ENGLISH STUDIES DEGREE

FINAL UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION

When the conversation doesn't include you: representations of transgender identities in EFL source materials

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ABSTRACT

Language has a strong symbolic power that needs to be understood in relation to its social meaning. From a poststructuralist perspective, it is through language that individuals construct and negotiate their multiple social identities in signifying discursive practices. However, *habitus* and *doxa* underlie the systems of power that approve discursive practices depending on their conformity with the norm. Then, those individuals whose identities are considered non-normative, such as women, homosexuals, or transgender people have been discursively excluded to the margins of society. Moreover, in the language-learning environment, educational materials have been shown to reflect hegemony by not questioning heteronormativity and cisnormativity. On the contrary, audiovisual media, that may be used as additional language-learning sources, have revealed a wider range of identity options. In this respect, Norton Peirce's (1995) model of investment emerged with a view to explore the impact of identity options in learners' investment in language learning. Nevertheless, no research to date has focused either on the underrepresentation of transgender people in textbooks and audiovisual media, or on the impact that such visibility may have in learners' investment. Thus, this paper aims, firstly, to consider the extent to which transgender people are represented in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) written sources. Secondly, the range of subject positions present in an audiovisual source will be explored and compared with that in textbooks. Finally, the impact that trans visibility in language learning sources may have on learners' investment will be discussed, together with the role of EFL teachers in dealing with silenced identities in the classroom. The study revealed that whereas transgender misrepresentation in language-learning textbooks is still an issue, audiovisual media tend to offer a more realistic image of diversity in society. In line with previous studies, trans representation was suggested to enhance learners' investment due to the wider range of subject positions which learners can use to participate in classroom practices. These results are discussed and suggestions for further research are given.

Keywords: Language and identity, transgender identities, investment, EFL textbooks, audiovisual sources

1.   Introduction

The notion of *language* has been generally regarded as a system of linguistic signs available to individuals to communicate and interact. Nonetheless, although it is certainly an intrinsic human feature used to convey feelings and refer to reality, language is by no means a simple repository of words, but rather a social construct with great symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991). In this regard, language conveys ideologies, beliefs, and values, as well as entails an essential part of a person's self-identity construction. Thus, inevitably, language needs to be understood in relation to its social meaning (Norton, 2010).

Poststructuralist approaches to language have long studied the relationship between language and identity by defining the latter as a *site of social struggle*, since unequal power relations of ethnicity, class, or gender are said to construct history through language, namely *discourse* (Weedon, 1987). In other words, the fact that the internalised predominant ideologies of a society reflect dominant power interests (e.g. heteronormativity, cisnormativity) can result in different forms of discursive exclusion, including the silencing or denial of those subject positions that do not fit into the established mould of hegemony (i.e.: white Western heterosexual cisgender males) (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Jones, 2016).

When applied to the context of language learning, feminist theories of language and queer linguistics have long studied the misrepresentation of women and homosexuals in language-learning textbooks, revealing how these materials can become the instruments of major power structures to silence particular learners' identities and, with this, maintain a non-inclusive view of reality (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Van Dyck, 2019). Similarly, the model of investment, proposed by Norton Peirce (1995), examines the role that complex identities and imagined identities play in shaping learner investment in learning a given target language (Norton, 2010, 2013; Pavlenko, 2004). In this respect, it seems that audiovisual media in the twenty-first century has opened the boundaries of the language classroom and given access to large identity networks in and outside the classroom. This may eventually enhance learners' agency to negotiate, deconstruct, and assert their (previously silent) identities (Darvin & Norton, 2017; Harrison & Tomas, 2009). Nevertheless, despite the thorough feminist analysis of women and homosexuals in English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) textbooks, fewer studies have tackled the invisibility of other minoritized and socially silenced groups, that is to say, the case of transgender people (Heinz, 2012; Ringo, 2002).

2. Theoretical framework

In order to define the focus of the current study, we will review the relevant literature. The following subsection 2.1. will firstly introduce the poststructuralist view of identity to later explain the relationship between language and identity. Moreover, we will consider the notions of power and doxa, and focus on the social construct of gender. In particular, the case of transgender women and men. In subsection 2.1.1. we will apply the previously discussed concepts into the language-learner identity and the idea of investment.

2.1. Language and identity

Prior to considering the relationship between language and identity, we need to understand the broader concept of identity. Whilst the traditional structuralist view defines identity as a fixed, structured, and innate feature of a person (Hall, 1996), poststructuralist theories emphasise the fact that *identities* (plural) are fluid, diverse, and socially constructed in power relations (Butler, 1999; Menard-Warwick, 2009). Therefore, and following the poststructuralist perspective, this paper understands identities as constantly changing and always subject to the life experiences of individuals. More specifically, identity involves a convergence of complex and multiple social categories that are continuously changing across time and space and which constitute one's sense of self (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

Indeed, identities can be the most diverse of all of the possible social environments through which a person navigates. Concerning this complexity, Weedon (1997) proposed the term *subjectivities*, which may describe more appropriately the fact that an individual *is subject to* different power relations, and which shapes his/her multiple identities (e.g. student, daughter, friend, musician) (see figure 1). However, these subjectivities are not independent from one another, but they interact, combine, and eventually build the identity of a person. Indeed, this intersectionality offers individuals different views of reality and the world (Darvin & Norton, 2017; Jones, 2016).

Identities are performative. They are not inherent, but rather built, imposed, challenged, and negotiated through language (among other systems) every time a person is engaged in signifying discursive practices (Davies & Harré, 1990; Menard-Warwick, 2009; Norton, 2013), as language mediates the link between personal and social identities. Bourdieu (1991) defined language as having great symbolic power, as it is through language that "a person negotiates a sense of self" and, furthermore, "gains access to—or is denied access to—powerful social networks that give learners' the opportunity to speak" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 13). It is the opportunity to speak that needs to be negotiated because there are subject positions that have been historically *imposed*, whereas others have been *challenged* in discourse. In the words of Baxter (2016), subject positions are:

> [...] approved by their community or culture, and made available to them by means of the particular discourses operating within a given social context. If people do not conform to these approved discourses in terms of how they speak, act and behave, they may be stigmatised by others with labels such as 'weird', 'a misfit', 'a freak' or 'an outsider' (Baxter, 2016, p. 37).

Here, the concepts of *habitus* and *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977) are introduced to account for the systems of power underlying such *approved discourses* (i.e.: normativities). Bourdieu (1977, 1991) defines *doxa* as the different socioculturally taken-for-granted ideas that determine what is perceived as normal and what is, on the contrary, *weird.* Doxa gives a quality of "self-evidence" to the world that surrounds us, and sets limits on what we can think and say; in Bourdieu's (1977, p. 169) words, it constitutes "the universe of possible discourse". On the other hand, *habitus* is defined as the collective entity which establishes and reproduces dominant sociocultural conditions by conferring cultural value via institutions (i.e.: family, education, employment, etc.). We, as subjects, internalise these dominant conditions, and thus become raced, gendered, and/or nationalised (among other possible subjectivities). In turn, we then form part of the habitus and reproduce its sociocultural conditions. It seems obvious, then, that habitus subjects tend to be conditioned by *doxa* which inclines the members of a society to think and act in ways that may seem natural on the surface, but have actually been constructed to serve dominant power interests. Indeed, power plays a crucial role in the discursive construction of identity, as unequal power relations have

been claimed to socially construct history through language, and the *habitus* is basically the result of history being "coded" into signifying practices.

For this reason, social normative systems are *exclusive* in essence, inasmuch as hegemony dictates whose identities are welcomed and whose are not, which ideologies are labeled as typical and who can access specific discursive practices (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Hence, poststructuralist theorists have defined identity as *a site of social struggle*, since one's desires to build her/his sense of self in relation to their imagined identities are in a continuous dispute with what is accepted and what is expected from them by the members of a particular society (Bourdieu, 1991; Darvin & Norton, 2015).
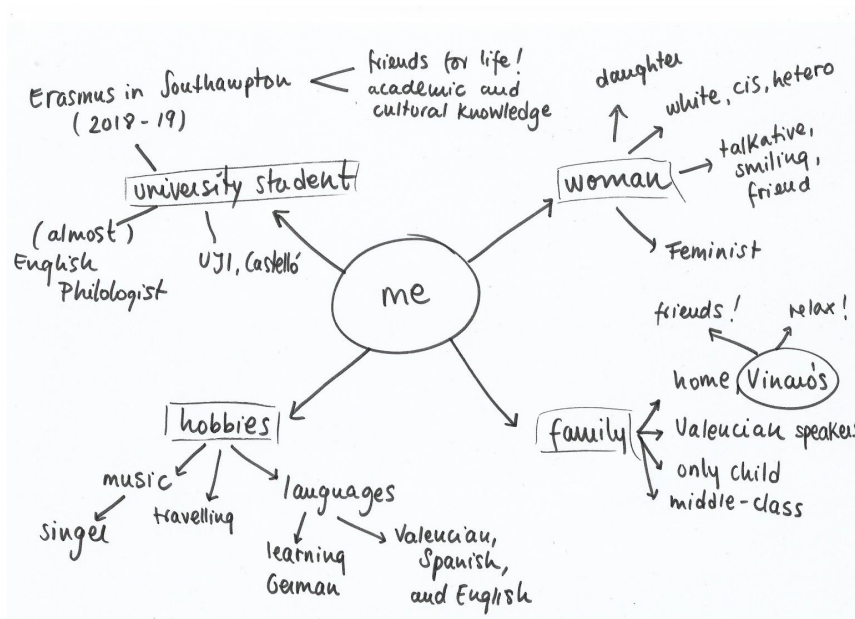

Figure 1: Example of an identity map

Gender is one of the many facets constituting a person's identity, and defined as "how an individual self-identifies as masculine, feminine, or within a rich spectrum of identities between the two" (Blackburn & Miller, 2017, p. 1). Nonetheless, gender is probably one of the most complex conventions established by the dominant orthodoxy, as it is a set of social behaviours, beliefs, and culturally general values associated to a person on account of their biological sex. In other words, it is a system that presupposes a unique and direct relation

between sex (i.e.: biologically and physiologically born female or male) and gender (i.e.: whether one is/identifies as a woman or a man), excluding any other option (Butler, 1999).

In line with the feminist approach, this sex distinction is fundamentally rooted in the long-lasting system of patriarchy which is based on the dominance of males over females. In other words, it is a matter of power. This system labels males and females with gender-specific roles e.g., behaviours, activities; as well as sexual preference (heterosexual), only because of their biological sex. Such male dominance, and the consequent suppression and invisibility of women, has been, and still is, exerted through Derrida's (1975) concept of the *phallogocentric language system*. That is, language is argued to position men in the center of everything, as in, for instance, the sentence "A small step for a man a giant leap for *mankind* " or in the very word *woman*, defined as "the wife of a human being, a man"[1].

By extension, the norm drives society to expect that a person should fall into this binary gender system and that, those who do not conform, are *deviants* (Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013). Bauer, *et al*. (2009) argue that this "expectation that all people are cissexual, and that those assigned male at birth always grow up to be men, and vice versa" (p. 356) is what we call *cisnormativity*. In this respect, as Butler (1999) claims, and in relation to the notion of *doxa,* "certain kinds of "gender identities" fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, and that they appear as developmental failures or logical impossibilities" (p. 24). With this statement, we may refer to, among many others, transgender identities.

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD, 2020)[2] define the term transgender as "an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth" (p. 35). Consequently, this gender-sex mismatch does not meet the conventional cisnormativity expectations (i.e.: female-woman, male-man), which may lead to discrimination, silencing, and erasure (Gray, 2013). Indeed, the documentary film *Gender Revolution. A journey with Katie Couric* (2017) relates that nearly 50% of the people who identify as transgender have tried to or committed suicide, and that 2016 has been the deadliest year yet for trans people.

On the other hand, gender is much more complex than physical appearance (i.e.: not all trans people go through gender affirmation surgery), but it entails many other binary

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[1] According to the Online Etymology Dictionary (2001-2020).
[2] GLAAD website: https://www.glaad.org/

sex-gender expressions/ expectations e.g., heterosexuality, ways of dressing, acting, speaking, and behaving (Blackburn & Miller, 2017). Then, and in general terms, trans men and women do not meet the mimetic sex-gender system (e.g. woman: *she,* makeup, sensitivity (vs.) man: *he,* physically strong, boss). Instead, they *go beyond* (literally *trans*-gress) socially-constructed, patriarchal, cisgender norms.

One example of conventional sex-gender linguistic expressions is the grammatical association between the pronouns *he* and *she* to a *man* and a *woman* respectively. In this respect, part of the LGBT+ community, including transgender people, has progressively expressed their preference to use and to be addressed with the neutral acceptation of the pronoun they/them, among other alternatives. However, numerous controversies have arisen as the fact of not using the typical pronouns entails one type of transgression of cisnormative expectations. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the term *transgender* was not established in the English language until the 1970s, nor included in the queer[3] acronym LGBT+ until the 1980s. Even today, the Spanish Dictionary (DRAE) includes the term *transexual,* instead of *transgénero,* which many transgender people have reported has a rather sexualised and negative connotation.

Hence, trans people are the example that "identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions said to be its results" (Butler, 1999, p. 33) inasmuch as being a woman or being a man is not intrinsic, but rather a life-trajectory negotiated according to the constraints of inequitable power relations (Beauvoir, 1949). In the same way, the power inequality of transgender identity in society and, consequently, in language shows the extent to which languages not only mirror societies, but also reinforce normative power interests.

2.1.1. Language-learner identity and investment

In the research field of second language acquisition, the language learner has been traditionally studied in relation to the notion of motivation as an inherent property, which implies that learners' learning outcomes are expected to be driven by their levels of motivation. Nevertheless, as Norton Peirce (1995) argued, the conceptualisation of the learner as fixed and unique does not allow space to consider learners' "complex relationship between

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[3] *Queer* is an umbrella term under which different sexualities and gender identities fall. Yet, as we focused specifically on *transgender* men and women, the term *queer* will only be used when referring to other authors' work.

relations of power, identity, and language learning" (p. 17). In other words, the idea of motivation contemplates neither learners' individual differences, nor their different commitment reasons or needs. That is why Norton Peirce (1995) proposed a model of investment, which contemplates the learner not only with regards her or his role in the language classroom as a *learner*, but also in relation to his or her multiple identities that may position them in a certain way or another in classroom discourse. The ultimate goal of investment is to enhance learner's agency, by studying and addressing the circumstances of power inequalities under which a motivated learner might present resistance towards learning the target language.

When referring to investment or commitment in learning a language, this model suggests that the dynamic choices and desires of learners are based on the different power relations and spaces through which they navigate, such as identity, ideology, and capital. While ideology refers to the normative ideas shared in a community, capital is concerned with economic factors (i.e.: wealth), as well as cultural (i.e.: knowledge) and social (e.g. gender, ethnicity) aspects (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 37). Therewith, this model claims that language learners do not only invest in the target language, but also in their social identity, since their personal investment may range, for instance, from the desire to integrate in a new country, to their urgent need to pass a language test to access further knowledge.

Yet, social relations of power do not remain outside the classroom, rather they are maintained in second language learning settings through curricula, textbooks, and language practices (Gray, 2013; Menard-Warwick, 2009; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Jones (2016) advocates that if the imagined identities of learners are not reflected in the language practices inside the classroom, they may potentially invest less in language learning. In this sense, educational settings need to be understood as part of a broader community of practice that can either enable, or constrain learners' participation in new linguistic communities, in a similar way to the out-of-school discursive interactions learners engage in (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Norton, 2010), or even challenge their self-chosen identities (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). Because of this, research on investment in language learning claims that the second-language learning may be the space where selves can be deconstructed and reconstructed again through the powerful tool of language (Menard-Warwick, 2009).

In this sense, researchers on investment including Gray (2013), Norton Peirce (1995), and Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004) agree on that the underrepresentation of diverse identity options in textbooks may result in the frustration, or even resistance, of queer learners to learn the target language. Similarly, with a view to examining the impact of such erasure in the attitudes of learners, Jewell (1998, cited in Nelson, 2008) conducted an interview with Jackie, a transgender student, on the heteronormative curricula included in ESL textbooks. In this respect, she expressed her detachment from the curricula content, as she felt unable to identify with the discourse appearing in textbooks (e.g. cisnormativity, heteronormativity).

On this subject, Nguyen and Yang (2015) explored the identity construction of a Korean queer and gay woman outside and inside the English classroom for adults, in relation to her investment. In their words, Han's main reason to invest in learning English was "very much a part of the transition to explore her queer and immigrant identity in new social environments" (p. 225). Indeed, the analysis of a particular interaction (p. 230) revealed the way in which she, in contrast to her cisgender and heterosexual classmates, had to agentively queer[4] the affordances in a language exercise to claim her identity as a trans woman within a classroom discourse on which she could not find herself reflected. Furthermore, Nguyen and Yang (2015) suggest that when she self-positioned as a *lazy language student*, this may be linked to the apparent disconnection between the communities of practice she had access to inside and, on the other hand, outside the classroom.

Besides, due to the rapid incorporation of new technologies in language learning and language teaching, audiovisual media constitutes another important input source for language learning and teaching, which has also been examined in relation to investment (Darvin & Norton, 2017). The term media, or mass media, encompasses many different modes of communication and discourse interaction, which range from the most traditional, such as books, television, series, or films, to today's new online media, including social networks, or online platforms with freely available, on demand content.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, despite the fact that technology may contribute to the preservation of ideologies through the control of the flow of information on the net, Darvin and Norton (2017) also claim that offline and online media may extend learners'

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[4] Used as a verb, 'queer' denotes a method for challenging heteronormativity through broad textual analysis (Somerville, 2007; Sedgwick, 2013; Paiz, 2019).

identity options. In fact, the numerous modes of communication and dissemination of information imply that the mass media constitute diverse ways of expressing ideas that may conform, or not, to dominant ideologies. In the case of online media, they open the door to "what is socially imaginable in the future" (Darvin & Norton, 2017, p. 4). By *future*, they refer to the previously mentioned linguistic communities in which language learners can participate to invest in the TL, as well as to negotiate, and assert their social identities. Thus, language learners invest in their cultural capital, or knowledge, in the same way that they interact with different kinds of media as sites where identities are maintained, as well as reinforced and adapted to new linguistic communities (Harrison & Thomas, 2009).

As Ringo's (2002) study showed, the role of audiovisual media, mainly books, internet, and films/videos, in female-to-male transgender identity construction had encouraged them to question their identity or to proudly adopt an identity label (classified as *pre-awakening*, *awakening*, and *identification* identity event types); as much as to accept and to feel accepted by others for who they are (classified as *maturation*). Similarly, Norton and Williams (2012) examined the impact of eGranary, an offline digital library, on the investment of six Ugandan secondary students, which also suggested that this digital tool enhanced students' investment and identities by broadening the scope of discursive communities of practice available.

2.2. Transgender identities in EFL source materials

In the language learning context, unequal power relations may be maintained in source materials. Therefore, in this section we will consider how transgender identities are represented in materials that may be used as a source of input in EFL. In subsection 2.2.1, we will focus mainly on previous studies that examined the representation of transgender people in English as a Foreign Language textbooks. In subsection 2.2.2., the focus will be on trans visibility in audiovisual media.

2.2.1. Textbooks

Feminist theories of language and language learning pioneered critical discourse studies on how gender identity is constructed in language textbooks in the 1970s (Hartman & Judd, 1978). Since then, it has been evidenced that educational materials may reflect a

non-inclusive view of society and, ultimately, marginalise particular identities in discourse (Van Dyck, 2019).

However, the American gay and lesbian rights movement in the 1970s and 1980s lead to the emergence of queer theory and, later queer linguistics, which contributed to broadening the scope of analysis and to reconceptualising the dominant discourses of gender and sexuality that incited the marginalisation of LGBT+ people (Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013). Maney and Cain (1997) were among the first queer researchers to underscore the absence of sexual-diversity teaching in elementary school curricula and proposed a list of arguments on the need for queering education. Nonetheless, in contrast with feminist studies, the twenty-first century did not bring with it such an evolution in the LGBT+ inclusion in textbooks. For instance, Ghajarieh and Cheng (2011) examined both sexual and gender identities in three Iranian EFL textbooks, but no representation of gay, lesbians, bisexuals, nor transgender identities was encountered. Moreover, this could be also explained by the fact that Iran is an officially religious state with a deeply-rooted conservatist, but contradictory[5], government in relation to the LGBT+ community.

In agreement with Jones (2016), nevertheless, even queer research fails, to some extent, to promote gender inclusivity as it has mainly examined cisgender speakers. As a consequence, and in general terms, queer linguistics leaves behind other gender identities, viz. trans women and trans men. In this regard, Gray (2013) analysed ten contemporary UK-produced textbooks (from elementary to intermediate), in which neither sexual nor gender diverse options were detected, and suggested that the omission of LGBT+ content in textbooks, as well as, its unpopularity in the field of research, may be associated to the need of the publishing houses to satisfy the expectations of wide markets.

Additionally, Holopainen (2018) decided to explore gender identity options (including queer), and examined the Finnish EFL textbook series *On Track.* However, results still showed no overt reference to queer characters, except for Chelsea Manning, a non-fictional transgender woman, whose gender was not overtly mentioned or indicated by using pronouns she/her, but expected to be assumed by upper secondary school students. In this respect, Holopainen (2018) maintains that textbook authors need to consider the best way to create

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[5] While being gay is punishable to death in Iran, trans sex-reassignment surgeries are legal (because they are viewed as necessary to cure the "disease"). Extracted from Advocate (2018): https://www.advocate.com/.

LGBT+ inclusive and respectful materials, due to the fact that mentioning one's gender identity may not necessarily always contribute to giving visibility to members of this community, but rather to *othering* them.

2.2.2.   Audiovisual materials

On the other hand, the representation of transgender women and men in offline and online audiovisual media constitutes another valuable aspect to analyse in the context of second language learning since, in a similar way to textbooks, content in the mass media may mirror hegemony and domination (Namaste, 2000). However, following McInroy and Craig (2015), web visibility is a medium by which people that come to identify as transgender can actually feel represented and attached to the narratives available on the Internet.

In this respect, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation organisation (GLAAD) was founded in 1985 in the United States with the aim to rewrite the scripts and narratives towards the acceptance of the LGBT+ community. For twenty-four years, it has been quantifying the presence of LGBT+ characters on television and fifteen years developing annual *Where We are on TV Report* to record the overall diversity of primetime scripted series on broadcast networks. Following these reports, the first television season reported (2005-2006) showed that the inclusion of LGBT+ characters was less than 2%, which a decade later increased up to 4% (only 2.58 % were trans characters). Comparing the report results from 2015/16 and 2019/20, we can see that over the last five years, the number of transgender characters (out of 488 LGBT+ characters) in broadcast networks, cable primetime script series, and streaming original series has moderately increased up to 33. This represents the 6.76 % of LGBT+ characters in the season 2019-2020 (see Table 2).

	2015-2016		**2019-2020**	
Broadcast networks	None out of 70	-	6 out of 120	5 %
Cable primetime scripted series	3 out of 142	2 %	18 out of 215	8.37 %
Streaming original series	4 out of 59	7 %	9 out of 153	5.88 %
Total per season	7 out of 271	2.58 %	33 out of 488	6.76 %

Table 2: Trans characters out of the LGBT+ characters according to GLAAD

Conversely, it has to be considered that a great number of those characters such as Adam from *Degrassi* (2001-2015), Unique from *Glee* (2009-2015), or Maura from *Transparent* (2014-present) were played, and still are, by cisgender actors and actresses. Likewise, a GLAAD (2012) review of transgender images on television over a ten-year period suggested that trans representation had been 54% *negative* in 102 catalogued episodes (e.g. criminals, mentally unstable, sex workers), while 35% ranged from *problematic* to *good*. In this respect, not only needs the trans community be decently represented in audiovisual media in terms of quantity, but also their narratives and storylines should focus on something more than them being trans in terms of quality (e.g. *Pose, Transparent*).

Taking into account the relevant literature, a research gap has been determined. To the best of our knowledge, no research to date has focused on the underrepresentation of transgender people within the language learning environment through textbooks, or other classroom materials (Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2019), or taken into consideration how this visibility may impact the investment of transgender language learners and the negotiation of their identity in EFL contexts (Darvin & Norton, 2017; Norton Peirce, 1995; Nguyen & Yang, 2015).

3. The study

3.1. Aim of the study

The present project aims at examining the representation of transgender people in English-language learning materials for young and adult learners in order to discuss the extent to which this visibility, or lack thereof, may impact transgender students' investment in the process of learning a language. In this regard, two traditional EFL textbooks, *Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book* and *Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book* (McCarthy, McCarten, & Sandiford, 2014), will be compared with an audiovisual source, the Netflix series *Orange is the New Black* (Lionsgate Television, 2013-2019), as series are gradually gaining more popularity now, both on television (broadcast and cable) and in online platforms (streaming). The ultimate aim is to encourage the use of inclusive materials in the language classroom that would offer learners a wider range of subject positions and thus contribute towards giving them equal opportunities to speak.

In brief, this paper seeks to address three lines of enquiry, formulated as the following three research questions:

RQ1. To what extent are transgender identities represented in EFL textbooks?

RQ2. Do textbooks and audiovisual materials offer language learners the same range of subject positions with which they can identify?

RQ3. How can trans visibility enhance or impede the investment of transgender learners in learning English?

3.2.   Method

Due to the complexity of expressions that gender entails, I resolved to focus on instances of the two types of transitions: social (e.g. change in name, and personal pronouns) and physical (e.g. affirmation surgery, appearance, dressing). In addition, we also looked for symbols and elements related to transgender people (e.g. flag, colours), since these also constitute an important part of identity construction.

Thus, regarding the written sources, the total amount of content units was reviewed in order to examine whether the authors have, or have not, made any overt reference to transgender people in the portrayal of fictional and nonfictional characters throughout the texts, and in pictures and drawings. Likewise, as textbooks are intended for a young adult audience, the topics dealt with in the various readings, story dialogues, vocabulary sections, and discussions within listening and speaking activities were of great interest.

On the other hand, given that the series *Orange is the New Black* was deliberately chosen owing to the transgender character of Sophia Burset, the analysis was particularly directed to explore how this character is visually depicted to the audience, as well as to examine the nature of her interventions, the topic discussions she is involved in, and the kind of relationship she has with the rest of the inmates and the staff.

3.3.   Sources

The textbooks selected are two samples of EFL materials: *Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book* (CEF Level: A2+) and *Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book* (CEF Level: B1).

They both belong to the four-level Cambridge series for adult and young adults. Although they were originally published in 2005, we will analyse the revised Second Edition from 2014. The Touchstone series offers instances of language natural use and encourages students to discuss their personal lives. Both *Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book* and *Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book* include twelve content units each, which are divided into different topic related sections (see Appendix 1).

The criteria for choosing the textbooks to be analysed considered two main aspects. In the first place, the target learners. Due to the fact that examining the impact of textbook content on learners' investment was one of the main issues to tackle, EFL materials may adapt better to the reality where adults invest in learning a language. Secondly, another important point was the proficiency level of the textbooks. Given that previous studies showed that beginner level textbooks tend to use more simplified language (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004), we opted to choose intermediate level materials that may include more complex topic discussions. In a similar way, EFL textbooks probably contain more adult-like content, such as social issues and future plans.

As regards audiovisual media, the Netflix original series *Orange is the New Black* (Lionsgate Television, 2013-2019) was chosen to be examined. This choice was based on three key criteria: the introduction of LGBT+ content, the year of its release, and the possible impact of the series in society. In this sense, *Orange is the New Black* is a North American comedy-drama created by Jenji Kohan and based on the memoir *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison* (2010) by the American author Piper Kerman. One of the main issues that the series is concerned with is diversity, since it comprises 7 seasons and 91 episodes in which race, sexuality, and gender diversity, among others, are overtly covered. It is worth mentioning that the series has received 16 Emmy Award nominations and four wins during the past six years.

Besides, and in relation to the aim of this project, when *Orange is the New Black* premiered in 2013, there were no other series in which a transgender actor or actress had a recurring role. Then, the African American transgender actress Laverne Cox[6] broke with this

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[6] Laverne Cox was the first openly transgender person to be on the cover of *Time* magazine and she is now one of the leading contemporary activists campaigning for the rights of the transgender and LGBT+ community.

tradition by playing the character of Sophia Burset, a transgender hairdresser who was jailed for committing credit card fraud to finance her gender-affirmation surgery. Laverne Cox appears as a recurring actress in 6 out of 7 seasons (64 out of the 91 episodes) released in the past six years. Episodes have a duration of around 50-60 minutes. However, the present paper will examine only the most outstanding episodes in which transgender issues are overtly addressed (see Table 1).

SEASON 1 (2013)	Episode 3	"Lesbian Request Denied"	Sophia's male-to-female physical and social transition is depicted by means of a flashback. Her wife and son are also introduced to narrate the family's adaptation through this process.
SEASON 3 (2015)	Episode 1	"Mother's Day"	As it is Mother's Day, Sophia reveals that her son will visit her Then, she is asked "How does that work with you being a lady-man?".
	Episode 8	"Fear, and other smells"	This episode portrays the "frequently asked question about being transgender".
	Episode 12	"Don't make come back there"	After a violent scene where Sophia is harassed and verbally abused by other prisoners for her gender identity, she is put under surveillance for her own protection.

Table 1: Description of the episodes analysed from *Orange is the New Black*

4.   Results

The following subsections will present the results of the study. First, the analysis of the written sources will be shown and, secondly, the results on the representation of a trans character in a possible audiovisual source will be presented.

4.1.   Trans people in Touchstone series

The analysis of both *Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book* and *Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book* encountered no representation of trans people, or LGBT+ in general, in any of the 247 pictures (i.e.: realia) and 121 drawings with one or more characters depicted. Moreover, in agreement with previous research (Gray, 2013), in a total of 256 pages, there were not found storylines that included the voices of transgender individuals who might narrate personal experiences on their social and physical transitions, for instance. In fact, only a few instances of reading passages subtly discuss identity issues of gender and nationality.

Such is the case of an interview to the British-Iranian journalist and television host Christiane Amanpour, in which she is asked about the advantages and disadvantages of being a female correspondent of CNN with a particular cross-cultural background (see Appendix 2). However, there is not any other type of allusion to identity issues, in either *Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book*, whose story dialogues and vocabulary sections are mainly devoted to the traditionally repeated topics of talking about interests (unit 2) and *get to know* other cultural celebrations (unit 4); or *Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book*, which includes more adult-like themes e.g. talking about future plans (unit 6) or conversations about people's wishes and imaginary situations (unit 8).

Nonetheless, our analysis recognised the textbook's author tendency to be more inclusive in the depiction of particular characters and the approach of gender stereotypes. By way of illustration, in the activity *Who's who?* (see Appendix 3), learners were encouraged to fill in the gaps a set of sentences about appearance with comparatives and prepositions (e.g. *Sonia's the one___the spiked hair, and Jane's the one___the ponytail*). When we observe the drawings of Jane and Sonia accompanying this activity, it can be argued that these women[7] have not been represented in the same way. That is, while the character of Jane may be considered to conform to the normative *female-like* appearance (i.e.: with long hair, tight clothes, and thin body shape), we might say that Sonia has been depicted as closer to the conventionalised *male-like* image (i.e.: with short hair, loose clothes, and broad-shouldered). On the other hand, there is a speaking activity on fashion and new trends (see Appendix 4) that poses the questions *What makeup is everyone wearing?* and *What jewelry and accessories are popular?*. In these two sentences, the use of *everyone* and the lack of gender reference are observed as a technique to dissociate social sex-gender stereotypes.

4.2.   *Orange is the New Black*

In this section, the results obtained by analysing the character of Sophia Burset in the Netflix series *Orange is the New Black* have been organised in three main related themes: (1) male-to-female transition, (2) verbal and physical transphobia towards Sophia, and (3) the lack of knowledge about trans people in society.

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[7] In spite of the absence of third person feminine pronouns, we may assume they both identify as cisgender women because of the names they have been attributed.

Accordingly, the third episode of the first season portrays Sophia's (1) male-to-female transitioning story to a great extent (see Appendix 5). This begins with a short flashback scene from when Sophia was presented with a male-bodied person, worked as a firefighter, and was addressed with her birth name, Marcus. The flashback ends by melting Marcus' image with Sophia's present image, who stares at her reflection in the mirror of the prison's bathroom. As her body is naked, her breast and figure inform the viewer that Sophia is a transgender woman who chose to undergo medical surgeries.

In another flashback, while Sophia and her wife Crystal have a conversation before the final physical transition surgery, Crystal expresses her desire of Sophia not undergoing this surgery, by saying "Please keep it. I'm fine with the rest of it. The hair and the make up. [...] Just please keep your penis" (23:15-23:30); to which Sophia responds "You know I can't. You don't have to stay". Sophia's struggle with her access to medication constitutes another storyline in the series, since the prison reduces her estrogen treatment dosage a few weeks after her incarceration. As Sophia argues:

> "If I don't get my medication, I'm going through withdrawal. [...] My face will sag, my body hair will start to grow back [...] Let me explain this for you. When my penis was split in half and inverted, my testes were removed, so I don't have any testosterone left to replace the estrogen that you (are) taking away from me!" (15:56-16:17).

When Sophia is conceded a medical consultation, she justifies her urgent need for her right dosage to the doctor: "I need my dosage. I've given five years, $80,000 and my freedom for this. I'm finally who I'm supposed to be. Do you understand? I can't go back." (20:50-21:02). However, she is again denied such treatment, and the series shows Sophia experiencing some of the effects she foresaw, such as the growing facial hair.

With reference to the instances of (2) verbal and physical transphobia towards Sophia, the already examined episode (S1, E3) contains a conversation between two Correctional Officers, Mendez and Bennett, about the prisoners' physical attributes. When referring to Sophia, however, the former uses the expression "That's a whole different species" and the offensive term "cyborg", to refer to her genitals. Later in Episode 12 from Season 3, a verbal as well as physical scene of transphobia towards Sophia is depicted. This situation arises when a group of inmates enter Sophia's salon after hours to direct offensive questions and

words to her (e.g. *You are hiding out in here pretending to be a female*). Then, the group of women violently attack Sophia while they continue to insult her with other offensive terms (e.g., *she-male*; *I told you he still had his man strength*), as Sophia tries to defend herself. However, instead of punishing the attackers or dismissing the correctional officer who ignored the attack, the events drive Sophia to be put under surveillance as the character Caputo, Director of Human Activities, argues:

> "There is not much else I can do. [...] I hear things. How things have been going ugly for you for a while now. [...] Look. Burset, I sympathise, I really do. But we have to be realistic about our recourse here. [...] Why do you have to make everything so hard?" (15:41-17:25).

Finally, the lack of knowledge about trans people is clearly suggested in the third season's opening episode, with the celebration of "Mother's Day" (E1, S3). Since all the internees receive the visit of their families on this day, one of Sophia's clients in the salon, the Italian-American inmate, Morello, asks Sophia whether she will have any visitors. In this moment, Sophia reveals that her son will come, and the conversation continues as follows (14:50-15:37):

> Lorna: Oh. How does that work, with you being a lady-man and all? Do you and his mother both celebrate the day?
> Sophia: You really wanna be callin' me a lady-man when I got a fistful of your hair in my hand?
> Lorna: Oh, I just thought it sounded nice. I don't know from these things. That's why I'm askin' questions.
> Sophia: We share the day. He's spending Father's Day with her new boyfriend, the pastor.

Similarly, in Episode 8 (Season 3), Sophia explains to Crystal on the telephone that COs (Correctional Officers) new to the prison ask her questions such as "What are you?" or "Do you still have your you-know-what?". Then, Sophia adds with a ironic tone: "I should hang a slip of brochures on my back for "frequently asked questions" about being transgender".

5. Discussion

In this section, we will attempt to answer the RQs by discussing the study's main results in relation to the theory previously argued.

In response to RQ1, our study shows that transgender identities do not appear to be represented in EFL textbooks. The fact remains that transgender erasure in written materials is still an issue, as the omission of trans characters and trans voices in the storylines and narratives analysed persists. In agreement with Holopainen (2018), we argue that, as opposed to normative social groups, the presence of gender minoritized groups needs to be indicated in a way to avoid cisnormative expectations. Moreover, in the case of transgender individuals, it should be firstly included in a respectful indirect way, that can still be identified by learners by introducing non-fictional trans characters (e.g., Chelsea Manning) (Holopainen, 2018). This lack of representation is not particularly surprising and could be explained by the fact that written sources are, at once, influenced by and reproduce the habitus, in the sense that they both subscribe to and disseminate dominant sociocultural ideologies (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). As Gray (2013) emphasises, mainstream EFL textbooks are mainly market-driven and, therefore, their content needs to fall into the moulds of hegemony at the expense of editing out some minoritized groups. In reference to the visibility of transgender people, it is even more controversial as their gender identities transgress the social boundaries, or approved discourses, imposed by the doxa.

With regards to RQ2, our analysis indicates that textbooks and audiovisual materials do not offer the same range of subject positions with which learners could identify. It has been encouraging to see that the audiovisual media are a step further, yet insufficient, in the way towards the acceptance of trans identities (GLAAD, 2019). In contrast with the trans visibility gap in written sources, *Orange is the New Black* gives voice to trans people with the introduction of a real trans actress in the cast, whose recurrent appearance provides a strong trans narrative. Indeed, the series aims at raising social awareness and normalising the conversation about trans (and LGBT+) issues, as we can find examples of what Heinz (2012) describes as *active erasure*, or the visible discomfort or refusal of services towards trans people (e.g. *Look. Burset, I sympathise, I really do. But we have to be realistic about our recourse here*), and *passive erasure* or ignorance (e.g. *I don't know from these things. That's why I'm askin' questions*). Besides, and in line with Baxter (2016), we can also identify instances of stigmatisation of and discrimination towards non-conforming identities in several offensive expressions (e.g. *That's a whole different species*) and terms to refer to Sophia's genitals (e.g. *cyborg*). In this sense, we could suggest that while textbook discourse does not

represent subjectivities from which trans learners would easily self-position, they could conversely identify with more realistic and transgressive storylines in TV series, such as that of Sophia.

One of the evident reasons for this asymmetric visibility between written and audiovisual sources may be found in their different purposes and target audiences. Namely, while EFL textbooks are expressly developed and shaped by dominant educational interests as a learning guide for language learners, series and other kinds of audiovisual media have diverse stakes e.g. inform, persuade, entertain, or deal with real social issues and are intended to a wider heterogeneous audience who can choose what to consume and for what purpose (e.g., as additional language-learning sources).

Consequently, with regards to RQ3, while trans erasure may impede the investment of transgender learners in learning English, trans visibility may positively enhance their levels of commitment. It could be argued that the lack of subject positions from which transgender learners can speak, listen, read, or write may result in significant growth of their disengagement from the discursive practices in the classroom and a decrease of their levels of investment. That is, the sense of vulnerability of trans learners for not being represented in the same way as their cisgender classmates may lessen their commitment and, eventually, hinder their language learning process, as they may have the sense that *"ce n'est pas pour nous"* (Bourdieu, 1977). Furthermore, this marginalisation inside the classroom might reinforce the social marginalisation in outside the classroom contexts and affect not only the social relationships of transgender learners, but also the approach of cisgender learners towards trans issues. Conversely, we could say that, given the fact that the visibility of transgender women and men in different kinds of audiovisual media, including series, has encouraged trans people to embrace their self-chosen identity labels (Ringo, 2002), they could similarly enhance their commitment to learning a language, as they may be able to self-identify with subject positions that are present, valid, and socially accepted by others. Therefore, using audiovisual media as additional language-learning sources could contribute to deconstructing and rebalancing the power inequalities in the language classroom that may have been long constraining the learning process of motivated students with marginalised identities.

In addition to the gradual implementation of audiovisual sources in the class, the pedagogical role of EFL teachers when dealing with transgender learners, as well as with other identities living on the margins of society, is fundamental to compensate for the lack of representation. As Norton and Pavlenko (2004) proposed, language teachers need to deconstruct the identity options offered in textbooks (i.e.: to explore them in detail and from a critical perspective) with a view to considering whether there are identity positions that silence students and, if so, to what extent this can be normalised, or *queered,* within a pedagogy of inclusion. Then, teachers could foster the agency of trans learners by giving them tools to identify and exploit the affordances provided in language practices and exercises in the textbooks in order to negotiate their identities (Nguyen & Yang, 2015). By way of illustration and considering examples for textbooks analysed in this paper, transgender learners could take advantage of the absence of gender reference in the questions *What makeup is everyone wearing?* or *What jewelry and accessories are popular?* as part of a speaking activity on fashion and new trends (see Appendix 4) to agentively *trans*gress and challenge cisnormativity. Another example could be the *Talk about it: What are your secret dreams?* activity (see Appendix 6) with questions such as *Why haven't you done them?* (i.e.: "your secret dreams") and *What has stopped you?*, which could be the trigger for trans learners to uncover and assert their own identity stories.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has considered the role of language in the construction of transgender identities, since the system of language constitutes a shared social construct that has been employed to a large extent as a tool to fulfil the interests of dominant systems of hegemony by exerting control over society. More specifically, we aimed at analysing these power inequalities in the context of language learning, as early studies have shown that educational curricula contribute to the continuity of heteronormativity and, in the case of trans people, cisnormativity. Audiovisual media, moreover, have been examined as a potential additional source of input for language-learning that may contribute to learners' identity construction. However, feminist research also views language as the only weapon to normalise *other* subject positions and points to second-language learning as a possible space where dominant discourses of gender can be deconstructed and reconstructed again. Additionally, the model of investment proposed by Norton Peirce (1995) suggests the direct

relationship between the complex identities of language learners and their commitment to learning the TL, which may be influenced by the discursive practices in which they engage in the classroom. Hence, with the ultimate aim of discussing to what extent trans erasure or visibility may constrain or enhance the levels of investment in learning a language, we compared the representation of trans women and men in traditional offline sources, aimed at language learning, and contemporary audiovisual sources that may be used as additional English-learning sources.

The review of two written samples of textbooks from the *Touchstone* series for young and adult English-language learners corroborated the persistent omission, observed by previous research, of transgender narratives and storylines in educational curricula. In contrast, the online series we examined, *Orange is the New Black,* offered a more reliable image of the diverse and multifaceted nature of society due to the inclusion of Sophia, a trans character (and real-life trans actress). With this, we suggest that while the idealised image of a social homogeneity present in textbooks may exclude trans learners from discourse practices and, as a consequence, hinder their investment in learning English; the wider range of subject positions available in the trans storyline of this audiovisual media would enhance learners' commitment to participate in more inclusive discourse practices. We also suggested that the role of teachers would be that of enhancing agency among learners in the classroom, so that power is redistributed in a more equitable way. The foregoing evidence presented leaves us with little doubt that the omission of trans narratives assures ostracisation, rather than inclusivity, since the only way of raising awareness about the existence of lived experiences is to direct attention to them. Thus, 'mentioning' as a critical pedagogical tool may constitute the first step in the recognition of other still silent LGB*T*+ identities, particularly the neglected *T* in the acronym. In sum, societies evolve, and so should educational textbooks.

Needless to say, the present study is not without its limitations. Firstly, we have specifically focused on gender identity and, thus, we have not taken into account intersectionality, that is, the convergence of different identity aspects in terms of gender and sexuality, or gender and ethnicity, among others. And secondly, although our study has attempted to discuss the impact of transgender representation on learners' investment, it has done so from the cisgender perspective of the author; the analysis of trans learners' narratives

may provide more representative information on this issue. However, in spite of these limitations, the study opens up possibilities for further research. A follow-up of the present study could examine the extent to which other non-conventional identities on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or (dis)ability are represented in language-learning textbooks. Alternatively, future research could also explore the impact of trans visibility either by conducting quantitative and qualitative research on other audiovisual media or, by interviewing trans learners and studying their experiences through their narratives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Table of contents of both textbooks analysed

	Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book	*Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book*
Unit 1	***Making friends*****:** talking about yourself, family, favorite things	***The way we are*****:** Talk about people's behaviour, personalities
Unit 2	***Interests*****:** hobbies, types of music	***Experiences*****:** secret dreams, travel blog
Unit 3	***Health*****:** common remedies, how to stay healthy	***Wonders of the world*****:** city, country, nature
Unit 4	***Celebrations*****:** birthdays, favorite holidays, plans, predictions	***Family life*****:** immediate and extended family, memories
Unit 5	***Growing up*****:** life events, memories of growing up	***Food choices*****:** eating habits, cooking
Unit 6	***Around town*****:** places in town, give and ask for directions	***Managing life*****:** future plans, *I'd better go*
Unit 7	***Going away*****:** before the trip, travel and vacations	***Relationships*****:** circle of friends, dating
Unit 8	***At home*****:** furnishing, objects, habits, routines	***What if ?*****:** wishes, imaginary situations, everyday dilemmas
Unit 9	***Things happen*****:** anecdotes, accidents, part of the body, injuries	***Tech savvy?*****:** problems with technology, email scams, personal data protection
Unit 10	***Communication*****:** phone expressions, keeping in touch	***What's up?*****:** news, kinds and types of movies
Unit 11	***Appearances*****:** describe and identity people	***Impressions*****:** speculate about people and things
Unit 12	***Looking ahead*****:** talking about the future, about work study, and life plans	***In the news*****:** new events, natural disasters, statistics

Appendix 2

Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book, p. 124

LIFE'S WORK:
Christiane Amanpour

An Interview with Christiane Amanpour, by Alison Beard

Christiane Amanpour gained global fame in the 1990s as a war correspondent for CNN. After a short time in the studio, she returned to foreign news reporting because "there simply aren't enough people doing it."

How did you get started in journalism?
My first job was at a local television station in Providence [Rhode Island]. They took a leap of faith with me, I think because they saw a young woman who was very serious about her career path and knew exactly what she wanted to do with her life. I was committed to journalism; I wanted to be a foreign correspondent. Today I think that's quite unusual. So I think it was the

Has being a woman been an advantage or a disadvantage for you?
It's been nothing but an advantage. It's allowed me to get my foot into places where men have not been able to.

Your father is Persian, your mother is British, and you grew up in Iran and the UK. How did that cross-cultural experience help you in your career?
It simply made me aware, from the moment I was born, of different cultures. I've lived in a completely multicultural, multiethnic, multireligious environment, in some of the most difficult places in the world. I've seen firsthand that you can bridge differences; you can have tolerance between groups. The trick is to minimize the extremes and to stick to the sensible center.

Appendix 3

Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book, p. 127

1 Who's who?

A Complete these sentences about Jane and Sonia. Fill in sentences 1–4 with comparatives and sentences 5–6 with prepositions. Then compare with a partner.

1. Jane is ___shorter___ and _____ than Sonia.
2. Sonia's hair is _____ and _____ than Jane's.
3. They've both got freckles, but Jane has _____ freckles.
4. Sonia is wearing _____ jewelry.
5. Jane's the one _____ the black T-shirt, and Sonia's the one _____ the yellow blouse.
6. Sonia's the one _____ the spiked hair, and Jane's the one _____ the ponytail.

Appendix 4

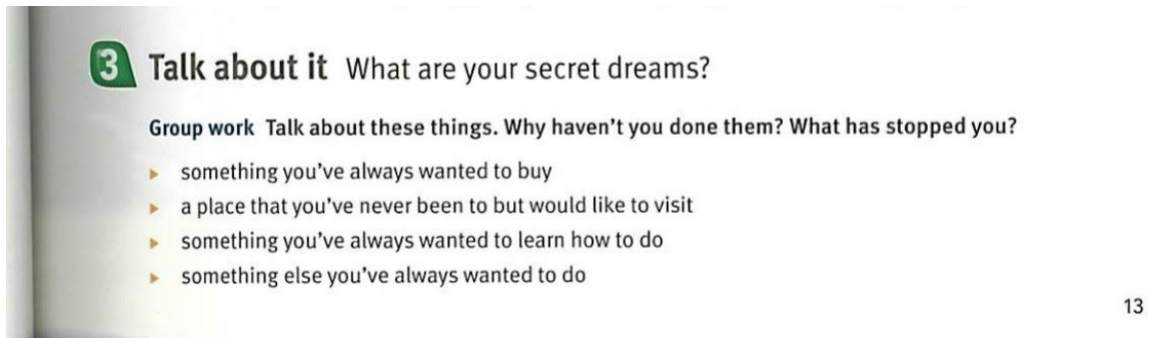Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book, p. 115

Appendix 5

Season 1, Episode 3 *Lesbian Request Denial* (2013) from *Orange is the New Black*

Appendix 6

Touchstone Level 3 Student's Book, p. 13

3 Talk about it What are your secret dreams?

Group work Talk about these things. Why haven't you done them? What has stopped you?

▸ something you've always wanted to buy
▸ a place that you've never been to but would like to visit
▸ something you've always wanted to learn how to do
▸ something else you've always wanted to do

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