

Gender representation in a Finnish EFL textbook

Bachelor's Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Koulujen sukupuolitietyoisuus ja sukupuolisensitiivisyys ovat viime vuosina nousseet ajankohtaisiksi aiheiksi paljon mediahuomiota saaneen Suomen opetushallituksen julkaiseman Tasa-arvotyö on taitolaji -oppaan johdosta. Opas kannustaa kouluja lisäämään ymmärrystä sukupuolen moninaisuudesta ja tuo esiin sukupuolten tasa-arvoon liittyviä haasteita. Opas herätti vilkasta keskustelua siitä, miten sukupuoli tulisi huomioida suomalaisessa perusopetuksessa.</p> <p>Tutkielma tarkastelee alakoulun englannin kielen oppikirjaa sukupuolinäkökulmasta ja pyrkii selvittämään, miten sukupuoli rakentuu oppikirjassa, sekä edistääkö oppikirja tasa-arvoa. Oppikirjat ovat suomalaisen perusopetuksen keskiössä ja niiden rooli on oppitunneilla suuri. Ne välittävät asenteita ja käsityksiä ja vaikuttavat siten olennaisesti siihen millainen kuva kirjan käyttäjälle sukupuolesta rakentuu. Tutkimuksessa analysoitiin A-englannin kuudennen luokan tekstikirjan tekstejä sekä kuvituksia. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin kriittistä diskurssianalyysia sekä kvantitatiivista analyysia. Tutkielmassa huomioitiin niin naisten kuin miesten kuvaaminen oppikirjassa.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset heijastelivat aiempien tutkimusten tuloksia ja osoittivat tarkastellun oppikirjan sisältävän perinteisiä sukupuolirakenteita, sekä miesten aseman olevan näkyvämpi. Oppikirjasta löytyi kuitenkin myös tapauksia, joissa perinteisiä sukupuolirooleja ja stereotyyppioita haastettiin. Tutkimus osoitti, että vaikka suomalaiset oppikirjat ovat viime vuosikymmeninä kehittyneet paljon, on vielä tarvetta tarkastella niitä kriittisesti.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender issues have received increasing academic and public attention during the past 10 years and more attention has been given to the relationship between gender and language during the last decade than in any other period in history (Julé 2015). We are much more aware of gender being a key variable in who we are and of how we use language to reflect, create and sustain our own gender identities and the identities of others (Julé 2015). The concept of gender has evolved and is now seen as a spectrum, rather than as a masculine and feminine binary. The existence of more than just two genders has been acknowledged and people have started to question the narrow expectations of gender (Julé 2015).

There is an extensive body of research on the relationship between language and gender and much research is continuously performed on gender stereotyping and its influence on society. Education as an institution is part of producing, reproducing and preserving social and cultural norms, including the existing patterns of gender inequality through formal and informal processes (Julé 2015). Classrooms and the surrounding school culture are crucial settings where the foundations of social behaviour are created, which makes education one of the most powerful ways to improve gender equality and introduce a change (Julé 2008; Brugeilles and Cromer 2015). The construction of one's gender identity and relationship with the world that results from it are partially learned and rehearsed inside schools (Julé 2008). This means that gender, language use and education are inevitably and intimately connected.

In Finland, gender issues in education settings rose to the centre of discussion in 2015, when the Finnish National Agency for Education rolled out a new gender equality guide titled 'Tasa-arvotyö on taitolaji' designed to help schools broaden concepts about gender in their teaching and embrace gender diversity (Jääskeläinen et al. 2015). The guide contains practical suggestions and examples that encourage schools to move away from traditional gender-based teaching and to pay greater attention to gender diversity (Jääskeläinen et al. 2015). The guide emphasises gender-sensitivity and the importance of seeing and treating pupils as unique individuals rather than through their assigned gender. The goal is to create an accepting environment where students are not held back

by conservative gender roles and, instead, have the freedom to reach their full potential. The guide received a lot of media coverage and sparked a discussion on how gender should be addressed in schools and how well gender equality is currently realised in Finnish schools.

Textbooks used in schools present an image of social reality, an ideology and a worldview that reflects the attitudes, values and beliefs of a certain society. They feature characters talking, working, studying and performing various other activities. The image that textbooks present has often been critiqued by researchers for being stereotypical and reinforcing the traditional conception of roles assigned to men and women in society (Blumberg 2007). Textbooks have been widely researched worldwide and previous studies on gender representation in textbooks have discovered that males outnumber females, occupations and activities tend to be stereotypically gendered and men occupy more powerful occupations (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). Due to the growing gender awareness, more recent studies have discovered some changes in gender representations in textbooks but occupational roles still tend to be distributed by gender and an overrepresentation of males continues to persist (Julé 2015). Textbooks still occupy a central role in today's classroom and the image they present has an inevitable impact on their audience and its idea of gender (Jääskeläinen et al. 2015). Therefore, providing teaching materials that contain balanced and diverse representations of gender is crucial.

The aim of the present study is to explore how gender is constructed and represented in a Finnish EFL textbook used in Finnish comprehensive school, investigate possible gender bias and reveal possible stereotypical representations of men and women. It explores both linguistic and social aspects of gender representation and includes treatment description of the treatment of men and the representation of them in the textbook, which is a topic that is sometimes neglected. The study aims to raise textbook authors' as well as teachers' and students' awareness on gender fairness and work towards creating education that is just and sustainable for all.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Defining gender

Sociolinguistics is a field that is interested in the relationship between language and society. It explores language use, how it reflects social contexts and what kind of impact sociological variables have on language choices (Julé 2015). One of the concerns of the field is language and its relation to gender. For the last two decades, there has been an increasing interest in masculinities and femininities and in the gender continuum that links them (Julé 2008). Studies on language and gender have started to question how gender is represented and constructed in language and more attention has been given to context and motivations (Julé 2008; Julé 2015).

The study of language and gender requires deep understanding of both past and present theories of the ways language and gender are connected (Julé 2015). In order to study these relationships, what is meant by 'gender' and how it differs from 'sex' must first be established. According to the definition by Mooney and Evans (2015: 109) sex refers to the biological state of male and female, whereas gender is the socially constructed characteristics, norms, roles and relationships that are associated with one's sex. By referring to socially constructed gender we can make different distinctions and understand better the different ways people perform their identity and how they are judged (Mooney and Evans 2015).

Gender is not something one has, it is something that is accomplished through behaviour, clothing, habits and speech. This is often characterised as 'performing gender' (Mooney and Evans 2015: 109). Gender and language studies have shifted away from exploring 'gender roles' and 'gender differences' and are now concentrating on variable identities (femininities and masculinities). Instead of just seeing gender as an individual or social attribute it is also seen as a contextualised changing set of practises (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). Gender is characterised to be a complex and fluid category that is profoundly variable, multi-faceted and constantly shifting.

According to Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002), making a simple distinction between biological sex and social gender is now seen to be inadequate in order to properly acknowledge agency and diversity and to see language as constructing and shaping gender. Gender is no longer seen as a set of behaviours that are imposed upon the individual by society or as a masculine/feminine binary, and the importance of discourse, context, motivations and how language affects gender have been acknowledged (Julé 2015; Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002).

2.2 Gender and discourse

Although the equality of men and women has been legally recognised in most countries, everyday sexism still exists and it is easy to find examples in language (Mooney and Evans 2015), such as using the 'generic' he when discussing a topic that is applicable to both sexes, using titles like 'congressman' or 'stewardess' or by adding gender markers to genderless titles such as 'male nurse'. Language choices exist in social practise and can be made consciously or unconsciously. They reflect the values, norms and attitudes of a certain society, are influenced by context and have an inevitable impact on one's gender identity and attitude towards gender (Julé 2015: 1).

From an ideological social theory perspective discourse is seen as a form of social practise (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002: 9). By seeing discourse as a social practise, we can better understand how we experience the world through the representational capacity of language (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). Gendered representations exist in both written and spoken texts and discourse analysis of different types of texts can expose the range of ways gender identities are represented, constructed, performed and interpreted (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). According to Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 13), 'discourse in a social practise sense is not only representational but also *constitutive*: not only a form of knowledge about cultural ways of thinking and doing, but also, more powerfully, a potential and arguably actual agent of social construction'.

The aim of a discourse approach to gender and language is to accommodate ideas of individual agency. Gender is seen as a variable that is multiple, dynamic and shaped in part by language. It is characterised to be the understanding of what it means to be a

woman or a man and how it varies between language users from different generations, ethnic groups and social classes (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). The notion of intersectionality highlights the connection between gender and other systems of power such as race, social class and sexuality and emphasises that not everyone experiences gender oppression in the same way (Julé 2015).

The discourse of gender differences has been dominant in many contexts and for a long time language use was seen to be a reflection of one's gender. Recently there has been a shift towards a new understanding of the gender and language relationship where language use and discourse are seen to shape rather than reflect gender (Julé 2015). Differences in language use are seen to be best explained by the way people are expected to perform their gender rather than because of any innate differences between men and women (Mooney and Evans 2015).

According to Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) the idea of 'gender differences' is unproductive and conservative and they highlight the importance of focusing on how a range of masculine and feminine identities are continuously constructed within and across individuals. They emphasise the shift from gender differences to discourse and gendered identities and to relations shaped by discourse. When focusing on gender differences, gender is inherently represented in binary opposition and it implicates that the way women and men speak is shaped by their biological sex. It also supports and echoes heteronormativity, implies fixedness and does not separate gender from sex, which in turn does not allow the possibility of language shaping gender (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). Finding and noting gender similarities instead of differences challenges the disadvantaging 'binary' characterisation of gender. It should, however, be noted that both similarities and differences need to be contextualised when the findings are interpreted and discussed (Julé 2015).

As discussed above, there are several arguments against seeking binary gender differences in naturally occurring talk. However, gender representations are a different case. Representation is always of someone by someone and it is the result of a set of choices made by someone of someone's attributes and behaviour. According to Julé (2015: 11) 'the availability/desirability of the choices are filtered through ideology, socially

shaped beliefs and awareness both of what is commercially advantageous and the consequences of transgression'. Representations do not mirror reality and they involve the use of creativity, agency and intention. They are often critiqued for being stereotypical, which is why Julé (2015) argues that in gender representation studies exploring gender differences in written and multimodal text types is still relevant and valid.

2.3. Gender and discourse in EFL textbooks

Language textbooks offer interesting data for gender representation studies because they are full of both fictional and actual human characters who perform different social actions and continually verbally interact with each other (Julé 2015). They also involve a lot of repetition and phrases in chapters are often repeated in written exercises and, therefore, potential gender stereotypes might receive a lot of coverage in class (Julé 2015). In addition, language textbooks provide a great opportunity for promoting gender equality. According to UNESCO's methodological guide to promoting gender equality in schools, textbooks are practical and powerful tools that have the potential to introduce a process of social change (Brugeilles and Cromer 2015). Diverse representations can encourage students to find fulfilment according to his or her potentials and passions rather than according to the attributes of his or her sex and its associated gender (Brugeilles and Cromer 2015).

In textbooks, gender-bias can manifest itself in many forms. Perhaps the most familiar examples of bias in teaching materials are the use of sexist language, the exclusion of a group either completely or partially in some contexts, such as occupational or domestic settings, and stereotypical representations, where all members of a group are assigned a set of characteristics. For example, portraying all men as assertive and with successful careers, but rarely in domestic roles of a husband or a father, or portraying all women as nurturing caregivers who rarely appear in occupational settings are forms of gender-stereotyping (Sadker and Sadker cited in Blumberg 2007).

Early studies on gender representation in language textbooks consistently found that males were overrepresented, women and men were in gender stereotypical occupations, performed stereotypical activities and that men occupied more powerful occupations such

as leadership roles and embodied authority and independence (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002; Brugeilles and Cromer 2015). Women were also more frequently described in terms of their physical appearance and emotions (Julé 2015) and appeared almost exclusively in domestic settings (Brugeilles and Cromer 2015). When analysing dialogues women were found to speak less, speak first less often and perform in fewer discourse roles than men (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). These stereotypical representations could be found in similar form in textbooks all around the world and most textbooks did not recognise all the changes in women's position in recent decades (Blumberg 2007). It should also be noted that not only women and girls, but also men and boys may suffer from sexism and biased representation in some contexts. Domains that are considered feminine, such as parenting and childcare, often favour women (Mooney and Evans 2015).

The changing social climate and the growing social awareness of the importance of inclusion have created changes in gender representation in language textbooks (Julé 2015). Not only is the publishers' and writers' awareness of gender bias growing but teachers and students are also becoming more aware of it (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). There are policies and legislation regarding gender equality and in publishing there are guidelines for 'inclusive language' when designing teaching materials. Some of the more recent studies have discovered that male-female ratios are getting closer but in some contexts men were still found in public settings and more active whereas women were in household settings, which is why there is still a need for gender-inclusive policies and legislation (Julé 2015).

When analysing gender representations in textbooks it should be noted that it cannot be predicted how students will respond to sexist or stereotypical representations. These representations can be recognised, called out and critiqued by educators or students (Julé 2015). The way the teacher presents the text also cannot be predicted and the teacher discourse around a given text, which is often diverse, has an inevitable impact on how the text is perceived by students (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002).

Previous gender representation studies of language textbooks have been critiqued for failing to address sexuality and heteronormativity. The attention given to gender and traditional gender relationships has often been at the expense of acknowledging sexuality

or exposing heteronormativity (Julé 2015). LGBTQ+ people are often not represented at all and textbooks tend to be extremely heteronormative and represent only conventional nuclear families and heterosexual relationships. According to Julé (2015) the studies on language textbooks should not only critique gender imbalance and stereotyping but also address 'the textual prevalence and flaunting of heterosexuality'.

2.4. Gender equality in Finnish schools

Finland is often seen as a pioneer in gender equality, and equality is a core value in Finnish society. Being the first country to grant women full political rights in 1906, and having a legislation that tackles discrimination against women in employment show that gender equality has been an important issue for Finns for over a century. However, studies have shown that gender bias in textbooks is more widespread geographically than the remaining gender gap in parity (Blumberg 2007). According to Blumberg (2007: 33) the stereotypes of males and females are 'camouflaged by the taken-for-granted system of gender stratification and roles'. They are found worldwide, even in countries with a high level of gender equality, as measured by indicators such as the UN Gender Development Index (GDI), including the Nordic countries (Blumberg 2007).

Promoting gender equality has long been an officially stated goal for the Finnish educational system and Finland's current key gender equality goal in education is the reduction of gender segregation (Jääskeläinen et al. 2015; THL 2018). The Finnish national-level core curriculum states that all schools must provide education and teaching materials that support and promote equality (EDUFI 2014). However, teaching materials containing stereotypical depictions of men and women are still being published and used in schools, which is why teaching materials need to be studied critically. As a part of their equality guide '*Tasa-arvotyö on taitolaji*', the Finnish National Agency for Education carried out a study, which found that men were overrepresented and LGBTQ+ people were almost entirely missing in all teaching materials that were studied (Jääskeläinen et al. 2015). When minorities are excluded they are inevitably portrayed as 'others' and the diverse nature of people is not represented. The Finnish National Agency for Education has since issued a guide for teaching material publishers and writers on how to support gender equality in teaching materials (Jääskeläinen et al. 2015).

3. DATA AND METHODS

The aim of the present study is to analyse an English textbook that is being used in EFL teaching in Finnish schools, examine how different genders are represented and whether stereotyping exists in the textbook. The textbook under review is *Let's Go! 6 storybook* published by Sanoma Pro in 2012. It is aimed at the sixth grade and it is part of the *Let's go!* series. The textbook was chosen for two reasons: its recent publication date and the theme of the textbook, which is occupations. Being a recent publication the textbook provides up-to-date data of gender representations in Finnish EFL teaching materials. It is also centred around working life and thus features gendered characters engaged in various occupations, which according to previous research tend to be stereotypically gendered. The research questions are as follows:

1. How is gender represented in the textbook?
2. Does the textbook contain biased or stereotypical representations of gender?

The data was collected by studying the texts, dialogues and illustrations of the digital version of *Let's Go! 6 storybook*. The data was analysed using quantitative analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) and both social gender roles as well as linguistic aspects of gender representations were studied. The social aspects include the visibility of male and female characters, the attributes, activities, occupations and roles assigned to each gender, ideologies, thoughts and ideas connected to gender and what characterises the behaviour of females and males. The linguistic aspects of gender representations include the vocabulary that is used to describe and associated with the characters, the amount of utterances produced by the characters, who starts the dialogue and the 'firstness' of characters and gendered nouns. The patterns of ordering in noun phrases when both a male and a female are mentioned is linked to power and can demonstrate gender inequality (Mooney and Evans 2015). The form that is placed first receives a priority status and can, therefore, signal a power imbalance between the genders.

CDA studies language's relation to power, focuses on social interactions and explores how structural relationships of dominance, discrimination and power are manifested in language (Blommaert 2004), which makes it suitable for analysing gender representations.

According to CDA, discourse as a tool of power is becoming increasingly important in today's society and CDA aims to expose the ways discourse can be used as a medium of power (Blommaert 2004). Blommaert (2004) argues that CDA needs to focus on how inequality is produced in, through and around discourse and start taking into account the contextualisation of discourse. Social domains where CDA is used also include education settings where, according to CDA, social relations are reproduced and identities constructed and formed (Blommaert 2004). Education settings are also seen to be valuable opportunities for introducing a social change and propagating universal values, including gender equality (Brugeilles and Cromer 2015).

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Amount of characters

The first aspect under analysis is the ratio of gender-marked characters that appear in the written texts of the *Let's Go! 6 storybook*. A quantitative analysis was performed and only characters who have lines and who, therefore, play an active role in the texts were taken into account. The textbook features a talking squirrel with human-like attributes who was also excluded from the analysis, and focus was placed on human characters.

Table 1: Amount of characters

	Characters <i>n</i> (%)
Female	19 (39%)
Male	30 (61%)
Total	49 (100%)

As can be seen in Table 1, the analysis revealed that the total number of characters in the *Let's Go! 6 storybook* is 49, out of which 61% are male and 39% female. It can, therefore, be concluded that the male gender is the dominant gender and is given a preference and a more visible role throughout the textbook. The characters are in the roles of school

children and adults engaged in various occupations, which are roles that could be filled by both females and males and, therefore, there is no explicit explanation that would justify the gap.

4.2. Utterances

The textbook consists of seven sections: a prologue called 'Career week', five units set in different locations and an epilogue called 'Clubhouse'. Each setting features a variety of characters who engage in conversation with each other. An analysis was conducted to determine how many utterances each gender produces in different settings in the *Let's Go! 6 storybook* and to find out whether a certain gender dominates the conversation.

Table 2: Utterances

	Career week	Hotel	Science centre	Shopping centre	Airport	TV station	Clubhouse	Total
Female n (%)	4 (31%)	28 (30%)	25 (25%)	41 (49%)	12 (20%)	36 (63%)	8 (36%)	154 (36%)
Male n (%)	9 (69%)	64 (70%)	76 (75%)	43 (51%)	49 (80%)	21 (37%)	14 (64%)	276 (64%)

As can be seen in Table 2, male voices dominate the discussion throughout the book and male characters produce 64% of the total amount of utterances compared to female characters who produce 36%. Out of all the settings the airport features the largest difference. Male characters dominate the discussion and produce 80% of the utterances, compared to female characters who only produce 20%. Male voices are also more prominent at the science centre and at the hotel. Female characters were found to speak more than male characters only in one setting, which is the TV station.

4.3. Initiating conversation

The dialogues in the textbook were further analysed in terms of who initiates conversation in mixed-gender dialogues, which has the potential to reveal information on discourse roles and power dynamics of interaction. The findings are tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Initiating conversation

	Initiates conversation <i>n</i> (%)
Female	10 (50%)
Male	10 (50%)
Total	20 (100%)

The analysis revealed that out of the 20 mixed-gender dialogues in the textbook, 50% were started by females and 50% by males. This result shows that males and females are given an equally initiative role in dialogues and no power imbalance can be detected between the genders.

4.4. Firstness

The next aspect under analysis is the patterns of ordering in noun phrases when both a male and a female are mentioned. Binomials where the ordering is simply conventional, such as in Tarzan and Jane, were not taken into account in the analysis.

Table 4: Firstness

	Firstness <i>n</i> (%)
Female	4 (50%)
Male	4 (50%)

Total	8 (100%)
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As can be seen in Table 4, the textbook contains 8 instances of noun phrases with both female and male forms. It was discovered that in four of them the female form is placed first and in four the male form, for example, 'Liz and Jason' (Harjula et al. 2012: 55) and 'Ron Boss and Brooke Hogan' (Harjula et al. 2012: 95). Since the order varies and is not alphabetical, a decision, conscious or unconscious, has been made by the authors regarding the order of female and male forms and no gender is prioritised over the other.

4.5. Occupations

Occupations and careers are a central theme in the *Let's Go! 6 storybook*. The storyline follows a career week during which a group of school children visit different work places and get to know various occupations. An analysis was performed to determine which occupations are ascribed to males and females and whether certain occupations are stereotypically gendered. Both verbal and visual data was studied and the findings tabulated in Table 5.

Table 5: Occupations

	Occupations	<i>n</i>
Female	architect, baby sitter, secretary, housekeeper, personal trainer, paramedic, airport employee, vet, TV station employee, meteorologist	10
Male	businessman, carpenter, computer programmer, driver, gardener, lawyer, musician, plumber, politician, head master, scientist, travel agent, shark professor, dog barber, airport security officer, pilot, director, astronaut	18

Both	teacher, chef, food critic, waiter, hotel manager, reporter, police officer, actor, athlete, sports anchor, translator	11
Total		39

As can be seen in Table 5, the textbook contains a total of 39 different occupations. It was discovered that males are engaged in a greater variety of occupations than females. They do most of the manual work and are portrayed in occupations such as carpenter, driver, gardener, dog barber, and plumber. Males are also engaged in several occupations that require an advanced degree such as businessman, lawyer and professor, and in leadership roles such as politician, director and head master. Travelling is also associated with males and they are portrayed 'travelling to an international conference' (Harjula et al. 2012: 71) and engaged in occupations such as pilot, airport security officer, travel agent and astronaut. Science and IT related jobs, such as scientist and computer programmer, are also associated with males.

Women, on the other hand, are associated with occupations that require taking care of others such as baby sitter, vet and paramedic. They are depicted as housekeepers and are engaged in occupations such as secretary, architect and a meteorologist.

Both genders are associated with catering and cooking and are working as chefs, food critics and waiters. The textbook also contains both female and male police officers, reporters, teachers, hotel managers and translators. Both genders are involved in sports and are in the roles of a sports anchor and athlete.

4.6. Gender roles

A closer analysis was performed to find out which roles female and male characters are assigned with. The verbal and visual data was examined to get an idea of what kind of activities and attributes are assigned to each gender.

In the textbook, cleaning and being tidy is associated with women. A unit set in a hotel features a female housekeeper and it is said that 'she really likes her work and she is very good at it' (Harjula et al. 2012: 15). It is also said that 'the old ladies kept their rooms so tidy' (Harjula et al. 2012: 15). Similar comments, however, are not made of men. When talking about a male musician it is said that 'cleaning really isn't his strong suit' and that 'he doesn't like cleaning as much as Mrs Ek' (Harjula et al. 2012: 16).

The textbook contains illustrations of both genders studying and learning. However, science as a subject and as a career is strongly associated with males. Most characters that appear in a unit set in a science centre are male. A male student working as an assistant is said to be 'really into science' (Harjula et al. 2012: 7) and the scientist showing him around is also male. As was seen in Table 2, males also produce more utterances and dominate the discussion in the science centre, which reinforces the stereotype that men are more interested in science.

Sports is associated with both genders. According to a female character 'as a child [she] liked all kinds of sports' and she has worked as a personal trainer (Harjula et al. 2012: 24). Another female character explains that she is the goalkeeper in her school's football team and says that she would like to learn how to surf (Harjula et al. 2012: 55). The book also contains illustrations of females cross-country skiing and skating (Harjula et al. 2012: 98). Males, however, are associated with a greater variety of sports, for example, with surfing and swamp football and the textbook contains illustrations of males playing floorball, doing gymnastics, skateboarding, bowling, snowboarding, playing ice hockey and ski jumping (Harjula et al. 2012: 98). They also appear in the illustrations in the roles of a referee, coach and sports fan (Harjula et al. 2012: 98). A unit set in a TV station features both a male and a female sports anchor who interview both female and male characters engaged in a variety of sports. It is said that 'some brave men and women' (Harjula et al. 2012: 99) compete in swimming competition in muddy water and both genders also take part in a pumpkin regatta. Men, however, are both the past and current winners of both sports.

Males are generally portrayed as active, adventurous, and tough. They perform in adventurous and extreme activities such as studying sharks and their behaviour in Australia (Harjula et al. 2012: 52), surfing in Tasmania (Harjula et al. 2012: 55), playing

swamp soccer in Finland (Harjula et al. 2012: 56) and organising extreme trips to the North Pole (Harjula et al. 2012: 51). They are also portrayed in the texts and illustrations calming, helping or saving women or giving advice. They are depicted being brave and the textbook contains illustrations of males saving a girl from a fire, keeping a door open for a woman and helping an old lady. A male student calms down a female student when she gets scared (Harjula et al. 2012: 37) and a male student recalls advice given to him by his dad (Harjula et al. 2012: 79). However, when two students get lost a female student takes the lead (Harjula et al. 2012: 36). The textbook also features female triplets who are, according to a character, 'the wildest girls [she's] ever seen.' (Harjula et al. 2012: 75)

The textbook contains several instances of males being associated with verbs related to misbehaving, bullying and crime. They break, hit and steal, whereas similar verbs are not associated with females. They are in the roles of a thief: 'stop that man! -- He stole my wallet!' (Harjula et al. 2012: 59), and they are associated with negative adjectives such as naughty, rude, mean and scary. The textbook also contains illustrations of males pushing people, taking a toy away from a girl and pulling a girl's hair (Harjula et al. 2012: 70).

Since the textbook is set around occupations and working life, data on families and domestic roles is rather limited. However, both genders can be found performing in domestic roles and are portrayed as members of a family. A unit set at an airport features a dad travelling abroad with his three daughters (Harjula et al. 2012: 75). The dad is in the role of a caring parent involved in taking care of his children. The same unit includes a story of a grandmother travelling to visit her grandchildren.

5. CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to investigate gender representations and stereotyping in a Finnish EFL textbook used in Finnish comprehensive school. Gender bias and sexism in textbooks has been a widely researched topic and previous studies have consistently found overrepresentation of males and a tendency to assign both women and men traditional gender-based activities and social roles. The data for the present study was collected by studying *Let's go! 6 storybook* and analysing the texts and illustrations in the textbook. The analysis revealed that the textbook under review does contain some gender-

biased elements and instances of stereotyping. The quantitative analysis showed that males outnumber females and dominate the dialogues throughout the textbook, which has also been a consistent finding in previous research. Females held a less visible role and also produced less utterances than males.

The results of the study also demonstrated that the textbook contains elements where male and female characters are assigned stereotypical roles and are ascribed stereotypical attributes. Some of the occupations were also stereotypically gendered. In the textbook, females are portrayed cleaning, being tidy and taking care of others, whereas men are generally portrayed as brave, adventurous and tough engaged in extreme activities. Additionally, science as an interest and as a career is strongly associated with males, males have a wider professional range and are more frequently engaged in occupations that require an advanced degree. On the other hand, males could also be found in the roles of trouble-makers and associated with misbehaving, bullying and crime.

The textbook does, however, contain some instances where traditional gender roles and stereotypical representations are challenged. For example, the textbook features a female police officer, a dad in a domestic role of a caring parent taking care of his children and both males and females are found taking part in various sports activities. Women are portrayed as active subjects, not as passive objects. In addition, no bias was detected in terms of initiating conversation in mixed-gender dialogues or in the patterns of ordering in noun phrases when both genders are mentioned.

Finland has a reputation as a country where gender equality has been implemented in basic education with good success. When compared globally, gender bias in Nordic textbooks is not very extensive and has diminished over the years (Blumberg 2007). However, as the present study has illustrated, biased representations still exist and can be found in EFL textbooks, which is why textbooks should continue to be studied critically. Gender bias may have taken less explicit forms but both males and females continue to suffer from biased representations in some contexts.

The scope of the study was rather limited and further research would doubtless reveal more detailed information about the gender representations in Finnish EFL textbooks. Only

one of the books in the series was examined and only some of the linguistic and visual aspects available were analysed. For example, the illustrations in the textbook were analysed only on a surface level and the analysis did not cover LGBTQ+ representations and heteronormativity. Observing how the texts are treated in the classroom could also provide insights and bring an interesting aspect to the analysis. In addition, future research could examine how students respond to stereotypes and how unbalanced teaching materials affect students and their future decisions. Studies have discovered that educational and professional choices are restricted by traditional notions of men's and women's jobs and according to the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare (2018), in particular boys have a tendency to think that gender affects their future professional choices.

Raising gender-awareness and emphasising balanced and diverse representations of gender in teaching materials is crucial. Gender stereotypes limit girls and boys to certain modes of behaviour and study and career choices and thereby may prevent them from realising their full potential. Furthermore, textbooks should reflect the rapidly changing social climate and provide diverse and balanced representations of gender that keep students up to date with social changes.

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