship (Bland, 2018), and to the representation of language and of the world, without ignoring the ideological aspect involved in both (Bland, 2016; Gray, 2016).

The inclusion of pictures as an integral part of the narrative is a distinctive mark of picturebooks as an art form. The dialogue between the written text and the pictures becomes essential for meaning making, and the children develop visual literacy together with an understanding of the written word (Mourão, 2016). In the picturebook reading process, children interact with the text and develop a range of attitudes such as empathy, understanding, identification or respect for the characters’ struggles or situations (Mourão, 2016). Moreover, as an art form, picturebooks promote children’s artistic responses to the visual experience (Whitelaw, 2019).

Images are vital in foreign language classes since they often are the entry point into facilitating initial comprehension of the linguistic input and they may contribute to presenting the context of the text. In picturebooks these images may be ambiguous or may contradict the written text (Nodelman, 2004) creating gaps of indeterminacy (Iser, 2001; Mourão, 2015; Nodelman, 2004). These gaps are an opportunity for children to bring their own worldviews into the reading experience.

To illustrate to what an extent children’s picturebooks have become a powerful teaching resource in the field of CSE, for being both accessible and age appropriate, Miller (2018) recounts the great number of picturebooks which were published in the last decade introducing gender creative and transgender youth. Miller refers to this growing subgenre as “new queer children’s literature” which represents queer youth and features gender creative characters and their negotiations with social institutions such as family and school due to their nonconformity to gendered social expectations. This phenomenon started in 2009 after the publication of *My Princess Boy*, the non-fiction story of Cheryl Kilodavis’s experience mothering a gender creative child, different from the preceding books on lesbian and gay themes, focusing on cisgender adult gays and lesbians.

Picturebooks with a CSE Lens

To exemplify how CSE can be implemented in primary English classes via picturebooks, a critical pedagogic analysis of two contemporary picturebooks is presented with suggested creative teaching ideas to work with children (see selection criteria in Mourão, 2010; Ruckermann, 2020). These examples are taken from a unit on diversity and inclusion in primary English teacher education to prepare student teachers to teach English in primary school with a CSE lens via picturebooks. Student teachers undergo the critical pedagogic analysis process with each of the picturebooks, discuss theoretical concepts, examine the stories, plan and try out a series of creative activities.

The critical pedagogic analysis is based on queer and feminist pedagogies (Merse, 2020; Świetlicki, 2020; hooks, 1994; 2000; Adichie, 2014), which constitute the framework to develop CSE in primary English education. By means of disrupting the commonplace in traditional fairy tales, challenging gender roles and introducing creative gender identities, the selected children's picturebooks play a relevant role in the development of criticality towards heteronormative and patriarchal cultural practices, such as compulsory heterosexuality.

Even when this unit work springs from a situated educational context, this picturebook selection, the critical pedagogic analysis and the suggested creative teaching ideas which encourage children's self-expression and critical thinking can be applied in different environments. The suggested activities may be adapted according to the children's age, language level and context. Finally, as picturebook reading fosters children's creative and reflective responses, the activities proposed focus on including the children's responses so as to encourage learners' agency by taking their perspectives on the reading seriously (Short, 2011). This is based on the notion that, in primary school, language learning is a complex process since children simultaneously learn the language, develop literacy, autonomy, agency, empathy and respect for diversity (Bland, 2019).

1. *King & King's* critical pedagogic analysis

King & King (2000) by Linda de Haan and Stern Mijland, is a contemporary fairy tale with a queer plot twist: it subverts the construction of the traditional fairy tale structure, the archetypal characters and the well-known, and highly expected, happy ending in which the newly wed prince and princess "live happily ever after" (Zipes, 1987; 2012).

With the intention to provide student teachers with opportunities to go through a critical pedagogic analysis of the picturebook's potential for developing CSE in primary classes, the following activities are carried out:

1.1. Activity 1: Subversion of traditional fairy tale plots.

Students are provided with a Table to complete (Table 1) in which the first column includes Propp's basic plot elements of the folk tale (1968). Student teachers complete the second column on *King & King* and introduce the changes in the rewriting and revisiting of the traditional fairy tale. The aim of this activity is to highlight how this story offers a queer counternarrative to heteronormativity in fairy tales, and defy the (re)production of compulsory heterosexuality. In other words, the inclusion of contemporary queer fairy tale versions in the primary classroom gives visibility to queer people, socializes their realities and defies heterocentrism (Lütge & Merse, 2020).

Table 1- Comparison between traditional fairy tale elements and *King & King*

Traditional fairy tale elements	<i>King & King</i>
The initial situation: An idealised royal family is introduced. The king (the father) is the ruler of the kingdom. The queen (the mother) is by his side and their son, a young prince, is the heir to the throne.	The initial situation introduces a royal single-mother family. The queen reigns the kingdom and raises her son, the prince, on her own.
Absentation: The absence of a member of the family causes a source of concern.	The absence of the father is a matter of no importance in the story.
Interdiction: the protagonist (the prince) must marry.	The same interdiction takes place here.
Lack: The protagonist lacks something or desires to have something.	Lack: the prince does not show interest in women or marriage.
Provision of receipt of a magical agent: A fairy comes to the rescue.	No fairy or any other magical agent appears in the story.
Misfortune liquidated: The prince finds his princess and they fall in love.	The prince finds his prince and they fall in love.
Wedding: the prince marries the princess and ascends to the throne.	The prince marries the other prince and ascends to the throne.

The completion of the table shows *King & King*'s subversive actions: The single parent household dismantles the idealised family -father, mother and child, and introduces family diversity (Miller, 2018). The absence of the father figure enables the queen to take the role of the leader and she reigns with determination and character, defying traditional gender roles and introducing women in positions of power (bell, 2000). The fact that the perfect match in the story is somebody of the same sex subverts compulsory heterosexuality and gives visibility to same sex couples (Gray, 2013).

An adaptation of this activity to be carried out with Primary learners in the classroom is the completion of a Venn Diagram, in which the children compare this story with any other traditional fairy tale they have already worked with. For children aged 11 -12, tasks may involve challenging the traditional fairy tale plot, as in *King & King*, and creating their own contemporary stories to be performed in class.

1.2. Activity 2: Gaps of indeterminacy (Iser, 2001).

Student teachers are asked to pay a close look to the cover to share their first impressions and notice the gaps of indeterminacy (blanks of information). The cover is the first entry point to the story and it shows a crown prince dressed in the most traditional royal clothes, which can be a wink to very classical fairy tales' illustrations. A contemporary reader, though, may see a young man wearing a flamboyant dress which a drag performer would wear when they participate in a drag pageant in their high heels and faux fur-trimmed coats. The aim of this activity is to encourage children to express their opinions, to stimulate interaction and to arouse curiosity about the story. To promote this interaction, a suggested strategy to scaffold language is to include objects, puppets or pictures to activate prior knowledge or to introduce vocabulary and expressions related to fairy tale structure, characters and themes.

1.3. Activity 3: A feminist critique.

Student teachers are asked to work in groups and discuss the story to notice moments in which the characters accept or defy patriarchal practices both in the actual words and in the images. The different aspects they may notice are the following:

- The representation of women in the actual pageant who parade in front of the royal family competing for the prince's heart (reinforcement of patriarchal practices) (Zipes, 1987; 2012);
- subversive actions against patriarchy are to be found in the dialogue between words and pictures: Family diversity is enhanced by visually significant details in the illustrations, such as the official pictures of the royal family hanging on the walls which show a single parent family and the two young princes on the wedding cake topper which stand for gay marriage;
- the illustrations of the queen introduce her as a woman of action and of power. In her interactions with the young prince, her body language is imposing and she clearly vociferates to get her son accept to marry a princess;
- the love between mother and son can also be traced in the illustrations: they look at one another sadly when the search for the right princess fails and the queen shows delight when her son finally meets the "prince" of his dreams.

1.4. Activity 4: Using Graphic Organisers to trigger Primary learners' responses to the picturebook reading experience.

Student teachers are asked to explore and choose a graphic organiser to trigger their responses to the picturebook reading experience. These graphic organisers can be mind maps, story maps (story trains, story mountains, story cubes, story carpets), among others. The aim of this activity is to encourage children to think about the story, to organise their thoughts, to handle basic elements of the traditional narrative structure, to develop CSE awareness, to learn the additional language and to express themselves through art.

Graphic organizers (O'Brien-Palmer & Stephen, 1999) are a visual scaffolding support to foster comprehension, recollection of the key moments in the story plot, understanding and memorisation of new language items, stimulating (creative) self-expression and consolidation of knowledge of text structure (story). In Primary classrooms, children are asked to create their story maps. Teachers provide

the template and children follow the instructions which involve drawing the different key moments of the story and adding key words found in the story to match each of those moments. This task intends to create room for (creative) self-expression a

nd for the children to interact with the story at their own pace and choose what language bits they consider relevant. The completed story maps may be displayed on the walls of the classroom for children to ‘show and tell’. To scaffold oral skills, children may choose from different language signs, brought by the teacher, to relate to their story maps, such as “What a wonderful prince!”, “What a wonderful wedding!”, “Once upon a time, there was...”. Language scaffolding -set formulas, connectors, and topic-oriented words- will be adapted according to the children’s linguistic needs and their level of proficiency. Variations of this activity include working with drama exercises (see Charlesworth, 2001; Farmer, 2011; Read, 2020).

Among these templates, the Story Carpet activity puts the focus on the three basic components of stories -setting, character construction and climax. The template (Scholastic,1999) resembles an Oriental rug with three different frames. The outer frame includes elements of the setting (drawings, pictures, words, phrases, isolated words), the next one includes information about the main characters and the central frame introduces the children’s favourite scene (see figure 1). Similarly, the story cube activity (Hollenbeck, 1999) organises the story around six scenes and adds a three-dimensional feature to the task. It also adds a playful component to the ‘show and tell’ moment since children can throw the story cube to see what scene appears (see Figure 2) and may perform it by creating still images or frozen frames (Farmer, 2011).

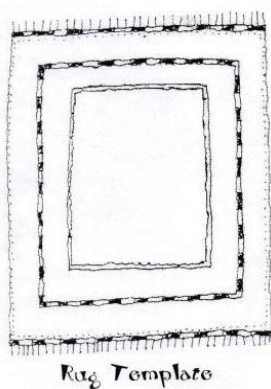


Figure 1 - Story carpets

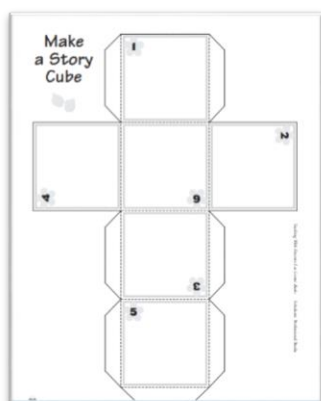


Figure 2 - Story cubes

2. *Julián is a Mermaid's* critical pedagogic analysis

Julián is a Mermaid (2018) by Jessica Love, is the story of a boy and his *abuela*. It is about play, exploration, identity construction, acceptance and love (Winner, 2018; Whitelaw, 2017). It is about learning to say who you are or who you would like to be. It is about being accepted by those you love. This story encourages readers to see the world from the perspective of a child who dreams he is a mermaid and who plays to become one. This story is a gem; a reading experience and a visual delight.

From an intersectional perspective, this is an unconventional story of initiation of a child who explores his (trans)sexual identity. The written text is scarce, minimal, and the illustrations expand and grow on the page, carrying most of the weight of the narrative. Student teachers are asked to discover the visually-significant markers of otherness in the text which include language, ethnicity and gender identity:

Language:

- Words and phrases in Spanish interspersed in the story. Spanish anchors the story within the Latinx community in the US and, as Ibrahim (2020) highlights, bring to the surface that the world is not linguistically sanitized or monolingual, reinforce the link between languages and deconstruct the narrow one-language-one-culture-bias. The salient words are *Julián*, the name of the protagonist, *abuela* and *mijo*. These culture capsules inscribe the story within linguistic and ethnic otherness. *Julián* carries the accented “á”, *abuela* means grandmother and *mijo* is a short form for *mi hijo*, my son. These Spanish words reinforce the characters’ multicultural and multilingual realities, which become visible in the English language classroom. However, the UK edition of this story by Walker Publishing has sanitized the multilingual nature of the text and swiped away the Spanish words turning the text into a monolingual one (Ibrahim, 2020).

Ethnicity:

- *Julián* and his *abuela* belong to an Afro-Latin community, and the brown kraft paper used for the illustrations enhance their ethnic identity. The soft brown background blends with their brown skins and extends their world all over the pages.

Creative gender identity construction:

- The illustrations introduce and delve into the core theme of the story: the child’s (trans)gender exploration (Merse, 2020; Paiz, 2019; Whitelaw, 2017). *Julián* undergoes two revelatory moments, one is his daydreaming in which he imagines he is a mermaid under the sea and the second one is his own transformation into a mermaid when he is in his *abuela*’s living room, and plays with her voile curtains, flowers and make-up to create his own mermaid costume.
- The mirror as self-image. One of the most relevant illustrations which bears the essence of the story appears on the first page. It is a small vignette in the lower right corner of the otherwise empty brown page. It shows an Afro-descendant boy with short curly hair and a white sweatshirt facing the reader. Behind him, there is a mirror which reflects a different image of the back of the child. The reflection shows someone with long curly hair and a naked upper body. An almost imperceptible detail in the mirror reveals tiny little white bubbles as if the child were under water. These two sides of *Julián* show how he plays with being a mermaid and, by so doing, explores ways to be and to express himself in the world. This creative gender exploration will be carried out all along the story. Key moments are the subway daydreaming experience when he feels like a mermaid and his own transformation into one in his *abuela*’s living room.

As Bishop (1990) says, books are sometimes windows to worlds known or imagined; windows can become sliding doors and readers can only walk through in imagination to these worlds, but sometimes literature becomes mirrors where readers can see themselves reflected, transform their lives and undergo a process of self-affirmation. *Julián*’s story brings diverse gender and minority ethnic identities into the classroom for all the little (minority ethnic) queers (Miller, 2018) to find themselves reflected in those mirrors and gain freedom of expression.

Student teachers discuss and explore different creative activities to work with *Julián is a Mermaid* in primary English classrooms, which are organised around a project-based initiative (Phillips et al., 1999): An under the sea festival. The aim of this project is to highlight diversity in nature. This proposal can also be part of an interdisciplinary project with other areas, such natural science, visual arts and drama. The final task revolves around a whole class parade for children to engage in bodily activities as well as in linguistic performances (Whitelaw, 2019).

The first tasks involve learning about sea animals, activating previous knowledge and adding new information. One possible activity is to create nonfiction mini books for a sea animals classroom library. Those mini books may include key features, such as the animals' life-cycle, body parts, their enemies, their eating and reproduction habits, their family organization, their homes and community life and fun facts and peculiarities about them. Library books about sea animals, posters, videos, documentaries, or internet sites need to be accessible to search for the information required. Children may use photographs, drawings or graphic organizers (e.g. Animal Fact File) to put that information together. Teachers may choose to complete an Animal Fact File about a sea animal with the whole class to provide a model for writing.

If circumstances allow, a school trip to an Aquarium would provide an opportunity for active learning and for real life interaction with the learning content. Children may take their animal fact files with them to complete on site, talk to experts or animal keepers, and read specific information in brochures or signs.

Once the mini books are ready, children show them to the class and share their findings. As an oral activity, guided by the teacher, children find similarities and differences among the sea animals to notice diversity in nature. For example, frogs undergo radical physical transformation, like developing legs. Some sea animals are mammals, others are born from an egg. Some eggs are hatched by the female and some others by the male, like penguins, male seahorses become pregnant. Dolphins have developed a language of their own and the whale is at the very end of the food chain. Mermaids are mythological creatures, octopuses have tentacles to move around and crabs move sideways. Some sea animals have legs, others have fins, or tails, or tentacles, or rays. The aim is to foster the development of critical thinking, and shows diversity in nature. This activity may finish with a conversation about mermaids, the focal point of the story. The teacher may again guide the talk and ask whether they know about mermaids in other stories and challenge the heteronormative view of Ariel, Disney's mermaid.

Artistic activities focus on preparing for the parade. They include choosing a sea animal to perform, creating masks and costumes, dramatizing ways to move around and behave like their sea animals, and writing a short text to introduce their characters to the audience during the parade. To scaffold the writing part, teachers have different options:

- Children complete a guided descriptive paragraph with information they have collected in their mini books. In this activity, isolated vocabulary expressions about sea life are imbricated in a paragraph structure.
- Children experiment with poetry. The teacher brings models of list poems, shape poems or action poems for children to write their own about the sea animals. List poems highlight key vocabulary, shape poems integrate visual and written texts and action poems add a performative twist to the activity. In all the cases, poetry empowers children to express their emotions in another language (Bland, 2019).

When the actual parade takes place, children are ready to perform, recite, sing, dance, and play with their classmates in a highly celebratory atmosphere which embraces diversity in the English classroom.

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper delved around developing CSE in primary English teacher education via picturebooks. It aimed at bridging picturebooks to equip student teachers with informed knowledge, tools, resources and strategies to teach English in primary school with a CSE gender perspective. The

focus on picturebooks as an appropriate resource is based on the notion that additional language teaching through literature brings the world into the primary classroom and children interact with another language, other cultures and diverse worldviews (Bland, 2016).

The pedagogical framework section shows the need to work towards enacting CSE in the primary classroom through feminist and queer pedagogies which make gender bias, sexuality and sexual health visible. Moreover, the CSE lens gives voice to less represented diverse gender and sexual identities. As Gray (2013) clearly shows in his close examination of contemporary global ELT coursebooks, heterosexuality may not be compulsory any more in western, capitalist societies, but it still is a mark of privilege which keeps homosexuality [and creative gender identities] in “the coursebook closet” (Thornbury, 1999, p.15). To amend this invisibility and marginalization, student teachers explored the innovative potential of disquieting picturebooks (Whitelaw, 2017), which resist otherwise sanitized texts, and which open the closet’s doors for all sorts of characters to express their diversity.

The section on picturebooks with a CSE lens shows that developing CSE in primary English Teacher Instruction is an opportunity for student teachers to work with complex and life transforming CSE content in their primary English classes. Picturebooks wrap language learning around art, creativity and criticality in the everyday classroom activities with children. Moreover, picturebooks give children room for personal identification and for exploration of the world of play while they learn to respect social classes, ethnicities, races, languages and gender and sexual diversity in their communities. Student teachers discover their pivotal role in such learning process and envision how it materializes at school.

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