

Queer Matters: The Construction of the Heteronormative Discourse within EFL Textbooks for Secondary School Learners in Finland

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<p>Tässä tutkimuksessa käsiteltiin heteronormatiivisuuden diskurssin rakentumista yläkoulun englannin kielen tekstikirjoissa Suomessa. Heteronormatiivisuus on laajalti vallitseva ideologia, jonka mukaan ainoastaan heteroseksuaalisuus on normaalia, ja muut seksuaalisuuden ilmentymät ovat epänormaaleja, ei-toivottuja, tai alempiarvoisia. Tutkimuksen tavoite oli selvittää, millä tavoin heteronormatiivisuutta rakennetaan tekstikirjoissa tekstin ja kuvien avulla. Tutkimus koostui yhdeksästä yläkoulun englannin tekstikirjasta, jotka analysoitiin kriittisen diskurssintutkimuksen menetelmin. Tutkimuksessa identifioitiin kohtia, joissa seksuaalinen identiteetti tuli ilmi joko suoraan tai epäsuoraan. Nämä löydökset luokiteltiin kolmeen kategoriaan heteronormatiiviseksi, matalasti heteronormatiiviseksi, ja ei-heteronormatiiviksi. Tutkimuksen keskeisinä tuloksina oli, että matalasti heteronormatiiviset strategiat olivat yleisin keino rakentaa kuvaa seksuaalisista identiteeteistä. Selkeästi heteronormatiiviset tapaukset muodostivat toiseksi yleisimmän ryhmän. Aineistosta ei löytynyt yhtään yksiselitteisen ei-heteronormatiivista tapausta. Koska oppikirjoilla on edelleen keskeinen rooli kielten opetuksessa, niiden sisältämät ideologiat rakentavat osaltaan koulujen ilmapiriä seksuaalivähemmistöjä kohtaan. Seksuaalisten identiteettien moninaisuus on noussut viime vuosikymmeninä keskeisempään rooliin kuin koskaan aiemmin, mutta sitä huomioidaan kouluympäristöissä edelleen vain hyvin rajatuissa tilanteissa. Tämä osaltaan heijastuu oppikirjojen sisältöihin, joissa seksuaalivähemmistöjä ei rakenneta osana kirjojen maailmankuvaa.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses the construction of the heteronormative discourse within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks in Finnish secondary education. In the present study, the aim is to answer the research question of how heteronormative discourse is constructed within EFL textbooks. Heteronormativity is an ideology which perceives all other sexualities than heterosexuality to be deviant, inferior, or sinful. What is more, heteronormative ideology presumes gender being dividable into two distinct yet compatible categories of men and women and does not validate non-binary identities. Heteronormative discourse has for long been the dominant ideology in Western societies, and according to research, heteronormativity dominates in textbooks globally. Textbooks have maintained a central position in foreign language teaching; hence, they are potent tools of ideological construction. Tainio and Teräs (2010: 10) assert that according to research, teaching materials are impactful in shaping the learners' views on the contents and goals of that subject. Flowerdew and Richardson (2017: 525) state that textbooks carry also a wider societal meaning, for they have potential to shape the knowledge and values of the future generations, thereby rendering them as mediums of policies which can define what identities are desirable, welcome, and normal. What is more, foreign language textbooks especially have plenty of characters and character interaction within which ideologies of sexuality and gender norms can be produced.

Yet, sexual identities are a relatively novel and unexplored topic in the field of textbook research in Finland. Gender roles and stereotypes have received more attention than issues of sexuality. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the sexuality aspect of the heteronormative discourse rather than on the gender side of it, although the role of non-binary genders in textbooks will be discussed to a small degree. The lack of research on sexuality within textbooks might partly be explained by the fact that matters relating to sexuality have not historically been handled openly within Finnish educational system. Sexuality has been perceived as a private and personal matter, and often as irrelevant regarding learning results. However, sexuality is not to be confused with sexual acts, for as Nelson (2006: 6) remarks, sexuality interlinks with the most ordinary aspects of everyday life and is present in everyday patterns of thinking, speaking, and learning. Nelson (2006: 3) explains that sexual identities are produced, shaped, and policed by societal forces and conventions, therefore, they are never a fully private matter. What is more, the growing awareness and acceptance of marginalized sexual and gender identities within the Finnish society has increased the understanding of the meaning and relevancy of sexual and gender identities. Therefore, LGBTQ+ issues have made their way out of the margins of the society into the

mainstream in many contexts. LGBTQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. The ‘plus’ stands for all other forms of sexuality and gender, such as intersex and asexual people; sometimes the form LGBTQIA is used to make these identities explicit (Taavetti and Alanko, 2015: 5). The forms LGBT and LGBT+ are common as well; none of the acronyms are more right or wrong than the others – the preferred form depends on the context, intended meaning, as well as convention. In this thesis, the form LGBTQ+ is favored because it is concise yet inclusive.

Moreover, the study of sexual identities is now more topical than ever, for the most recent Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education discusses sexuality explicitly in the passage noting that “the pupils’ conceptions of their gender and sexuality evolve during their time of basic education” (NCBE: 2016: 47). As Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017: para. 10) note, before the NCBE of 2016, sexual diversity had not been addressed at all in the Finnish NCBEs. Additionally, the plurality of sexual and gender identities is reflected in the legislation concerning basic education. The most central acts are the Non-discrimination Act and the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The Non-discrimination Act (2014/1325) forbids discrimination on the basis of age, origin, nationality, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics (Non-discrimination Act, 2014/1325 § 8). As apparent, sexual orientation is specifically mentioned in the Non-discrimination Act, therefore obliging all basic education institutions to secure the equality of all learners regardless of their sexuality. Gender is not mentioned in the Non-Discrimination Act, since it is covered by the Act on Equality between Women and Men aimed at promoting equality between women and men and preventing discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression (609/1986; amendments up to 915/2016 included).

Yet, the lack of visibility of marginalized sexual and gender identities is evident even on the curricular level. Finally, there is a total of three mentions of sexuality explicitly in the NCBE, the other two mentions situated in the subject-specific parts of health education and religion, indicating a lack of direct visibility of sexuality in the NCBE. The diversity of sexualities can be interpreted to be contained for example in the statements that the development of basic education is guided by the principles of equality and equity, that education should promote economic, social, regional, and gender equality, or that basic education is built on respect for life and human rights (NCBE: 2016: 23). Yet, sexual identity is not specified alongside economic, social, regional, and gender equality in the document, which constructs it as an isolated topic reserved for the subjects of health science and religion. The textbooks that were selected for the analysis were originally

published during the time when both the new NCBE as well as the previous one were in force, so some attention in this thesis is also paid to the fact whether the NCBE of the time of publication and textbook development affects the way sexual identities are constructed within the textbook discourse.

The present study which contained both quantitative and qualitative elements consisted of nine secondary school textbooks, *Key English 7, 8, and 9*, *Spotlight 7, 8, and 9*, and *On the Go 1, 2, and 3*. This study could be described as a queer linguistics informed critical discourse analysis. The main focus of the analysis was on the textual means of constructing heteronormativity. However, also the role of the visuals included in the books in co-constructing the discourse was taken into account. In the analysis, the aim was to identify cases in which sexual identities had potential to emerge either explicitly or implicitly. In practice, this meant for example examining kinship terms regarding families and partnerships, family and relationship models, and expressions of attraction and affection in the textual analysis. The visual analysis supplemented the textual analysis and focused on the visual instances within which sexual identity became apparent. The cases were then contrasted with heteronormative ideals, that is, constructions of heterosexuality as the norm, instead of presenting sexuality as a spectrum and devaluing other forms of sexuality. The analytic model was inspired by a research by Paiz (2015), for the textual and visual cases that were identified were coded into three categories according to their suggestions: explicitly heteronormative, low-heteronormative, and explicitly non-heteronormative depending on whether the instances reinforced or contested heteronormative discourse or whether they were not clearly positioned either way in relation to it.

This thesis is structured as follows: first, in the background section, I introduce the field of queer linguistics, which is the theoretical background of this thesis. Secondly, I move on to discussing heteronormative discourse in greater detail and how it presents itself within discourses. This is followed by a discussion of the essential concepts of sexuality, gender, and sex from the contrasting points of view of heteronormativity and queer linguistics. Then, I move on to presenting earlier studies done on heteronormativity within textbooks, and I briefly introduce also the notion of queer pedagogy, which could be the solution to diversifying the way sexuality and gender identities are included in educational contexts. Next, I move on to explaining the set up the present study and to motivating the choices made regarding the selection and delineation of research materials. The research methods and categorization criteria will be handled thereafter in greater detail, which will be followed by the result section of this thesis. Finally, I deliberate the relevance of the findings of this study, reflect on its possible shortcomings and on the complications in interpreting the findings,

and, ultimately, I contemplate on some alternatives for deconstructing the dominance of the heteronormative discourse within English as a Foreign Language textbooks.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Queer linguistics

In this subsection I introduce the theoretical framework of the present thesis, queer linguistics, which is a field of linguistics informed by queer theory. Queer theory stemmed from the rise of various social justice movements in the 1950s and 1960s, as Cameron and Kulick (2003: 75) explain. The gradual loss of the stigma around homosexuality expedited a more scientifically sound approach to the study of sexual and gender minorities, compared to the pathologizing views of the early 20th century. When queer theory became applied to linguistics, queer linguistics became established. Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 3) explain that queer linguistics succeeded feminist linguistics, which aimed at exposing and deconstructing linguistic items and practices which stereotyped, belittled or discriminated women and pursued gender-neutral language. However, as Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 4-5) remark, the early feminist linguistics has been criticized for the adverse and oversimplifying view on women and men which ignored the mutual similarities, the intra-category variation, the intersectionality of gender and other social parameters, and the agentic nature of individuals. Queer linguistics partly emerged to replenish these shortcomings of feminist linguistics. What is more, it shifted the focus from gender issues towards matters relating to sexuality, a topic which had previously been researched very superficially within linguistics.

However, as Motschenbacher (2010: 6) notes, queer linguistics were not a well-defined field until the 1970s-1980s. The queer linguistics' central conceptualizations have undergone major changes since their emergence, and a distinction of the field's early conceptions from their modern counterparts had to be made in order to constitute an understanding of what is advocated within modern queer linguistics. For instance, Livia and Hall (1997: 21) construe that there are two prongs of research relating to queer linguistics. The first one to emerge, that is, the study of language used by homosexual people often inaptly represents the field in its entirety, even though it is merely one of the possible lines of research within queer linguistics. This rather narrow linguistic approach to sexual and gender minorities was even more limited within the early queer linguistics, for, as noted by Livia and Hall (1997: 21), the studies revolved mainly around homosexual males and to a lesser degree, lesbian women. This narrow scope of queer linguistics study has been dubbed as Lavender Linguistics, as Livia and Hall (1997: 21) point out. Therefore, one should distinguish Lavender Linguistics from queer linguistics, for the latter is a considerably more varied field which does not revolve only around the language used by homosexuals.

The criticism towards the essentialism embedded within gay liberation movements of the 60s began to arise in the 70s and 80s, as explained by Nelson (2002: 46). During this time, the conceptualization of sexual identities shifted towards more poststructuralist and social constructivist views. This meant the acknowledgement of the intrinsic variation among queer people, instead of the assumption of a common, universal essence shared by all non-straight people. As Nelson (2002: 47) explains, this was the starting point of modern queer theory and queer linguistics. Research within this more contemporary prong of queer linguistics moved beyond the language used by homosexuals to language used about homosexuals, as Livia and Hall (1997: 21) note. The transition was expedited by the queer criticism in the 90s, that is, the critique by academics and activists of the unilateral focus on gay men and women in linguistic studies, as Cameron and Kulick (2003: 28) explain. Due to this progression, queer linguistics became an umbrella term for research dealing with discourses of normalcy and abnormality regarding gender and sexuality, as Baker (2008: 186) delineates. Therefore, as Motschenbacher (2010: 10) specifies, modern queer linguistic research can encompass both non-heteronormative sexualities as well as non-normative heterosexuality. Examples of the latter are polyamorous relationships, childless couples, and sex workers and buyers.

Modern queer linguistics often deals with topics of sexual norms, non-normativity, and fluidity of identities. The name, queer linguistics, in an apt descriptor for the field, for the term queer itself represents non-normative and fluid identities. As defined by Nelson (2006: 3), queer is a purposely defiant term reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community, and as such it protests against the rigid and dichotomous categorizations of sexual and gender identities. Motschenbacher (2011: 152) explains that the term queer could be perceived as a linguistic experiment of a signifier without a stable signified, although the use of queer as a shorthand for LGBT+ has gained foothold to some extent. What is more, because queerness defies all binaries, it is a continuum in itself, as stated by Motschenbacher and Stegu (2013: 521); therefore, there is no clear demarcation in between being queer or non-queer, and the state of being queer fluctuates and overlaps. In a similar manner, categories are seen to shift and overlap within queer linguistics. As noted by Motschenbacher (2010: 10), poststructuralist approaches typically problematize essentialist categories, for the enforcement of categories is seen to inaccurately create inter- and intragroup demarcation. In other words, labelling generates exclusion, but it also regulates the ingroup. Because of these limitations posed by rigid categories, queer linguistics typically takes a critical stance towards them and aims at problematizing them.

Moreover, poststructuralist approaches tend to emphasize the agentic and interactive nature of identities. In queer linguistics, sexuality and gender are perceived to be socially shaped and reshaped. Nelson (2002: 47) points out that queer linguistics was strongly influenced by Judith Butler's conception of performativity in the 90s. Performativity is a concept which describes the way identities are actualized only within interaction, therefore rendering them not as something a person can have but as something a person does. Therefore, sexual and gender identities are seen as performances in queer linguistics. The queer linguistic notion of sexual and gender identities as fluid, overlapping, and interactive is contrasted by the heteronormative and essentialist notion of these concepts. Heteronormative ideologies perceive these categories to be naturally emerging, instead of being socially constructed, and assumes that these categories are universal, unchanging, and absolute. Whereas heteronormative discourses highlight the uniform, distinct nature of groups, queer linguistics accentuates intergroup similarity as well as intragroup diversity.

To recapitulate, modern queer linguistics no longer aims at mapping how homosexuals speak; instead, it aspires to understand and disestablish hegemonic, binary-based heteronormative discourses by approaching sexuality-related issues from the point of view of normativity, as Flowerdew and Richardson (2017: 389) formulate it. Therefore, queer linguistics is a sporadic, poststructuralist field with a varying research focus. Additionally, the field is dispersed in the sense that it can be combined with numerous other subfields of linguistics, including critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, historical linguistics, contrastive linguistics, and semantics and pragmatics, for example. The particular choice in this thesis is to combine a queer linguistic point of view with critical discourse analysis in order to decode the heteronormative discourses within English as a Foreign Language textbooks in Finnish secondary school.

In this subsection, I briefly introduced queer linguistics, which is the key theoretical framework of the present study. By making a brief introduction of the history of the field I attempted to distinguish the modern poststructuralist queer linguistics from its predecessor, lavender linguistics. What is more, I discussed the contemporary queer linguistic notion of identities as fluid, overlapping, and performative as opposed to heteronormative ideologies, within which identity categories are perceived through essentialism. In the following subsection, I will discuss and problematize heteronormative ideologies further, for it is one of the most central concepts in this thesis.

2.2. Heteronormative discourse

In this subsection I move on to introduce another key concept within this thesis, that is, heteronormative discourse. To begin with, I will briefly discuss dominant ideologies, for in order to understand the workings of heteronormative discourse, one must understand how dominant discourses manifest and maintain their hegemonic position. After discussing heteronormative discourse, I will finally present some linguistic tools for deconstructing binary-based language.

Discourses can be conceptualized in multiple ways: for example, they can be defined as language beyond a sentence (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002: 9), as a certain historical way of talking about an assortment of ideas (Eckert and McConnell, 2003: 42), or as ideologies that are actualized through language (Fairclough, 2015: 110). There are numerous other delineations made about discourses which often reflect the definer's academic field. Nonetheless, most definitions of discourse entail an idea of a shared understanding of a topic or a field that is mediated via communicative means. Additionally, most definitions make the distinction in between a discourse and a physical text; as for example Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 12) formulate it, text can be seen as the physical vessel for ideological discourses to occur within. What is more, a modern understanding of discourse entails acknowledging its dual role as being both the product and the directing force behind its the formation process. Therefore, as Fairclough (2015: 110) explains, language can be understood as the site of discursive struggle for ideological dominance, which renders discourses as a prolific research topic considering the construction of marginalized sexualities.

Fairclough (2015: 114) states that it is crucial to internalize the fact that there are no ideologically empty spaces. Where an ideologically neutral discourse seems to appear, it is due to the normalization process which has rendered it mundane to the degree it appears as the sole natural option, as the commonsensical alternative, as explained by Eckert and McConnell (2003: 43). Eckert and McConnell (2003: 43) continue by arguing that that the naturalization process obscures ideologies' provenance, thereby decoding the power they possess invisible to the general public. This view is in agreement with Fairclough's (2015: 108) argument that the more powerful an ideology is, the less visible it becomes. Since it is in the nature of powerful ideologies to be hidden in what is mundane and banal, when researching discourses, the focus has to be shifted to the aspects within texts that are constructed as neutral, logical, and commonsensical. The naturalization process occurs when discursive messages cumulate within various contexts, as Fairclough (2015: 82) illuminates. In other words, one text is a mere drop in the vast sea of texts, and, hence, a

singular text is rather void of power. However, when certain types of message representing a particular world view becomes replicated, it starts to amplify and echo itself. The message gains power through repetition and the attention it gets furthers the dominance of these discourses over more marginal competing discourses.

As Fairclough (2015: 108) notes, what we call a common sense is a consequence of an automatic gap filling system that individuals within a society have internalized through the socialization process. Due to the automatic, unconscious nature of one's common sense, those discourses that are deemed commonsensical tend to cease to be analyzed, questioned, and challenged. Reversely, those ideologies that do not enjoy the dominant position collide with conscious processing, leading possibly to contesting and denying it. This mechanism fuels the reproduction of the shared sense of what should be expected of whom, and what are acceptable ways of thinking, behaving, and acting based on sexuality and gender, for example. The ossification of these ideals leads to other options becoming more distant, more alien, and more unnatural, a process which is accelerated should there be no competing ideologies, as noted by Fairclough (2015: 110). However, similarly, in a case there is ideological diversity in one's environment, an individual's common sense has potential to become more multifaceted and dispersed. For example, it might be easier for an individual to accept a non-binary based notion of sexuality and gender if one encounters non-binary expressions of gender and sexuality regularly in their environment.

Heteronormativity is a dominant ideology which is deeply implicated in Western cultural and discursive fabrics (Nelson 2002: 49). The term heteronormativity was coined by Warner in 1991 (Neto, 2018: 602), and has since been an essential concept within queer approaches. Baker (2008: 109) defines heteronormative discourse as an ideology which alleges that there are essential differences in between heterosexuals and homosexuals, women and men, and that all people belong to either of these oppositional binary categories. As it is apparent from Baker's definition, heteronormativity endorses a thoroughly essentialist view on sexuality and gender by assuming the existence of dichotomous categories which apply to all people. Therefore, heteronormative discourse contradicts the queer linguistics notion which acknowledges the fluidity, overlap, and negotiability of categories.

Heteronormativity accepts neither non-heterosexual identities nor non-normative heterosexual identities as valid, acceptable, or normal, as Motschenbacher (2011: 152) illuminates. Motschenbacher (2010: 14) construes that heteronormative discourse pertains to the areas of social gender, biological sex, and sexual desire by validating only two combinations of these factors: people of the male sex should represent themselves as masculine and desire women, whereas people

of the female sex should represent themselves as feminine and desire men. heteronormative discourse deems other combinations as deviant, inferior, or sinful, and does not recognize the possibility that an individual can belong to both or neither of these categories. Therefore, heteronormative discourse first of all assumes the oppositionality of sexualities and genders, and, secondly, excludes and undervalues those forms it judges as unnatural, as the other. As Nelson (1999: 376) remarks, heteronormativity is hence not only descriptive, but also normative. Heteronormativity can be defined in many ways, although it is most often seen to encompass both sexuality and gender; however, in some contexts, it might be used to only refer to matters of either sexuality or gender. Hence, it is also apt to speak of heteronormative discourses in plural, for it can manifest itself in various ways. In this study, heteronormative discourse is approached from the point of view of sexuality more than from the gender aspect, although gender issues are discussed to some extent.

As noted by Baker (2008: 110), heteronormative discourse does not only produce and reinforce certain ideas but also aims at downplaying and marginalizing contrasting ideas in overt and covert ways. Motschenbacher (2010: 10) highlights that most often heteronormativity is not direct hostility towards sexual and gender minorities, although it can express itself through aggressive means, such as the criminalization of homosexuality and pathologizing of intersexuality. More often, heteronormativity silences the voices of those it deems to be the 'other', thereby enforcing its position as a hegemony. Sanders and Mathis (2012: 4) argue that silence about non-straight identities is thus never neutral, for the ignorance and denouncement of queer lives and identities conveys a message of them being a deviant identity and a taboo. Baker (2008: 110) agrees that it is the silent banality of heteronormativity which makes it powerful. Heteronormativity is generally not registered as an ideology precisely because it is present everywhere from entertainment, commercials, and news to educational materials, for example. Due to its normative status, heteronormative ideas of relationships and sexual and gender identities are present in seemingly neutral contexts where they are not recognized as ideologies. As Sedwick (1994: 10, as quoted in Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002: 177) exemplifies, heterosexuality has for so long maintained its unquestioned status that it has become seen as non-sexuality, not as one variety of the spectrum of human sexuality.

Therefore, the hierarchies assumed by heteronormative ideologies actualize themselves in various ways ranging from the most common strategies, invisibility and silencing, to direct homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny (Taavetti & Alanko 2015: 6). What is more, the hierarchies also extend to within the categories, leading heteronormativity to operate on macro- and

micro levels. On the macro level, it creates absolute and essentialist categories such as hetero- and homosexuals, and places them in opposition with another. On the micro level, the division takes place also on intra-category level, as Eckert and McConnell (2003: 251) explain. Eckert and McConnell (2003: 251) nominate this category nesting, which refers to categories existing within categories. Eckert and McConnell (2003: 37) explicate this by noting that there are not only categories of women and men within heteronormative discourse, but also feminine women and masculine women, and masculine men and feminine men. Those whose behavior, characteristics, and appearance do not conform to the binary norms, that is, masculine women, feminine men, and non-binary people, are deemed as outcasts and positioned lower in social hierarchies within the heteronormative ideology. The pedantic and hierarchical categorizing makes heteronormativity harmful also to people who identify as straight and cisgender, cisgender meaning that a person identifies with the gender they have been assigned at birth. The social pressure to fill the societal expectations of being a heterosexual man, for example, can inflict stress on an individual, because failing to fill these expectations can lead to social sanctions such as being ridiculed, being positioned lower in the social hierarchy, or being excluded from a group altogether. Motschenbacher (2010: 16) has aptly delineated heteronormativity as discursively constructed social pressure that requires a person to position to it on a daily basis.

As apparent from the previous paragraphs, heteronormative discourse can be harmful in various ways to people of all identities. The idolization of heterosexual, norm-conforming relationships as the only real and natural option is discriminating and essentialist. However, at times the norm of heterosexuality within heteronormative ideologies is confused with another similar yet distinct concept, compulsory heterosexuality. Seidman (2009: 28) explains that compulsory heterosexuality was a concept developed by lesbian feminists and gay liberationists in the 1960s and 70s. Seidman (2009: 19, 21) abstracts the contents of compulsory heterosexuality as a highly critical understanding of a pervasive sexual-gender hierarchy embedded in institutions and social life in the West which ostracizes and penalizes being a homosexual and which maintains gender binarism and male dominance. However, Seidman (2009: 25) construes that this rather stern understanding stemmed from time in which anti-homosexual politics were indeed actively and aggressively enforced in politics in the United States. It is a concept which reflects the time of its conception, and it can be an apt concept to use in some context. In various conservative environments, compulsory heterosexuality still prevails. For example, a study by Salami and Ghajarieh (2016) confirmed the existence of compulsory heterosexuality within Iranian textbooks. Compulsory heterosexuality could perhaps be defined as the extremist form heteronormativity;

nonetheless, distinguishing the two is important. More often, heteronormativity is more suitable term to use, such as within the present study.

2.3. Heteronormative discourse and language use

As noted previously, discourses become actualized through language use. Heteronormative discourse could hence also be decoded as a process of utilizing linguistic methods in order to establish heteronormative heterosexuality as the norm. Van Dijk (1998: 159) established that ideologies are capable of mapping into various dimensions of discourse, such as graphics, intonation, syntax, topics, and style. Hence, heteronormativity can be forwarded using various linguistic means. Motschenbacher (2010: 24) illuminates that the repetition of linguistics signs such as heterosexual and homosexual have made them accrue performative potential. This is to say, linguistic signs not only describe, but also define the signified object in hierarchical relation to other signifiers. When the signifier becomes charged with societal meanings and becomes reproduced through social conditioning, it becomes a social construct (Wodak 1997: 22). Simone de Beauvoir (1949, as quoted in Wodak, 1997: 22) aptly described this phenomenon by stating that “one can be born female but becomes what is called a woman through social conditioning”. This same principle could be applied to sexualities; regardless of one’s sexual orientation, the social expectations associated with being straight or being queer stem from society and shape the performance of one’s sexuality.

Heteronormativity within language systems is often so banal it goes unnoticed. Yet, it is clear that binary-based language is deeply entwined into the English language. The gendered conventions of language interlink with sexuality, for revealing the gender of one’s partner is an indication of one’s sexuality, although it does not enable making definite conclusions. Gendered linguistics practices extent to various levels of linguistic systems. On the morphological level, there are grammatical morphemes such as the feminizing suffix *-ess*, and lexical morphemes, that is, whole words, such as third person pronouns *he* and *she*, as Eckert and McConnell (2003: 63-64) elucidate. On the semantic and pragmatic levels of language gendered meanings are produced using specific words (Eckert and McConnell 2003: 79). For example, the social titles of *Mr*, *Mrs*, and *Ms*, do not only differentiate based on maleness or femaleness, but also on marital status when it comes to women. A more subtle gender division is apparent for example in the cases of adjectives *beautiful* and *handsome*, the former used predominantly to refer to females and the latter to males, (Eckert and McConnell 2003: 60). On a syntactic level the focus is on how words are used in

sentences; for example, recurring subject-object relations in texts (Eckert and McConnell, 2003: 73). Another level of gendered language is the phonological level, for Motschenbacher (2010: 49-50) explains, some speaking styles are perceived as feminine, such as using hedges and speaking with a higher pitch, whereas some as seen as masculine, such as having a lower voice and using more straightforward language.

Motschenbacher (2010: 41) explains that in the 1970s and 1980s there were attempts to create gender-neutral, non-discriminating language use in the field of feminist linguistics. However, the attempts to create gender-neutral language tended to revolve around the dominance of men and were focused on the male-female dichotomy. What is more, linguistic forms in themselves are not automatically discriminating, and gender-neutral language can be used in a derogative way. Moreover, it should be noted that gendered language can be utilized to construct one's identity; therefore, gender-neutral language can at times derive individuals of their agency. Consequently, instead of aiming at gender neutral language in the attempt to challenge heteronormative discourses, a more apt target could be nonconforming language, that is, flexible language use which is not tied to gendered linguistic norms.

In practice, this could mean breaking syntactic agreements despite the risk of the statement being interpreted as ungrammatical, as pointed out by Motschenbacher (2010: 77). Motschenbacher (2010: 43, 67) argues that referential gender has considerable potential to challenge gendered language. Referential gender is the syntactic agreement of using masculine nouns and address terms for men and using feminine forms for women. Therefore, applying nonconforming language could mean being ambiguous when it comes to gender such as using *partner* instead of *boy/girlfriend*, or use gender neutral forms such as using *actor* instead of *actress*. Another example of gender neutrality would be using the gender neutral third person singular *they*, which, as Eckert and McConnell (2003: 69) explain, has a long tradition of being used but which modern schooling eventually deemed ungrammatical. What is more, one can utilize gender-crossing, for example, calling a man *beautiful* or a woman *handsome*. When applying nonconforming language, one has the option of being more subtle such as making nontraditional samples linguistically explicit (e.g. the president and her family). A more radical example would be directly disobeying referential gender rules, such as calling a *man* a *sister* as is done in some queer subcultures, as Motschenbacher (2010: 43) illustrates.

In subsections 2.2. and 2.3. I introduced heteronormative discourse and the binary-based, essentialist, and hierarchical notions of sexuality and gender which it entails. In the beginning of the subsection 2.2. I briefly discussed the construction of dominant ideologies, and

explained how heteronormative discourse is a typical dominant ideology in the sense that it has established a normalized position within Western societies. The consequential banality of heteronormativity has diminished its visibility, thus, heteronormativity often goes unrecognized and heterosexuality is often seen as a default state of being, whereas other forms of sexuality are perceived as deviant, sometimes also as inferior or defective. In subsection 2.3. I discussed the linguistic side of heteronormativity which manifests itself in the gender binary which is strongly entwined within the English language. Finally, I briefly introduced some possibilities of how to challenge heteronormative discourse through the use of non-conforming language. In the following subsection, I will present the workings of heteronormativity in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and biological sex in more detail, for these concepts are essential within the present thesis.

2.4. Heteronormative discourse, queer linguistics, and sexuality, gender, and sex

Sexuality, gender, and sex are intricate concepts which can be approached from various viewpoints. Biology, psychology, and sociology have their own distinct conceptions of them, for example. Within queer linguistics, the view of these concepts is highly poststructuralist, as noted by Motschenbacher (2010: 7), which is to say that sexuality, gender, and sex are perceived to be fluid concepts with overlapping boundaries with one another and with other social parameters. Additionally, people's agency is seen as a central factor in the formation of sexual and gender identity. Whereas heteronormative discourses highlight intergroup differences and intragroup similarity, queer linguistics accentuates intergroup similarity as well as intragroup diversity. In this subsection, I will discuss these differences and their implications in more detail.

Sexuality has not always been associated precisely with sexual orientation as it often is today. Even the terms heterosexual and homosexual are relatively novel. For example, in ancient Greece, terms of hetero- and homosexuality did not exist, for sexual relations were defined based on societal status, not primarily on the basis of sexual orientation (Motschenbacher 2010: 9). Cameron and Kulick (2003: 20) note that the term *heterosexual* was originally coined to describe heterosexual acts for other purposes than reproduction, which lumped it among other unnatural and sinful ways of being sexual, such as homosexuality in the 19th century. Yet, whereas the term *heterosexual* later lost its negative and stigmatizing meaning, the term *homosexual* continued to be used as a pejorative label, and the religious undertones of homosexuality being a sin were replaced by the perception of it as a medical and psychological disorder in the 20th century (Cameron and

Kulick 2003: 20). As Livia and Hall (1997: 5) explicate, the relevancy of sexuality as a social parameter began when the categories of heterosexual and homosexual became increasingly associated with social and cultural values during the 19th and 20th century.

The lineage of the terms heterosexual and homosexual are proof the mutability of social categories. Time periods affect how certain categories are perceived, and other factors, such as the surrounding culture, have the same effect. Being a homosexual can be a dramatically different experience in different countries. As mentioned previously, queer linguists believe that social parameters such as age, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality and ableness all interact with one another (Livia and Hall 1997: 5). As Motschenbacher (2010: 10) exemplifies, a closeted queer person living in a rural area leads a considerably different life than a queer individual who is out of the closet and lives in a metropolis. Therefore, social parameters do not only change, but are also interdependent. When one or some of these parameters change, it will affect the other categories, as well.

Livia and Hall (1997: 5) remark that gender and sexuality are especially closely interconnected social parameters. As Cameron and Kulick (2003: 5-6) demonstrate, homosexuality is often understood in terms of gender deviancy, and people who do not conform to gender norms are readily suspected of having non-straight identities. Hence, gender and sexuality interlink within the heteronormative ideology, which perceives non gender norm-conforming individuals as sexually deviant. The queer linguistic approach contrasts this view by perceiving both sexuality and gender as a social construct and as a performance. This view was popularized by for example Wodak (1997: 27) and Butler (Nelson: 2002: 47) who argued that all identities are performative: that is to say, identities are co-constructed in social interaction. In other words, a person does not ‘have’ an identity, instead, identity is done by people.

The queer linguistic view of identity categories as performative also extends to the human biological sex, which has traditionally been widely considered to be a more unequivocal concept than societal gender, as noted by Eckert and McConnell (2003: 10). As Cameron and Kulick (2003: 4) explain, the difference between these concepts is that gender is seen to be social, whereas sex is perceived to be a biological descriptor. Within heteronormative discourse, gender expression and gender differences are seen to derive directly from the biological sex, but in queer linguistics it is acknowledged that physiology, chromosomes, or hormones which produce biological sex do not fabricate gendered socioeconomical differences by themselves, as Eckert and McConnell (2003: 13) state. The power of heteronormative discourse manifests itself also in the “corrective” surgeries performed on intersex people. According to Eckert and McConnell (2003:

11), 1/100 of babies are born with features that do not fit the standard gender categories. Many of these infants and children are made to go through surgical and hormonal treatments in which their anatomy is molded to correspond the medical definition of one gender in order to fit into societal expectations. Motschenbacher (2010: 11) argues that this is an example of the biological made to correspond to the social, an example of how powerful hegemonies can actualize themselves on the physical plane.

Yet, categorizations are not completely mutable, even if they are a social, not a biological phenomena. Wodak (1997: 27) acknowledges the fact that social constructions, such as gender, have a degree of materiality in them, and the social reality poses certain limitations which restrict the agency that people have. For example, trans people might have to face this fact as societal norms impede their recognition as the gender they identify with. According to Motschenbacher (2011: 163), binary gender and sexuality categories will continue to have an effect on identity construction and performance for a considerably long time, since they have acquired a myriad of cumulative performative potential. It is crucial to note that the point of queer linguistics is not to deny the existence of identity categories such as heterosexual, women, and men, for these are all meaningful identity markers. Instead, it aims at deconstructing their conception as stationary, oppositional, and separate. Motschenbacher (2010: 18) enunciates this idea as follows: within queer linguistics, there is generally a critical stance towards the essentialism of the binarized categories, not towards the existence of the categories in themselves.

The spectrum-based notion of sexuality and gender has become more visible in modern identity labels. New emerging sexual and gender identities appear to be less reliant on binaries. As Baker (2008: 7) exemplifies, the modern understanding of sexuality can be determined by numerous factors including past, present, and future in terms of sexual attraction and behavior, in addition to emotional and social preference. That is to say, the ways to conceptualize sexuality are manifold, which has also become more visible in the recent terminology that has been constructed to describe various ways of being sexual. The term *queer* is an apt example of this, and it is simultaneously a demonstration of the fact that linguistic struggles are simultaneously power struggles. As Motschenbacher (2010: 10) explains, queer as a term was originally used as an insult and a pejorative descriptor for non-heterosexual people, but it was reclaimed by non-heterosexual and non-cis people as a self-identifier and as an ingroup marker. Baker (2008: 194) notes that 'queer' can be a descriptor for one's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (or the combination of these), and the contents of the term may vary from individual to individual. The

term is preferred by some precisely because of its ambiguous, polysemic nature which defies binary categories.

There are other examples of the generation of terminology which challenges binary models of sexuality. For example, bi- and pansexuality refer to attraction and desire in which gender is not the determining factor or relevant at all (Taavetti and Alanko, 2015: 6). Asexuality, the lack of sexual desire or the need to enact one's sexuality disregards the assumption that sexuality and romantic attraction are interrelated. An asexual person might feel romantic attraction; if not, a person might refer to themselves as aromantic asexual (Taavetti and Alanko, 2015: 6). Demisexuality and demiromanticism are identity nominators which have been developed to describe the presence of sexual or romantic attraction only in certain conditions prior to which there may or may not have been romantic attraction. As Coombs (2019: 2) states, graysexual is a rather novel umbrella term coined to describe the people who experience sexual attraction in non-normative levels.

In relation to gender, similar agentic creativity is directly visible from the emerging non-binary based gender identity nominators. Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 5-6) explicate that gender identity refers to how a person orients themselves to genders: one can identify as a woman, a man, or as genderqueer. One's gender expression can be either in concordance with or contradictory to one's gender identity. Gender expression can be anything ranging from feminine to androgynous to masculine, and both gender identity and gender expression can either match or disagree with one's biological sex, which can be female, intersex, or male. In the case of trans people, there is incongruence between two or more of these factors: trans people is an umbrella term for transgender people and transvestites. Transgender people do not identify with their assigned sex; they could identify with either the opposite sex, somewhere in between both sexes (genderqueer, genderfluid, or intergender), or they might not identify with either (agender or genderless) as explained by Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 5). Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 5) emphasize that being a transgender person does not equal being a transvestite, that is, a person who can identify with either gender, and who might want to express this by dressing as the other gender. However, transvestite people are usually content with their biological sex and feel no desire to change it unlike transgender people, who might want to correct their sex through hormonal, surgical, or legal means, for example. At times, the lines between cis- and transgender and transvestite people can become blurred. Whereas non-binary genders are still a highly marginalized group within Western societies, in some other cultures, there have historically been more categorial fluidity, such as the hijras in India or the travesties in South America (Motschenbacher, 2010: 9).

This subsection has presented the contrasting views of queer linguistics and heteronormative discourses on sexuality, gender, and sex. These concepts are highly salient within queer linguistics and within the present study, which is why clarifying the conceptional differences of them was relevant. While the main focus of this thesis is on sexuality, as apparent from this subsection, sexuality cannot be separated from gender and sex. Thereby, a brief discussion of these concepts proved to be meaningful as well. On top of discussing the interaction and overlap of social parameters, I also presented some examples of non-binary based sexual and gender identities in order to exemplify the reality of sexuality and gender as a spectrum. Next, I will move on to presenting previous studies done on sexuality in textbooks and education, and I will also disclose the interesting concept of queer pedagogy.

2.5. The heteronormative discourse within textbooks and queer pedagogy

Traditionally, matters relating to sexuality have not been openly discussed within the Finnish educational system, for sexuality has been seen to be a private and personal matter. Sanders and Mathis (2012: 3) agree that LGBTQ+ themes are still often considered a taboo in the context of language learning. However, Sanders and Mathis (2012: 4) argue that the silence about queer identities is not neutral; for example, whenever teachers as authoritative figures remain silent about queer topics, they are transmitting a message of these topics being irrelevant, marginal, or inappropriate. Nonetheless, sexuality is not to be confused with sexual acts, for as Nelson (2006: 3, 6) remarks, sexuality is present in everyday patterns of thinking, speaking, and learning. Queer pedagogy is an approach which acknowledges this fact, and it will be discussed in more detail at the end of this subsection. First, I present earlier textbook research on sexuality and gender.

However, to begin with, I summarize few studies done about LGBTQ+ identifying people in Finland. A study of 15-25 year-old Finnish LGBTQ+ people by Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 27) found out that young queer people reported experiencing difficulties in educational institutions due to their sexual or gender identity. School environment was a crucial factor in determining the level of open identity expression: 75% hid their sexual orientation or gender identity from their teachers and 50% hid it also from their peers due to the fear of bullying, discrimination or violence, as Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 27) summarize. Most of the respondents had experienced harassment or bullying sometimes, trans people being the largest group to experience it weekly or daily according to Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 27). Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 28) explain that the stress experienced by queer young adults has resulted in visits to the

nurse's office, being absent, and even dropping out of school. What is more, Lepola (2018: 5) remarks that many queer people in Finland experience cumulative and intersectional discrimination for example due to ableness, ethnicity, or religion on top of their non-straight identity, which leads to a considerable amount of stress for the individual. Taavetti and Alanko (2015: 37) propose that the problems in mental and physical health reported by young LGBTQ+ people possibly results from the lack of positive role models, the stress caused by having to hide or defend their identities, and the experiences of discrimination and violence. Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017: para. 15) note that young queer people report experiencing teaching in Finland as heteronormative for the most part. Therefore, there seems to be little points of identification available for young queer people in educational contexts, which can amplify the feelings of isolation and disparity.

Based on the research findings presented above, sexual identity is a crucial matter in determining learners' wellbeing, which is directly interlinked with their ability to learn. Textbooks form a crucial part of the contextual fabric of educational institutions, hence, they can either reinforce or challenge the heteronormativity within education. Tainio and Teräs (2010: 10) point out that research has proven that teaching materials, such as textbooks, have a crucial impact on the way the contents and goals of that subject appear to the learner. Despite the fact that textbooks are not the sole provider of input, they have maintained a central position in supporting and concretizing instruction. Moreover, Flowerdew and Richardson (2017: 525) remark that textbooks are a valuable object of research, for they are ultimately aimed at shaping future generations' knowledge and values. Therefore, textbooks are not only educational instruments, but instead also mediums of cultural and political practices which are capable of presenting certain lifestyles and life choices as attractive, acceptable, and preemptory, and some as undesirable, unwelcome, or questionable.

Foreign language textbooks, in particular, are potent in ideology construction. As Morrish (as quoted in Livia and Hall, 1997: 223) note, they contain plenty of characters in varying relationships with one another and there is plenty of verbal interaction between them. Therefore, language textbooks are a prolific matrix in constructing and deconstructing various ideologies regarding norms of sexuality and gender. Paiz (2015: 78-79) remarks that foreign language textbooks are never merely assortments of suitable texts and strategic exercises, instead, they introduce students input about the target culture in explicit and implicit ways. This view is reiterated by Neto (2018: 600), who states that most foreign language textbooks aim at introducing the sociocultural point of view, besides a linguistic one. Since the norms of sexuality and gender are

embedded in the cultural fabric of societies, language textbooks form an intriguing object of research from the point of view of heteronormativity.

Yet, the ideologies in textbooks go often unacknowledged. As Van Dijk (1998: 179) explicates, some textual genres are assumed to be more value-laden than others, whereas other genres are expected to be more neutral. An EFL textbook is expected to be an excerpt of factual linguistic and cultural knowledge, whereas a church pamphlet is more readily assumed to contain a religious ideology, for example. Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 14) explain that discourses' have an ability contain subdiscourses: while a foreign language textbook is indeed constructed with the main purpose of conveying informative and useful linguistic knowledge, it simultaneously contains relationship models. When the same models become repeated consistently, a discourse of relationship norms becomes entwined in the textbooks despite it not being the main content nor purpose of the textbooks. Foreign language textbooks are thus polyphonic, that is, multi-voiced entities, and by identifying the discourses within textbooks a better understanding of their effect on the readers can be achieved, as Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 14) point out.

More studies have been conducted on gender than sexuality within textbook research. It is possible that the relevance of sexual identity within language learning has not been as recognized, leading to fewer studies having been conducted. Earlier studies have revealed a heteronormative view on gender in textbooks. Blumberg (2007: 4) summarizes that content and discourse analyses of textbooks worldwide have revealed that gender bias is present in textbooks widely, but its camouflaged nature makes it hard to rectify. Blumberg (2007: 5) explains that female characters form a minority of all characters and they have fewer lines; moreover, males and females are depicted in highly stereotype-conforming ways regarding occupation, characteristics, and actions. Women tend to be depicted as passive, conforming, and nurturing, whereas males are portrayed as being active, achieving a lot, and having fun to give a few examples.

Yet, sexuality becomes apparent, when the focus is shifted from individual characters to the interactions and relationships in between them. Motschenbacher (2010: 40) recapitulates that in general, studies show that families depicted in textbooks consist of heterosexual married parents with children, whereas single parent families, unmarried adults and couples, and LGBTQ+ characters and parents are left to the margins. Neto (2018: 600) agrees that most families depicted in language textbooks consist of married heterosexual parents with the average of two children. Non-binary genders are not taken into consideration; as Neto (2018: 598) explains, textbooks in general seem to reproduce a binary-based model of masculine men dating feminine women and forming nuclear families, with the few exceptions of divorced parents. This fact combined with the

lack of questions and topics dealing with sexual identity seems to presume a world in which everyone is a cisgender heterosexual who want to marry and have children (Neto 2018: 595). A study conducted by Paiz (2015: 89) in the United States echoes these results, for the English as a Second Language textbooks rated high on heteronormativity.

Heterosexuality appears indeed to be the only form of sexuality which is made apparent in textbooks. Smested (2018: 8-9) summarizes that studies on various subject textbooks from various parts of the world during 2005-2016 highlight the same finding of LGBTQ+ matters being invisible in the teaching materials on various levels of education. In foreign language textbooks, the lack of visibility is apparent not only in the topics but also in tasks. Neto (2018: 594) remarks that the starting point of foreign language learning often is the ability to express self-knowledge, that is, personal, physical, and psychological characteristics. Despite this, sexual identity is rarely included in the tasks and materials which prompt rehearsing the structures and vocabulary related to self-knowledge. Paiz (2019: 1) states that the lack of handling sexuality does not construct an ideologically neutral context, but instead, it presumes a monosexual world. This is to say, heterosexuality is constructed as the only form of sexuality, which reifies the heteronormative discourses within the foreign language textbooks. Moreover, in the minority of cases where LGBTQ+ issues are discussed, the focus is most often on gay and lesbian issues; bisexuality, pansexuality, asexuality, and trans people are superseded even within the margin (Paiz 2019: 7). What is more, also a negative handling of non-straight identities is not uncommon: a study by De Vincenti et al. (2007: 64-65) has confirmed a heteronormative bias French, Italian, and Japanese foreign language textbooks: LGBTQ+ matters were either lacking altogether, or presented in a heteronormative or even homophobic way. For example, in one textbook, homosexuality was only handled relating to AIDS.

Heteronormativity seems to prevail within textbooks in the Nordic countries as well. According to Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017: para. 2), the fact that Nordic countries have ranked among the highest in Europe in studies of acceptance of sexual minorities has not equated into any considerable changes in educational policies. It appears that the accepting stance towards sexual diversity in Nordic countries does not actualize itself on a practical level and does not reach the level of textbooks. Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017: para. 3) note that despite their progressivity, queer issues remain either hidden or they are not enacted at all within national curricula – a finding which is in concordance with the Finnish national core curriculum of basic education which was discussed in the Introduction. While for example gender equality is specified in the NCBE multiple times, sexuality is mentioned only in the underlying values section of the NCBE document. Overall, there

are total of three mentions of sexuality altogether in the NCBE, which indicates the invisibility of queer matters. Smestad (2018: 10-11) compared studies done on LGBTQ+ issues in textbooks in Norway, Sweden, and Finland and concluded that while these issues were included to some extent in the textbooks, their inclusion was rather selective. This is to say, LGBT matters were generally handled as a separate topic, thus constructing non-straight people as the observable other instead of an essential part of societies. Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017: para. 20) agree that this is the case with Icelandic textbooks as well: in the rare cases queer issues are mentioned, the context is most commonly health and sex education. In the Finnish NCBE, the other two mentions of sexual identity were within the parts dedicated to health education and religion, which reflects this separation of sexual identity from other social parameters.

In Finland, sexuality has been a little researched topic in textbook research and most studies which touch the topic of heteronormativity are focused on gender issues. Yet, there are some studies focused on sexuality. Tainio and Teräs (2010: 11) summarize that studies of textbooks in Finland have discovered heteronormativity in the subjects of religious education, biology, health science, psychology, civics, ethics, social studies and mother tongue. Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017: para. 15) confirm that various studies have shown the prevalence of heteronormativity in textbooks in Finland, for queer issues are depicted either marginally or they are lacking altogether. When they are discussed, most often the context is physical or health education. Therefore, sexual diversity is demarcated only to topics of sexual behavior as well as health issues, and the role of sexuality as a meaningful part of identity and as an influential social parameter is largely ignored. A report about the gender division in basic education textbooks by Tainio and Teräs (2010: 7) revealed that non-straight identities are not present in Finnish mathematics and mother tongue textbooks nor in student counseling materials apart from few exceptions. They conclude that this lack of visibility constructs other sexual identities apart from heterosexuality as the observable other.

Othering sexual and gender minorities is possibly be present in teacher education as well. Lehtonen (2015: 104) explains that sexual and gender diversity is rarely included at all in teacher education. When sexual identities are not discussed in an open manner in teacher education, the association of sexual identity with sexual behavior might not be deconstructed, which is why sexuality-related topics can become perceived as an adult theme unsuitable for basic education learners (Lehtonen 2015: 104). If sexual diversity is seen as a separate and irrelevant entity, for example LGBTQ+ learners, their non-straight associates and family members, as well as queer staff members are not recognized in the learning community. This further amplifies the illusion of LGBTQ+ people as the distinct and distant others. Yet, as mentioned previously, sexuality is not to

been confused with sexual acts. As Nelson (2006: 3,6) remarks, sexuality is present in everyday patterns of thinking, speaking, and learning. Societal forces and conventions produce and police the ways sexual identities are performed, and, therefore, society and sexuality are inevitably entwined. Queer pedagogy is a pedagogical approach which acknowledges this intertwined nature of sexuality and the rest of the society in order to ground sexuality in all its diversity into everyday life. It is a pedagogy informed by queer theory and, consequently, it takes a critical stance towards heteronormativity as explained by Neto (2018: 591). Yet, Neto (2018: 591) specifies that queer pedagogy is not aimed at advancing LGBTQ+ issues in schools, or at prompting learners and staff to come out. Instead, it strives to examine the ways sexual and gender identities can be expressed without strict binary models in educational contexts in order to create space for a more conversational, inclusive, and respectful learning environment.

Queer pedagogy is a practice-oriented approach; it aims at queering education, which Paiz (2019: 2) defines as the practice of creating spaces within education for critical dialogue of the sociocultural relevance of all identities, not just the queer ones. Hence, queering education does not revolve around the dichotomy of dominant versus marginalized identities, although they aim at advancing the inclusion of marginalized queer learners by increasing the understanding of varying identities among the learners, which can disperse prejudices (Sanders and Mathis 2012: 2). Instead of debating what is normal and what is not, queer pedagogy aims at understanding how identities and norms are constructed socially and linguistically (Nelson 2002: 50). Because its focus is not on differences, discussing and analyzing identities becomes relevant to all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation. Queer pedagogy is indeed queer in the sense that it does not rely on binaries and categories, instead, it emphasizes fluidity, overlap, and interaction of categories and agentic nature of the learners.

There are many ways to implement queer pedagogy in practice. According to Paiz (2018: 349), queering language education can be done on the level of classrooms via pedagogical means and by utilizing learning materials, as well as on the level of the curriculum to attain an open educational environment which facilitates learning. Therefore, queer pedagogies can be exercised on the level of the individual teachers as well as on the administrative level. However, Paiz (2018: 352-353) warns that leaving queering educational materials to the instructors alone might not yield results, for educators tend to be busy already, and in some institutional contexts teachers are obliged to use permitted teaching materials due to availability issues or standardization policies. What is more, support from administration is generally helpful and often necessary. Yet, even an individual teacher can help creating a safe space for deconstructing and comprehending identities and societal

norms governing them. Paiz (2019: 5) points out that for example teacher preparation offers a potential point of introducing pedagogies of inquiry, for their practical routines have not yet ossified. By preparing future teachers to handle matters of sexuality and gender in an open and questioning matter would increase the changes that the teachers are able to create safe learning environments for all learners.

In this subsection, I introduced earlier research done about queer issues within textbooks. It revealed that heteronormativity reigns in textbooks of various subjects in many countries in the form of stereotypical gender roles, one-sided family models, and lack of other than heterosexual representation. Despite Nordic countries being relatively progressive, heteronormativity appears to dominate in these countries as well. Finland is not an exception, as LGBTQ+ matters continue to be handled as distinct and distant topic in education reserved mainly for health education and religion, and it is not recognized in the Finnish NCBE to a considerable degree either. Therefore, it appears that applying queer pedagogy approaches would be needed in order to create more open and non-normative learning environments.

3. SET UP OF THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1. Aims and research questions

Within this section, I introduce the setup of the present study and justify the choices made regarding the selection and collection of data and the method of analysis. The present study was a qualitative and quantitative queer linguistics informed critical discourse study of the textual and visual data from Finnish EFL textbooks for secondary school students. The aim of this study was to examine the construction of the heteronormative discourse within three Finnish English as a Foreign Language textbooks series for upper secondary school learners. Because the sample size was small, this study was aimed at opening a discussion about the representation of sexuality within EFL textbooks instead of offering definite, undisputed answers. What is more, the objective of this study was to partake in the accumulation of criticism towards dominant heteronormative discourses of sexuality and gender in order to support change in the perception of sexuality and gender as a spectrum. By recognizing and naming dominant ideologies they can not only be understood, but also criticized, challenged, and transformed. To recapitulate, heteronormativity refers to an ideology which promotes hierarchical and essentialist binary gender and sexuality divisions. As it was explained earlier in this thesis, heteronormative discourse can also refer to the linguistic practices which deprecate non-normative forms of heterosexuality, such as polygamous relationships, and it also pertains to the area of binary gender norms. Nonetheless, in this thesis, the main focus was precisely on the way sexual identities are constructed, although gender is briefly discussed at times. My research question which I aimed to answer in this thesis is how heteronormative discourse is constructed within EFL textbooks for Finnish secondary school learners. My hypothesis was that the findings will be in concordance with earlier research, which has proven that textbooks tend to be predominantly heteronormative.

3.2. Selection and collection of data

The research data was collected from three English as a foreign language textbooks published in Finland for secondary school students, that is, grades from seven to nine. The data sample consisted of textbooks from three different series: *Key English* textbooks 7, 8, and 9 (Westlake et al., Sanoma pro OY), *Spotlight* textbooks 7, 8, and 9 (Haapala et al., Sanoma Pro OY), and *On the Go* textbooks 1, 2, and 3 (Daffue-Karsten et al., Sanoma Pro OY). Next, I will motivate the choice of these specific textbooks. To begin with, I chose specifically English textbooks because it is the most

studied foreign language within the Finnish education. According to a study by Finnish National Agency of Education (Facts Express, 2019: 1), English is studied as the primary foreign language by 90% of basic education pupils, hence, EFL education pertains to a clear majority of basic education students. Because of its prominent role, there is plenty of research of EFL textbooks in Finland from multiple viewpoints. Yet, sexual identity has received relatively little attention, which is why the subject could be argued to be a meaningful and actual research topic which complements the body of research on identity representations in EFL textbooks.

To continue, precisely secondary school textbooks were chosen for this particular study, because, according to my experience, the majority of studies of gender and sexuality conducted on language textbooks handle upper secondary school textbooks. Therefore, there appeared to be a gap in the research about sexual identities and heteronormativity with respect to the study of lower level language education textbooks. Moreover, lower secondary education involves all young people before the cohort splits to either upper secondary education or vocational schools, which is why these textbooks had potential to be impactful. Nonetheless, I assumed that secondary school textbooks would be more prolific in examining matters of sexuality than elementary school materials, for topics such as dating, romance, and attraction are discussed to a lesser extent in the materials for lower levels of education. Since these aforementioned topics are relevant regarding the construction of heteronormativity, secondary school textbooks appeared as suitable materials for this study.

Finally, these specific textbooks were chosen on the basis of the fact that I wanted to have materials from the same publishers. First of all, I assumed that if the materials had the same publisher, it might lessen the degree of variability. All of these books were published by the Sanoma Pro publishing house, which is one of the leading publishers of educational materials in Finland. However, variability cannot be eliminated altogether, for the textbook copywriters and content creators vary within the series. What is more, the textbooks have originally been published in varying time periods; the *Key English* series and the *Spotlight* series came out during the previous NCBE which was in effect during 2004-2014, whereas the newest series, *On the Go*, is relatively recent: it was published at the end of the 2010s when the current NCBE was effective. Even though the contents of the older textbooks have undoubtedly undergone various changes since the time of their publications, it is likely that they nonetheless reflect the ideals of the NCBE of their time of publishing, thus increasing the contrast to newer textbooks. Despite this intrinsic variation amongst the materials, these books are regardless among some of the most widely used EFL textbooks in Finland, even though no exact statistics of the textbook sales is available due to trade secrets.

Therefore, choosing them as the source of data can also be motivated by their wide circulation, for these materials reach a vast audience.

Data were collected during the January and February of 2020. The textbook contents that were included in the textual analysis did not cover the entire contents of the books, instead, some parts of the books were omitted. These omitted sections included the reference or grammar sections and the vocabulary lists both amidst text as well as at the end of the books. Initial scanning of these parts revealed that these sections did not provide useful data, because they contained minimal inter-character interaction. Furthermore, these sections are organized in such varying ways that it would have complicated the interpretation of the data; for example, some grammar sections include interactive examples, whereas some merely consist of listed grammar rules. In addition, questions for initiating pair or group discussions were omitted from the data, because these questions allow a variety of context-dependent answers, and, therefore, I did not deem them as meaningful for the present study. Moreover, it should be noted that since the three last chapters 7, 8, and 9 in *On the Go 2* and the chapters 1-3 of *On the Go 3* are identical for the purpose of differentiating learners, the first three chapters in *On the Go 3* were not taken into account. Counting these units from both books would have resulted in distorted data, hence this decision. As a general rule, I only included textbook output which did not require student input. However, as an exception, I included pair discussions which had readily formed answer possibilities, because I interpreted that these cases form a part of the textbooks' discursive structure and leave little room for the learners to modify the answers. It should also be noted that comics were analyzed both from the textual and the visual perspective, since they contain both elements.

Following these demarcations, my data consisted of the main texts, side texts, extracts from fictional texts, and comics. There was no uniform way in how the textbooks were organized, but on a general level, these sections were present in all of them in some form. By main text I refer to the texts that are meant to be read by all learners, and which set the general topic for the whole chapter (e.g. family, work life, environment). Main texts are usually the longest, most prominent texts within chapters, marked as the 'Text A' in *Key English* and *Spotlight* and labelled as the 'Study' text in *On the Go*. The side texts or B-texts are in general shorter, and sometimes supplement the main text by, for example, offering extra information of the topic or characters introduced in the main text. At times, a side text is a comic, a short article, or a literary excerpt, for example. However, sometimes the literary excerpts formed their own independent texts, and in some of the books, they were located at the end of the books. In *Key English* these were known as C-texts, and, additionally, there were separate *Key Stories* at the end of the *Key English* books.

Similarly, there were ‘Read More’ texts at the end in *Spotlight* textbooks. In *On the Go*, there were no separate texts at the end, but some of the ‘Your Choice’ texts were literary excerpts.

Next, I describe how I collected my data. In the analysis, my aim was to identify and count cases in which heteronormative discourse had potential to appear. After initial scanning, there were some instances which proved to be most prolific: kinship terms regarding families and relationships, other depictions of family and relationship models, and inter-character expressions of affection and attraction. Additionally, texts which dealt explicitly with dating and relationships provided useful data. These cases were potential vehicles for heteronormative discourse to appear in, for they had potential to construct different forms of sexuality and different relationship models. My aim was to see what forms of sexuality would be represented, how sexuality would be discussed in general, and if there would be any values attached to certain sexual identities.

Kinship terms were a notable source of data on the heteronormative discourse within the textbooks. Kinship terms are used to signal one’s relationship to others in a society, as explained by Ould & Whitlow (2011: 1106). Some of the most essential kinship terms are familial kinship terms, such as (*grand*)*mother/father*. However, there are also other kinship terms which refer to romantic relationships that can be categorized in varying ways. Ould and Whitlow (2011: 1094) collapsed them into three categories: marriage terms such as *spouse*, *wife*, and *husband* and romantic terms such as *partner*, *significant other*, and *girl/boyfriend* are some of the most obvious ones. However, even platonic terms (first name only, *friend*, *housemate*) can be used to signal partnership – this is a common strategy used especially in non-heterosexual relationships in public contexts, as Ould and Whitlow (2011: 1106) remark. Yet, the way kinship terms are defined varies according to field of study. Kinship terms can be used in a variety of ways and they allow both concealing (e.g. *special someone*) and revealing (e.g. *girlfriend*) the gender of the partner. Therefore, they were meaningful discursive structures to examine from the point of view of heteronormative discourse.

The expressions of attraction and affection were another prominent source of data. I examined which characters expressed attraction towards whom, what was the gender of the characters, and what kind of descriptions are used about the object of attraction. The aim was to delineate the expressions of affection to those ones that were explicitly romantic by nature, although the line in between platonic and romantic affection is not always clear cut. Similarly, the depictions of families and relationships were analyzed on the basis of who were in the relationship, although that information was not always disclosed. In some cases, it was unclear whether characters were in relationship or not; the distinction in between platonic and romantic relationships was made by

searching for cues in the whole text and in the visuals. Similarly, in the visual analysis, the texts were used to decipher the nature of the relationship in between characters depicted in a visual if it was unclear. The smallest source of data on the construction of heteronormativity consisted of the texts which explicitly handled dating and romance. There were only few of these texts, and although they provided intriguing and useful data, overall, they formed a small portion of the whole data. On the whole, singular mentions were much more common than explicit discussions about relationships within the EFL textbooks.

Even though the emphasis of the present study was on the textual analysis, also visuals were included for a number of reasons. Visuals refer to photographs, drawings, and comics that are used in the textbooks. As Van Dijk (1998: 132) remarks, ideological (re)formation takes place not only in language use, but also in spatial and visual communication. Because visuals are often such a relevant part of textbooks at the level of secondary education, ignoring them would mean disregarding plenty of data which has potential to contain ideological (de)constructions. Therefore, I deemed it appropriate to include visuals in this study. The visual data were collected from the main texts, side texts, comics, and all other visuals that accompany the textbooks. In a similar manner to the textual analysis, visuals from the reference/grammar section at the end of the textbooks were not included, for these tended to repeat the visuals from the actual texts and provided little novel data. What is more, the practices of including visuals within the grammar or reference section varied among the textbooks. However, I included visuals which accompanied tasks in the textbooks, even though in the textual analysis I did not count tasks if they required student input.

Because the research topic was heteronormativity, the visual analysis was focused on pictures which depicted either families or couples. Nonetheless, it was not straightforward to demarcate whether a visual included a couple or couples or not. A large portion of EFL textbooks' visuals consists of young people of mixed genders playing and doing various activities together. Therefore, only those visuals which explicitly portrayed a couple in a way that could obviously be interpreted as romantic were counted in the analysis. In practice, this meant counting pictures where characters for example held hands, hugged, or kissed. Also, those visuals accompanied by text which specified that the characters are indeed a couple were counted. Likewise, if it was specified the characters in the picture were friends, it was not counted. Overall, the analysis of the visuals was by no means a straightforward process because many pictures were not unambiguous. Nonetheless, these were the general guidelines directing my visual analysis.

Finally, I discuss some of the ethical questions relating to my study. Regarding the acquisition of the materials, I received the textbooks free of charge by submitting an email request in the summer of 2019 to Sanoma Pro. In my request, I stated my interest to study these textbooks and explained that in exchange for the textbooks, I would submit my finalized research for them. The representative of Sanoma Pro agreed to this, and I received the materials via mail. I argue that the fact that I received the materials for free does not compromise the objectivity of my study, since I could have attained the materials free of charge also from other sources, such as libraries. Receiving the books made the analysis process considerably more fluent, nonetheless, it would have been possible to conduct this study with loaned materials as well.

Regarding another ethical question regarding my study, that is, the copyright issues, I point out that as apparent from the previous passage, I informed Sanoma Pro directly of my intent to use their materials as the source of research data. Because they agreed to send the materials to me and showed interest in receiving my study once it would be finished, it is evident that I have their approval for using these textbooks in this thesis. Nonetheless, because copyright law prohibits copying and distributing the textbooks without permission, no copies have been taken of the materials. In the cases where I exemplify my points with excerpts from the textbooks, these instances have been clearly marked and referenced.

3.3. Methods of analysis

The collected textual and visual data were analyzed using critical content analysis model inspired by a study by Paiz (2015). The present study could be described as a queer linguistics informed critical discourse analysis which consists of both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis is evident in the way this analysis was ultimately based on impressions and interpretations, for there are no exact criteria what heteronormativity is or what it is not. No such demarcations can be made, for actions which may appear as heteronormative can actually be ways of queer identity construction: for example, a trans person might resort to stereotypical ways of constructing gender in order to express their gender identity and to be recognized as their real gender. In this thesis, heteronormativity was perceived as the ideology which normalizes only heterosexuality by silencing or depreciating all other sexual identities. I aimed at making the category and classification criteria as transparent as possible in the following paragraphs in which I motivate my choices.

The quantitative part of the analysis is visible in the figures which depict the research findings in a numerical form in order to visualize and concretize how the categories relate to one another. I counted the heteronormative, low-heteronormative and non-heteronormative textual and visual instances, which enabled comparing the prevalence of each category within the research data. It also enabled comparing the prevalence of each category within individual textbook series. Nonetheless, the quantitative part of this study was intended to be a supporting element in the present thesis. Hence, the main focus of the study was on the qualitative analysis, which I will introduce next in more detail.

In a similar manner to Paiz (2015: 86), I deemed it appropriate to classify the materials in three categories: heteronormative, low-heteronormative, and non-heteronormative. In my opinion, this classification was an apt model to use for analyzing the data and for answering the research question, since this three-level classification system allowed a more fine-grained analysis than a mere bipartition to heteronormative versus non-heteronormative. Following the delineations of Paiz (2015: 86), an instance which depicted sexuality was deemed heteronormative if it promoted heteronormative ideology by constructing an oppositional, dichotomous and hierarchical view on sexuality and gender, and if it assumed a heterosexual and monosexual world. The instances were granted low-heteronormative status if they portrayed conflict in between heteronormativity and non-heteronormativity, for example, if a gender-neutral term *partner* was used instead of *wife /husband*, but explicit non-heterosexuality was not depicted either. Non-heteronormative status was given to only those cases which handled the variety of sexual identities openly and specifically or otherwise defied heteronormative discourse in an explicit way. In the following paragraphs, I explain my classification model category by category in a greater detail.

The category of heteronormativity was reserved for those cases in which heterosexuality was explicitly and unambiguously evident. Regarding kinship terms, this meant terms such as *boyfriend* (partner being a female), *girlfriend* (partner being a male) and mentions of a *wife* and a *husband*. Also mentions of *(grand)mother* and *(grand)father* as a parental unit and mentions of *aunts* and *uncles* were counted as heteronormative in the cases the gender of the people in the relationship was apparent and it was revealed to be a heterosexual relationship. What is more, the cases in which a character expressed romantic or sexual desire towards a character of the opposite sex were counted within this section. Finally, also topics which discussed dating and romance from only a heterosexual point of view were counted here, because those presume a monosexual worldview. A problem with the delineation to count all heterosexual-appearing relationships as heteronormative is the fact that heterosexual-passing relationships are not always

heterosexual. For example, bi-, pan-, and asexual couples can have a same-gender partner without being straight. However, in this thesis, all heterosexual-passing relations were counted as heteronormative unless specified otherwise since technically speaking, all relationship depicted in the textbooks could be interpreted as non-heterosexual, for sexual orientation and gender identity is not always apparent outwardly. After all, it is rarely specified that characters are particularly heterosexuals, even if they are a different-gender couple. Because heteronormativity is a dominant ideology, I did not deem it meaningful to count straight-appearing relationships as non-heterosexual.

The category for low-normative cases was reserved for the unclear cases in which heterosexuality was neither established nor challenged or if the discourse contained conflicting messages. I deemed it appropriate to nominate this category as ‘low-heteronormative’ following Paiz’ (2015) terminology and not as ‘neutral cases’, because the dominant position of heteronormative discourse is likely to affect the reading of these superficially neutral cases as heteronormative. Instances of sexual identity were categorized as low-heteronormative if they contained no reference to sexual identities. Regarding kinship terms, this meant the use of gender-neutral kinship terms such as *partner*, *spouse*, and *(grand)parent(s)*, as well as speaking simply of ‘being together’ without any gender-specifying information, for example. Also, cases in which attraction, romance, and dating was discussed without gender specifying terms were counted here, as well as all other instances which did not qualify as explicitly heteronormative nor non-normative.

In a similar manner to the heteronormative category, only explicit non-heteronormative cases were counted as non-heteronormative. This meant explicit mentions of non-heterosexual romantic or sexual attraction. Even though many cases in the low-heteronormative category technically allow a queer interpretation, to my mind, the requirement of an explicitness was appropriate for cases to be counted as non-heteronormative. Heterosexuality is explicitly visible in the textbooks, which means that some forms of sexuality are given direct visibility. Because of this, I deemed it appropriate to demand the same treatment of minority sexualities in order to be counted as non-heteronormative, and not simply settle for inferable cases.

Visual data was analyzed through a similar categorization, that is, they were categorized either as heteronormative, low-heteronormative, or non-heteronormative. Similar requisites were upheld for visual data as for textual data: visuals were classified as heteronormative if they portrayed clearly identifiable heterosexual couples and families. This meant visuals which depicted families with a mother and father, and relationships in which the characters were a male and a female. The low-heteronormative category included cases in which the genders of the

characters who were in a relationship were either not seen (e.g. a picture from the back or from afar) or they were open to interpretation (e.g. androgynous characters). The non-heteronormative category was reserved for explicitly romantic non-heterosexual depictions of same-gender couples or families with same-gender parents. As it has been explained earlier in this thesis, the role of the visual analysis was to complement the main object, which was the textual analysis. Therefore, the reader should note that the visuals were for the most part analyzed alongside text as a supplementing factor.

4. RESULTS

In this section I present the results of my study regarding the construction of heteronormative discourse within Finnish EFL textbooks for secondary school learners. This section is structured as follows: first, I present a quantitatively oriented, general level overview of the textual analysis and discuss inter-textbook differences in brief. I will also present the general findings of the visual analysis. Then, I will move on to the qualitative analysis, in which I will discuss the research findings on a more detailed level while supplementing my analysis with suitable examples of the cases. The qualitative analysis will be organized in a thematic manner. First, I have conflated all family-related themes into the first group, which are handled in subsection 4.2. Other, non-family related cases of romance, attraction, and dating are handled in subsection 4.3., for even though these themes interlink, grouping them separately advanced construing the research findings in an organized way. Finally, in the last subsection I briefly discuss the lack of non-heteronormative cases also from the gender point of view of heteronormative discourse.

4.1. A general overview of the textual and visuals analysis

I begin this section by discussing the textual part of my overall analysis and by presenting the total count all of cases in which sexuality was present either implicitly or explicitly. The first number in Figure 1 following each category signifies the total number of those cases. This is to say, out of all the cases (n=299), 187 were classified as low-heteronormative and 112 were classified as heteronormative. There were no cases of non-heteronormativity within the data set of nine EFL textbooks. Low-heteronormativity was the most dominant category by 63%. Explicitly heteronormative cases consisted of 37% of the cases. Therefore, low-heteronormative cases formed the predominant category. Whereas explicitly heteronormative cases did not constitute the majority, the almost 40% section nonetheless formed a stark contrast with the nonexistence of unequivocally non-heteronormative cases. This fact partly confirms my hypothesis that the textbooks would be rather heteronormative. Then again, I expected that explicit heteronormativity would have been more dominant quantitatively, which was contested by the fact that it was the low-heteronormative cases which formed the majority of cases. Therefore, my hypothesis was partly inaccurate.

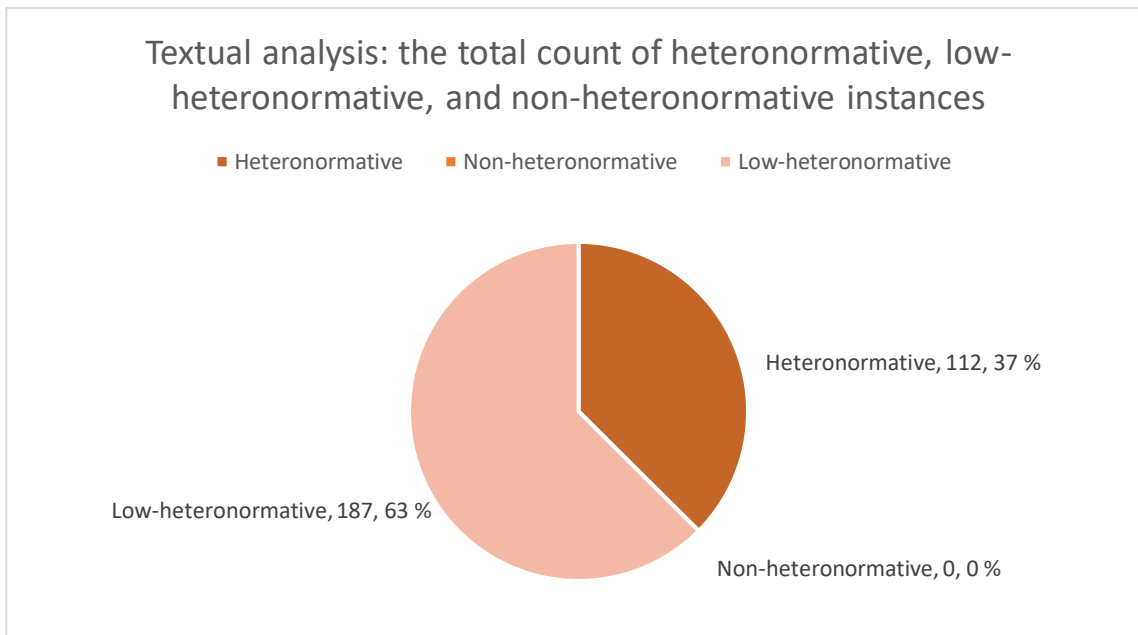


FIGURE 1: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: THE TOTAL COUNT OF HETERONORMATIVE, LOW-HETERONORMATIVE, AND NON-HETERONORMATIVE INSTANCES

However, it should be noted that one possible factor contributing to the prevalence of low-heteronormativity is the fact that the definition for the low-heteronormative category was more vague than for the other two categories, heteronormative and non-heteronormative, for a higher degree of explicitness was demanded for the latter categories. Should the criteria have been more stringent for the low-heteronormative category, it is possible that this section had been smaller. Nonetheless, despite the legitimate criticism regarding the qualification criteria, the finding maintains its relevance. Kinship terms, affection, and attraction indeed seem to be constructed quite often without gender-specifying information within textbooks, as the examples presented later on illustrate.

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, heteronormativity and explicit heterosexuality were embedded in the discourse of the EFL textbooks. There were no non-heterosexual cases, and only few examples, which will be discussed in the following subsections, broke heteronormativity in even marginal ways. This depicts the overall tone of the studied textbooks, for in the rare cases exceptions to the heterosexual norms are made, they tend to be menial and constructed through othering. The fact that heterosexuality was the only form of sexuality that was given direct visibility in the textbooks of the present study is problematized in this thesis. The fact that marginalized sexual identities are not present in the textbooks is unsurprising, nonetheless, the normalized and unquestioned hegemonic position of heterosexuality is precisely at the gist of heteronormativity. As it was noted at the background section of this thesis, the normalization process renders powerful

discourses, such as heteronormative discourse, so mundane that they cease to be recognized as what they are: ideologies (Eckert and McConnell, 2003: 43). Therefore, the fact that heterosexuality is the only visible form of sexuality within the research data is striking in the era in which the Finnish society has become increasingly multivocal and accepting about sexuality as a spectrum.

Among the textbook series, there appeared to be some differences in the degree of heteronormativity. In Figure 2, I present a graph of the heteronormative, low-heteronormative, and non-heteronormative textual instances within the *Key English*, *Spotlight*, and *On the Go* textbook series. I did not deem it meaningful to separate singular books in the chart; this delineation was made on the basis that, whereas a single textbook can be influential for a reader in the sense that one book is in general used for a whole academic year, investigating the effect of the whole textbook series which is generally used by the learners within the span of their whole secondary education is likely to be more substantial.

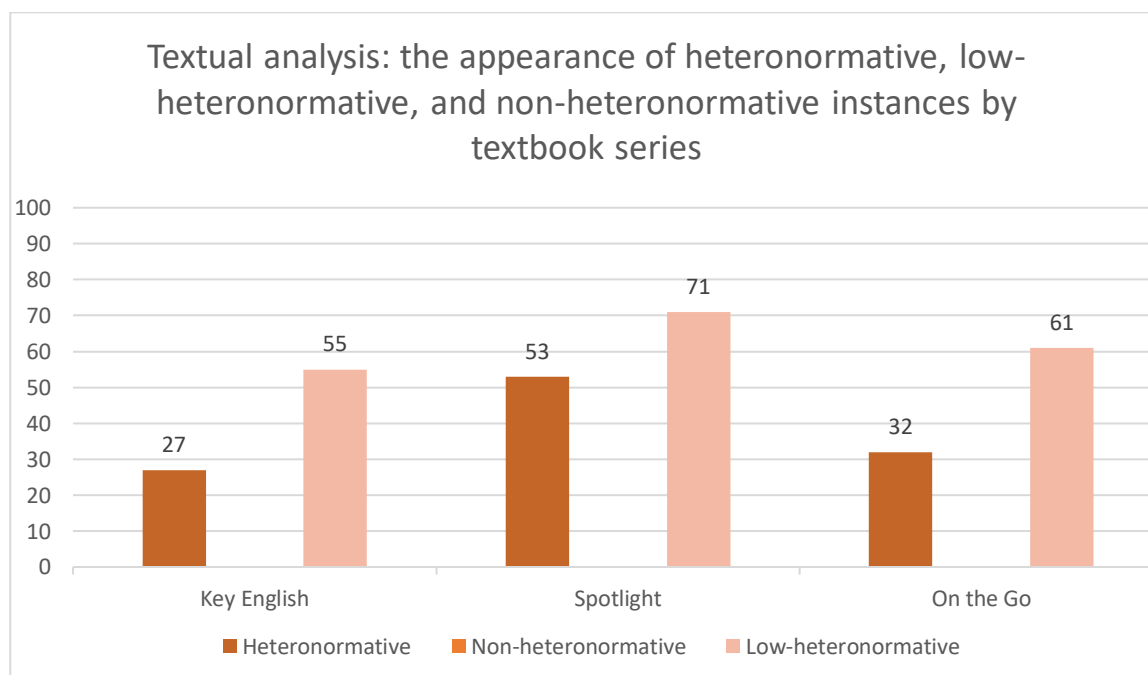


FIGURE 2: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: INTER-TEXTBOOK DIFFERENCES RELATED TO THE AMOUNT OF HETERONORMATIVE, LOW-HETERONORMATIVE, AND NON-HETERONORMATIVE INSTANCES

Figure 2 presents the instances of heteronormative, low-heteronormative, and non-heteronormative textual instances within the textbooks. The *On the Go* series had a total of 93 cases of both low-heteronormative and heteronormative cases, which was close to the total count of 82 cases in the *Key English* textbooks. The *Spotlight* textbooks stood out, for it had the highest total count by 124 cases. The numbers at the top of the beams indicate the total count of instances by category within the textbook. That is to say, there were 27 heteronormative and 55 low-

heteronormative instances within the *Key English* textbooks, and the numbers were 53 heteronormative and 71 low-heteronormative cases for *Spotlight*. In the *On the Go* textbooks these numbers were 32 for heteronormative and 61 for low-heteronormative cases. As it is visible from Figure 2, the *Key English* and *On the Go* series appear to be rather similar regarding the difference in between heteronormative and low-heteronormative cases, for the difference is approximately twofold in both. *Spotlight* differs from the other two because it has the highest total count but also the smallest difference in between heteronormative and low-heteronormative instances. Next, I will present some possible explanatory factors for these inter-textbook series differences.

One viable explanation could be the difference in the total number of pages, for the page count varied among the textbooks. I counted all the pages starting from page one and stopped at the grammar or reference section, for those were not included in the analysis. What is more, considering *On the Go 3*, I omitted the Units 1, 2, and 3, for as it was explained earlier, those units are identical to the Units 7, 8, and 9 in *On the Go 2*. *Key English* textbooks had the lowest total page count: 395, and *On the Go* series had the second highest number of pages, 411. *Spotlight* textbooks stood out with the total page count of 480. The *Spotlight* textbooks had both the highest page count, hence, it was natural that it had the highest total count of cases. Yet, it also had the smallest difference in between low-heteronormative and heteronormative cases. The connection in between the page number and total count is understandable, for more pages equal more opportunities for heteronormativity to be constructed. However, it is unclear if there is a connection in between the page count and degree of heteronormativity. It might be possible that there is for example more repetition in the *Spotlight* textbooks, which would increase the number of heteronormative cases. However, it would be necessary to have this finding reproduced by other studies before any solid conclusions about the causality in between the number of pages and degree of heteronormativity can be made.

Another explaining factor could be the effect of the National Core Curriculum of Basic Education (NCBE) of the time publishing, for the textbooks were produced at different times. The *On the Go* textbooks are the newest series, for it was published at the end of the 2010s. This means that unlike *Spotlight* and *Key English*, *On the Go* textbooks were originally developed along the delineations of the current NCBE, which has been in use since 2016. *Spotlight* and *Key English* textbooks were published while the previous national core curriculum prevailed, that is, during 2004-2014. Publishers are not obliged to follow the NCBEs, but they naturally want to produce textbooks which align with the values of the current NCBE, for it is an advantage in the textbook market. While the textbooks used in this study were all from the newest editions and the oldest

textbooks were *Key English 7* and *8* from the edition of 2015, the original time of development and publication is likely to have been influential. As it has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017: para. 10) remarked that, before the newest NCBE of 2016, sexual identities had not been addressed at all in the Finnish NCBEs. Even though sexuality is not taken explicitly into account to a considerable degree in the current NCBE either, it has emphasis on the individuality and equality of all learners, which might have influenced how sexual diversity is taken into account and constructed. Notwithstanding, this does not explain the similarity in between *On the Go* textbooks and *Key English* textbooks, for even though these were published during different NCBEs, they had roughly the same number of cases and twice as many low-heteronormative than heteronormative cases. If the NCBE affects the construction of sexuality in EFL textbooks, it is the *Spotlight* and *On the Go* textbooks which should have been alike, yet this was not the case. It appears that the effect of the NCBE which is in force during the time of production and publication is unclear. The scope of the present study was not broad enough to handle this topic in greater detail, and a research of a larger scale would be needed to decipher the causal relations behind effect of the NCBE to the degree of heteronormativity within EFL textbooks.

Moreover, it is possible that the content creation teams have been influential in creating the inter textbook variety. The field of queer identities evolves quite rapidly; therefore, the content creators require sufficient background knowledge and actual information of these matters in order to be able to construct timely and authentic queer representations. If no such information is available, it will affect the discursive construction of sexuality. Textbook creation is a complicated process in which the available affordances have an effect on the final product. The content producers are one affordance, and since they varied among the textbooks, it might have affected the outcome. However, figuring out the causal relations is complicated, because examining the effect of production teams would require for example interviewing the content creators about their knowledge of marginalized sexualities and genders. Likewise, examining the production process would have been necessary, which was not realistic within the scope of the present study.

Next, I move on to a general overview of the visuals. As apparent from Figure 3, there were a total of 34 pictures depicting families and couples within all of the textbooks. Out of these, 20 pictures were classified as heteronormative, and 14 were classified as low-heteronormative. There were no explicitly non-heteronormative visuals. Heteronormativity seemed to prevail more prominently within the visuals in the EFL textbooks compared to the textual analysis, in which low-heteronormativity prevailed. For example, typical examples of heterosexual-appearing visuals included pictures of families with male and female as the parents. Moreover, all displays of

romance were depicted only through male-female couples, which added to the explicit heteronormativeness in the textbooks. This insinuates that visuals might have a tendency to be more specifically heteronormative than the texts.

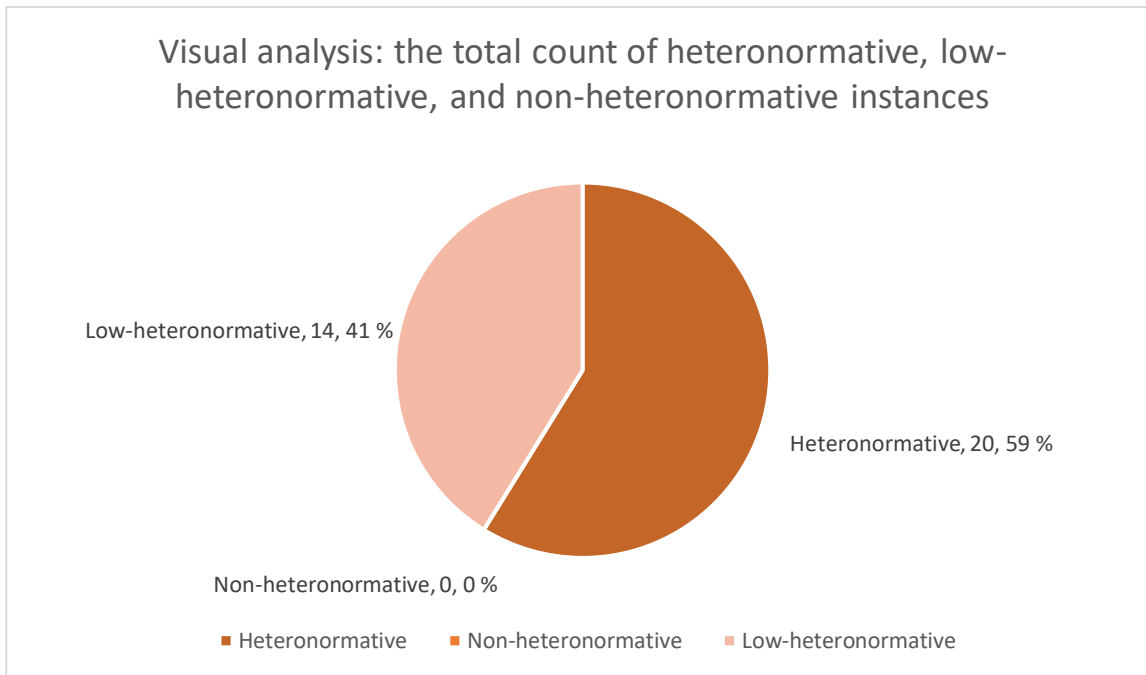


FIGURE 2: VISUAL ANALYSIS: THE TOTAL COUNT OF HETERONORMATIVE, LOW-HETERONORMATIVE AND NON-HETERONORMATIVE CASES

Naturally, the size of the data does not allow making any pervasive assumptions. What is more, the difference in between heteronormative and low-heteronormative visuals was not dramatic, as there were eight more pictures under the classification of heteronormative than low-heteronormative. Additionally, the focus of this study was on the textual analysis, as explained before. Therefore, the visuals were not analyzed using exact methodologies; instead, they were considered as a supplement for the texts, and their meaningfulness in this thesis was mainly attached to their interplay with the texts. A research focusing on the visuals in greater detail might lead to different results, therefore, no determinate inferences can be made on the basis of the visual analysis alone in this study. Therefore, Figure 3 ought to be interpreted more as a guideline, a superficial glance on the matter, not as an in-depth analysis. Nevertheless, visuals provided interesting insights into the construction of heteronormativity when examined alongside text, as the following subsections focusing on a more detailed analysis show.

4.2. Family-related themes and the construction of heteronormativity

In this subsection, I will compare how familial kinship terms and other family-related cases were constructed on the spectrum of heteronormativity. Because a notable portion of all the cases were family-themed, I deemed it sensible to handle them as one category for the sake of organizing my research findings. I begin by discussing low-heteronormative cases, for as illustrated in the previous subsection, low-heteronormativity surpassed explicit heteronormativity in the textbooks quantitatively. Based on the data it seems like the generous use of parental kinship terms added considerably to the prevalence of the low-heteronormative category. The use of terms such as *(grand)father*, *grand(mother)* and the linguistic variations of these terms are often used in a non-gender specifying ways. This is to say, the gender of the partner often not discussed further. It seems to be rather typical for the textbook genre to contain plenty of references to the characters' parents, for the main characters are teenagers in order to appeal to the teenage learners. Parents are typically present in this age group's lives; hence, it is sensible for the texts to include plenty of references to them. What is more, vocabulary about family is often rehearsed in secondary school textbooks, which naturally adds to the prevalence of parental kinship terms. The examples below show typical low-heteronormative structures with parental kinship terms.

1. My mom keeps telling us to keep our things tidy but we just keep the door closed. (*Key English 7*, 2015: 11)
2. It had been his father's dream that his son would play professional baseball one day. (*On the Go 1*: 2019: 35)
3. They use these languages with their parents and grandparents. (*Spotlight 7*, 2019: 46)
4. His daughter, Meera, lives with her mum, who has a new partner. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 108)

Kinship terms such as *mom* and *father* in Examples 1 and 2 used on their own do not reveal the gender of the other parent. Likewise, the use of the words *parents* and *grandparents* in Example 3 are examples of gender-neutral choices. Using the term *partner* in Example 4 is especially interesting, for it is explicitly gender-neutral term. This is one of the three strategies of gender non-conforming language, which was discussed in subsection 2.3. As Motschenbacher (2010: 43) suggests, non-conforming language can be expressed through ambiguous language use when it comes to gender. In practice, one can for example use gender neutral forms of kinship terms or even utilize linguistic gender-crossing. The use of the term *partner* allows both heterosexual and non-heterosexual interpretations; in principle, Meera's mother's partner could be a man, a woman, or a non-binary person, although the text does not insinuate a non-heterosexual reading, either. Therefore, it is a prime example of a low-heteronormative case. The next examples from a first-

person Singular perspective on possible future family also have a focus elsewhere than on the gender of the partner:

5. I would definitely love to spend my honeymoon there when I get married. When I'm about thirty-five, I mean. (*Key English 8*, 2015: 28)
6. I'm still young, but when I'm older – 35, say – I'd like to have a family. I want a good job, and to live a fairly normal life. When I have children, I'll probably decide on where to live. (*On the Go 3*, 2019: 152)
7. I don't think I will be working like this when I'm thirty. Having family would change things, I suppose. You can't be away from home twelve hours a day, including weekends. It can break up homes. (*Key English 9*, 2016: 58)

In all of the examples above, the suitable age of having a family is seen as the most relevant factor, which interestingly is thirty-five in both *Key English 7* and *On the Go 3*. Nonetheless, the examples here are not especially progressive, either – marriage is seen as essential in Example 5, and Example 6 depicts children as a part of normal life. Example 7 allows a less defined interpretation for it does not specify on the family structure, instead focusing on the challenges of combining work and family life.

The next examples below depict how different family structures are discussed. As in Example 8, single parents and divorced parents came up to some extent in the textbooks. This adds to the diversity in the family models that are represented in the textbooks. As for example Motschenbacher (2010: 40) and Neto (2018: 600) have pointed out, Western-type nuclear families tend to be predominant in textbooks. Finally, mentions of the family are often similar to Example 9, where the family model is not specified. These non-aligned cases are typical in contexts in which the topic of family is not discussed in detail, but instead, mentioned within the texts as a side note.

8. I'm living with a single-parent family. (*Spotlight 8*, 2019: 143)
9. Dakota's family is moving into a new apartment downtown. (*On the Go 3*, 2019: 94)
10. Here, almost everyone is a part of a large, extended family. (*On the Go 3*, 2019: 72)

It is interesting that those family models which diverged more radically from the typical nuclear families with two parent and a couple of children were located in non-Western countries. Example 10, which handled the way families are seen to encompass more than the immediate family, was located in Africa. The most radical examples of aberrations from the heteronormative family and relationship models, that is, Examples 11 and 12 below, were likewise located in non-European countries.

11. The emperor Shah Jahah ordered the Taj Mahal to be built in the memory of his favourite wife Mumtaz, a Persian princess who died giving birth to their 14th child. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 121)
12. Aminata lives with her mother and father, his second wife and the youngest of her 15 brothers and sisters in a small wooden house by a dusty field. (*Spotlight 9*, 2016: 60)

Both of these examples discuss polygamy, which means having multiple spouses. However, these cases were counted in the low-heteronormative category, although they break heteronormative norms of the only valid relationships being in between one man and one woman. The reasons why these were not counted in the non-heteronormative category is twofold: first of all, these models depict a man having multiple wives; the wives, however, are assumedly not in a relationship with one another. Therefore, these are essentially portrayals of heterosexuality, and it could even be claimed to present a male-dominated version of it. Secondly, these cases did not discuss polygamy aside from mentioning it. This fact combined with the way these cases are located outside the West constructs polygamy as something distant and alien for the Finnish students, as a way of life of the others. Example 11 was a piece of historical information, so it was located also temporally far away. The high child count in both examples breaks the norms of the generic depictions of Western nuclear families with two children. However, it could be claimed that it also creates an image of exoticness and bizarreness. Cases like the ones presented above would be excellent opportunities to exercise the principles of queer pedagogy (see subsection 2.4) and to question the cultural difference in family and relationship norms. However, that is left up to the teachers and learners, for the texts themselves do not initiate conversing family norms.

In a similar way to low-heteronormative cases, also heteronormativity was constructed using familial kinship terms. Next, I will move on to discussing the explicitly heteronormative cases. Even though in many cases the characters' parents or equivalent caretakers come up without specification of their spouses' gender, it is not rare for the partners' gender being explicit, either. Already the fact that most of the characters are constructed as having a mother and a father of whom they talk about within the texts significantly adds to the number of heterosexual couples, as the following examples show:

13. My mum's new boyfriend is allergic to dogs. (*Key English 7*, 2015: 24)
14. Eventually, we got so scared that my mum and sister and I went and slept in the car. Dad refused to leave and said we were a bunch of sissies. (*Key English 8*, 2015: 27)
15. Dear Mom and Dad (*On the Go 1*, 2019: 9)
16. Two years ago, his uncle, aunt, and cousin Nicola moved to New Zealand. (*On the Go 3*, 2019: 69)

All of these cases clearly depict how gender specific kinship terms simultaneously construct heterosexuality; in Example 13, the mum has specifically a *boyfriend*. Examples 14 and

15 depict typical models in which the use of mom and dad particularize on the parent's gender. Moreover, Example 14 seems to overall amplify gender stereotypes about men and masculinity. Example 16 illustrates the use of other kinship terms besides parental ones in the construction of heteronormativity, as the aunt and uncle form a heterosexual couple in this case. In the cases presented above, heterosexuality might be merely inferable, yet it is nonetheless explicitly present in the discourse. These cases which infer heterosexuality prove of its naturalized position. That position is not a problem in itself, but when it is contrasted with the lack of all other identities, it becomes problematic due to the monosexual worldview it constructs. Other marital and romantic kinship terms besides parental ones were also used to make heterosexuality explicit, such as the following examples will illustrate:

17. But there were hundreds of women hunting for their husbands and when they couldn't find them, they knew they had gone down with the Titanic. (*Key English* 8, 2015: 40)
18. He has a Finnish wife and two teenager daughters. (*Spotlight* 8, 2019: 106)
19. Edith and her husband have two small children and live in a beautiful house surrounded by trees. (*Spotlight* 8: 2019: 90)

The use of *husband* and *wife* in Examples 17 and 18 forms a contrast to the low-heteronormative terms such as partner. Examples 18 and 19 also explicate on the family structure, depicting and thus reinforcing the most common family model presented in EFL textbooks, a heterosexual nuclear family with two children. Visuals were influential in co-constructing similar, heteronormative structures. The two examples given below illustrate how visuals can affect the reading of the text as a whole. Whereas the adjoining texts were not heteronormative in themselves, the visual imagery led to a heteronormative reading.

20. Example 20. A picture of a family with the caption "A family of four in Britain in the 1940s. The baby's in the sidecar." In *Spotlight* 9, 2018: 35.



21. Example 21. A picture of a family with the caption: “Jack’s ideal home? Jack’s future family?” in *Spotlight 7*, 2019: 97.



As it is apparent from the two examples above, while using the word *family* in itself is a non-revealing word choice, the pictures specify that family in this context refers to a typical heterosexual nuclear family. As it was explained in section 4.1., according to the results of present study, visuals tended to be more heteronormative than texts. However, since text and pictures indeed co-construct discourse, the prevalence of heteronormativity in the visuals led to a heteronormative reading of the texts as well. Visuals were therefore significant in their impact, proving that they also offer a prolific matrix for de-constructing heteronormativity and diversifying the contents of EFL textbooks. If the visuals were more non-heteronormative, many of the low-heteronormative cases could be read as non-heterosexual, this would thus add to the variety of identities that were represented.

4.3. The themes of attraction, romance, and dating in the construction of heteronormativity

In this subsection, I move on to discussing those cases from the data which were not family related. These cases encompass a range of topics such as having a crush, getting a girlfriend or a boyfriend, falling in love, and marrying. I begin by handling the low-heteronormative spectrum of these cases.

To begin with, the data seems to suggest that when relationships are discussed on a general level, any sexual identities are not in general made apparent. The next examples illustrate these kind of generic-level structures:

22. Ancient tribes used to paint their faces for many reasons; battle, romance, art or religion. (*Key English 9*, 2016: 123)
23. [...] over the years, Finns married non-Finns. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 159)
24. But some invaders settled, married and built the first towns like Limerick, Cork and Dublin. (*Spotlight 8*, 2019: 57).
25. If you were black, it was against the law to go to a white party, date a white person, attend a white school. (*On the Go 3*, 2019: 78).

In these examples, the focal point is not on the relationships on an individual level. Due to the non-specificness of these passages, there is not much information available about the sexual orientations of the people in the relationships. For example, Example 22 does not speak of how the tribe members used to paint their faces to attract the opposite gender, instead, it simply speaks of *romance*. Examples 23 and 24 are not explicitly heteronormative either, although historically, marriage has been the right of heterosexual couples alone. The next examples exemplify similar, ambiguous cases which discuss dating and attraction:

26. She wondered what it would be like to be in love, and took up almost a whole page in her diary when she got her first kiss. (*Key English 9*, 2016: 127)
27. And your breath is smoky. No girl would want to kiss you. (*Spotlight 8*, 2019: 145)

Example 26 speaks of *love* on general level and does not deliberate on who was the kisser. Kissing is also discussed in Example 27, which is a comic about the hazards of smoking and bad habits. This example is located at the edge of low-heteronormative and heteronormative cases, for the comic depicts a group of four people, three males and one female. It was unclear whether the *you* in Example 27 refers to the male group member who is depicted as having a pack of cigarettes, or if it is meant as a general statement to the whole group which includes one female character. Nonetheless, a more neutral option would have been a comment about how *no one* would like to kiss you, for example. This example also shows how visuals co-construct discourses and at times complicate interpreting them.

There were other visuals as well which were located at the overlapping area in between low-heteronormative and heteronormative cases. Example 28 below is a rather common type of textbook visuals in EFL textbooks where the text topic is not related to human relationships and the visuals merely exemplify the contents of the text. Hence, the visuals typically depict some

type of action, the characters in the visuals are not introduced, and there is no additional information available about the characters' relationship. In Example 28, there is physical proximity in between the characters, but there is no indication of romance. This is to say, there are visuals with same-gender characters appearing close to each other. However, there are no visuals in which this closeness would be depicted in an explicitly romantic way unlike visuals of different gender characters which will be discussed after the next paragraph.

28. Example 28. A picture of two girls sharing headphones in *Key English*, 2016: 79.



29. Example 29. An illustration of a park scene with the caption: "Mitä kuvan henkilöt ja eläimet voisivat sanoa tai ajatella? Valitse lauseita aukeaman tehtävistä tai keksi omia. / What might the people and animals in the picture say or do? Choose sentences from the tasks in the spread or come up with your own sentences." In *Spotlight 7*, 2019: 19.



Example 29 is similarly open to interpretations. There is no background information given, therefore, there is little information available about the nature of the characters' relationship. Of course, the task in the Example 29 might prompt such heteronormative sentences as 'a man is

reading next to his girlfriend’, for the visuals direct the sentence-formation to some extent. Regardless, the learners have the freedom of making various interpretations of the events and relationships in the picture. Non-text adjoining visuals like Example 29 and exemplifying illustrations such as Example 28 depict how meaningful the interplay of text and pictures is in discourse construction. On their own, pictures allow a wide variety of interpretations about what types of relationships are being depicted, for the norms regarding what actions are typical of romantic or platonic relationships are mutable and fuzzy. Holding hands, hugging, and being physically close, for example, are characteristic of both romantic and platonic relationships.

Next, I move on to the heteronormative cases. I begin by discussing some of the most challenging cases to categorize, for they could have been interpreted in varying ways, and another person might have classified them differently. However, I counted the next examples as heteronormative, a choice which will be motivated in the following paragraph.

30. My best friend is a boy and I am a girl. We’re not dating or anything, just good friends. Is this normal? (*Key English 7*, 2015: 50)
31. Marinetta and Mikko had developed a close friendship and spent a lot of time together. Juan and Coco had also become good friends and were often seen walking hand in hand. This, of course, was captured on video by Peter from RealityTelevision. But, despite his efforts to find a true love story, he had accepted the fact that they, too, were only friends. (*Key English 9*, 2016: 31)

To my mind, both Examples 30 and 31 reproduce the heteronormative idea that males and females cannot have casual, non-romantic relationships. This stance promotes the heteronormative view that other than sexually, men and women are inherently distinct by nature but sexually compatible. The question “Is this normal?” in Example 30 reveals underlying assumptions about the potential abnormality of the situation. The fact that the cameraman, Peter, in Example 31 had to accept that Juan and Coco were only friends and no “true love story” would be found similarly assumes that it was against the heterosexual expectations and norms that the different-gender characters would not form romantic relationships. However, these examples could have been categorized differently or even left out of the analysis, for they depict friendships, not romantic partnerships. Since this study is focused on sexual identities, it could be claimed that these cases should not have been included in the analysis. Yet, the way friendship in between the two genders is constructed as surprising and even abnormal seemed to be in accordance with the heteronormative ideology in the sense that it assumes the separate nature of males and females in all other ways than romantically or sexually. Hence, these cases were classified as heteronormative.

Next, I move on to some of the more obviously heteronormative cases. Gender-specific kinship terms were a classic example of the ways heteronormative discourse is constructed.

As Examples 32 and 33 show, the specification on *girlfriend* and *boyfriend* when the partner is of a different gender reveals that the relationship in question is a heterosexual, romantic relationship.

32. Understandably, his relationship with his girlfriend is affected. (*Key English 9*, 2016: 84)

33. Max: weren't you listening? I said our sister has a boyfriend. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 95)

Explicit heterosexuality also emerged when dating and love were discussed as topics, as in the following examples 34-37. Examples 35, 36, and 37 discuss the problem points, such as anxiety and jealousy in dating, which gives some depth and variety in the portrayal of heterosexual dating and romance. These cases prove that heterosexuality does not only have a distinct position as the sole represented sexual identity, but it also is depicted in a many-sided way. What is more, as these examples show, heterosexual attraction is depicted in a wide spectrum of attraction ranging from going to a date to being in love. With same gender characters, the relationships were never depicted to reach even the state of infatuation, let alone romantic love.

34. Colleen K. Marshall should always remember that Davis R. Vaughn loves her, too. (*Spotlight 9*, 2018: 66)

35. There's no way how he might have done at dating. Sparky never once asked a girl to go out in high school. He was too afraid of being turned down. (*Key English 9*, 2016: 126)

36. Sam went on a date with Zani's sister Jean, but things didn't go according to a plan. (*On the Go 3*: 2019: 72)

37. Pete: Why don't you ask Garry? He's your new boyfriend, isn't he?

Ginny: Garry? Garry who? Garry Megson, the class bully? Or what are you talking about? I would never cheat on you, anyway! (*Spotlight 8*, 2019: 116)

There were also visual depictions of romantic heterosexual relationships. In Example 38 below, the statement "*I love you*" combined with the floating hearts around the characters indicate that the relationship in question is romantic by nature.

38. Example 38. An excerpt from a comic in *Spotlight 7*: 2019: 83.



As it is visible from Example 38, the special position of heterosexuality becomes visible through the way these relationships are marked as explicitly romantic. Ambiguity might be common both in textbook texts and visuals, but in those cases where romantic relationships are made visible, they are in between different-gender couples. Example 39 below is another apt example of this phenomenon: it depicts two couples kissing on a New Year's Eve. The couple whose faces can be seen is seems to be a straight-passing couple, whereas the other couple is less visible. Whereas that couple with the partly hidden faces could in principle be a same-gender couple, it is not explicitly shown to be such. This lack of direct visibility illustrates well how the heteronormative discourses reigns within textbook visuals within this data set. It seems like only heterosexual love can be showcased in EFL textbooks.

39. Example 39. A picture of couples kissing from *On the Go 2*, 2019: 131.



Expressing explicit heterosexual attraction was also evident in the way inter-character attraction was portrayed. These comments ranged from implicit to more direct ones. The next examples depict some of less direct ones, such as the comment of how girls are interested in Najid in example 40, or how Xhosa girls are *the coolest* according to Zani in Example 41. Examples 42 and 43 discuss the general attraction in between women and men. In Example 42, a low-heteronormative option might have been for example how some people find big noses attractive instead of using the word *girls*.

40. According to Nick, the kite is a bit of a chic magnet. “Girls always come up to us, pretending to be interested in the kite, but they’re obviously more interested in Najid.” (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 32)
41. Zani offered to teach Sami “emergency Xhosa” for chatting up girls – he thinks Xhosa girls are the coolest, of course. (*On the Go 3*, 2019: 71)
42. By the way, some girls find boys with big noses attractive. (*Spotlight 7*: 2019: 117)

43. Beautiful women and handsome men can sometimes make even an ordinary product attractive, especially if the message is that it will make you popular with the opposite sex. (*Spotlight 9*, 2018: 90)

Example 43 is interesting due to the use of *opposite sex*, for the use of the word *opposite* is linked to the very core of heteronormative ideologies. As it was also explained in subsection 2.2., heteronormativity constructs the genders of men and women precisely as separate and inherently different, yet compatible. This same ideology is present in all of the heteronormative examples to some degree, nonetheless, it is rarely as explicitly stated as in Example 43.

Signaling attraction towards the other gender was one of the main strategies of how heteronormativity was constructed. There seemed to be some differences in between how female and male characters express attraction. Interestingly, it seems that female characters were less direct in their comments about male characters. The next examples are made by female characters:

44. And Wayne took a photo of me! He's really cute. (*Spotlight 8*, 2019: 32)
45. It was Donna. I've never been so embarrassed in my life. 'He's cute!' I heard her say. (*Spotlight 8*: 2019: 168)

As apparent, female attraction is described in terms of cuteness. It is debatable whether calling someone cute is even a sign of attraction, yet, in this thesis, it was counted as such. Male characters, on the other hand, expressed more explicit attraction, which is apparent especially from Examples 47 and 48 below. This could be argued to further reinforce the heteronormativity of these statements, for these practices assert the role of women as more passive in relation to the more active and direct men. The construction of women as more passive than men is in agreement with earlier textbook research findings on stereotypical gender roles (Blumberg, 2007: 5).

46. "You made for a pretty good-looking fanatic!" He grins at me and then gets up and walks away so quickly that he doesn't catch my mouth stretch out in a smile so wide I'm in danger of damaging my facial muscles. (*Spotlight 9*, 2018: 122)
47. 'It's just that we met these girls yesterday, and they want to see us again tonight.'
'What girls?'
'They're hot, man. I mean, really hot. They're too good to turn down.'
(*Spotlight 8*, 2019: 170)
48. He fancied her like mad [...]. She was so good-looking it was untrue. (*Key English 8*, 2015: 108)

As the examples show, male portrayals of attraction towards females has a wider range than in the female characters' comments. Calling women *hot* in Example 47 could be argued to have a slightly different, more sexually charged tone than the comments about boys being *cute* by female characters in Examples 44 and 45. Heterosexual inter-character attraction is therefore expressed in a nuanced and varying way, at least by male characters. This again adds to the way

heterosexuality is not only the only form of sexuality that is made visible, instead, it is also depicted in a nuanced way.

What is more, the following examples add to the diversity of relationship depictions. In all of these cases, age differences are discussed. It was interesting that age difference issues came up in every textbook series, for this perhaps indicates that age differences in relationships are seen as central aspect of teenagers' lives. Some of these cases approached age differences from a slightly negative perspective or as a problem, such as the following examples illustrate:

49. [...] I can't go out with you.

I said: "Why not?" and he said, "Because you are too young. I'm nearly eighteen – it would not be right, it would be like cradle-snatching." (*Spotlight 8*, 2019: 128)

50. Max: weren't you listening? I said our sister has a boyfriend.

Sandy: are you serious?

Max: Uh-huh. I saw her with someone yesterday. He looked really old.

[...]

Max: Definitely. And they were holding hands.

Sandy: Really? That's creepy. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 95)

In the Example 49, it is a male character who is older than the female character. In the text, the female character is fourteen, so the age difference in between the characters is four years. The female character does not mind the age difference, but the male character compares the relationship to *cradle-snatching*. In Example 50, the age of the sister's boyfriend is not mentioned aside from him looking *really old*. Nonetheless, this is depicted as a negative fact, because later on in the discussion one of her brother's comments that it is *creepy* they were holding hands. The next examples handled age differences as well but seemed to be more neutral in tone. The next examples did not discuss dating per se, but instead, having crushes on teachers.

51. We both had a crush on the sports teacher in our school. His name was Mika or something. (*Spotlight 7*, 2019: 43)

52. Coco: If you ask me, Peter's the one with a crush on someone

Juan: how do you mean?

Coco: Haven't you seen the way he keeps looking at our teacher?

Juan: Janet? Really? Are you sure? I haven't noticed anything. (*Key English 9*, 2016: 31)

Again, the age difference is not explicitly discussed, but is nonetheless apparent. In Example 51 the crush is mentioned as a side comment and the tone appears as rather casual. In Example 52, the tone is more surprised, as is apparent from Juan's astonished comment *Really? Are you sure?*. There seems to be some normativity present also regarding the age differences in relationships. Since this was not explicitly studied in this research, no definite claims can be made. Nonetheless, these cases add to diverse ways heterosexual relationships were discussed.

Next, I will proceed to two intriguing sources of data about the construction of the heteronormative discourse within EFL textbooks. The following examples were collected from two texts which were especially intriguing source of data about the construction of heteronormativity in EFL textbooks: both of these texts had dating and romance as the main topic, so the focus was particularly on romantic relationships. These cases were prolific, for the majority of the cases which were counted included implicit mentions of relationships. Therefore, these cases which were explicitly about dating added to the versatility within the data, although there were only two of them. The first text, which discussed girlfriend and boyfriend qualities discussed the desirable qualities of a special someone. The questions presented in Example 53 were subheadings under which there were more text, marked with [...], for summarizing the whole text was not meaningful here.

53. Top five girlfriend/boyfriend qualities:

1 Do you find this person attractive?

[...]

2 Have you two got anything I common?

[...]

3 Does this person make you laugh?

[...]

4 Can you trust this person?

[...]

5 Do they make you feel good about yourself?

[...] (*Spotlight 9*, 2018: 18-19)

54. Believe or not this whole boy/girl thing should be a laugh as well as all the other stuff. (*Spotlight 9*, 2018: 18)

The use of kinship terms was neutral in Example 53. The use of split kinship term *girlfriend/boyfriend*, which was repeated throughout the text, allow the reader in principle to orientate themselves to either one. Additionally, the use of *person* is an apt example of using a gender-neutral term, and the use of ‘you two’ in the third line is also a non-gender-specific expression. The use of the third person plural *they* in the point 5 is remarkable, for as it has been discussed in subsection 2.3., the singular they is making a comeback as the gender-neutral alternative to gender specific third person pronouns he and she. Albeit this was merely one case, it was nonetheless one of the most progressive ways gender non-specific language was used in the EFL textbooks. The pronoun could have been split which was more typical strategy in the textbooks; to exemplify, a more generic alternative to the use of *they* would have been something along the lines of ‘does he or she make you feel good about yourself?’. This instance proves not only of the usability of gender-neutral kinship terms but also of gender-neutral pronouns. Notwithstanding, Example 54 from the same text reduces the gender-neutrality of the text. The wording in the phrase *this whole boy/girl thing* anchors the text ideologically into

heteronormativity. A question could be asked why the neutral tone was not carried out throughout the text. For example, a more neutral option could have been something along the lines of how ‘this whole dating thing should be a laugh’.

What is more, finally, the visuals adjoining this text diminished the low-heteronormativity of it. The text was accompanied by five pictures, four of which depict different-gender couples. In one picture, a person sitting opposite to a woman on a swing is not visible apart from one leg, which makes it impossible to determine the gender of the character. However, the overall visual imagery was inherently heterosexual. Again, this is a prime example of the way how the visuals can tilt a text deeper into heteronormativity even if the text itself would have potential to be low-heteronormative. Even one picture of a same-gender couple would have encouraged a more varied reading of the text about dating, thus creating a more multi-voiced contextual space. Yet, this opportunity was not seized in this text.

The next text did not allow any other than heterosexual reading regardless of imagery. This text was a ‘Your choice’ text, which in *On the Go* series is one of the alternative texts which the learners can choose based on their interests. Therefore, it was not something every learner would necessarily choose. Yet, it forms a part of the textbooks’ discourse, and is hence meaningful. It is a literary excerpt from a book called *A Survivalist guide to Love* written by Jeanette Baker in an unknown year. The text was split in two parts and handled the differences in between boys and girls. The text was constructed so as if it consisted of questions about the other gender written by teenagers. The questions were ‘signed’ by a name and an age, for example, *Anna, 14*, or *Michael, 16*. Whether these questions were authentically written by teenage writers is unknown, for this information was not made explicit nor could be found from other sources.

55. We may all be members of the human race, but have you ever found yourself wondering if boys are really from the same planet as you? Sometimes they say or do things that you can’t begin to understand, and sometimes they drive you mad. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 122)
56. Just when you think you’re beginning to understand what makes them tick, suddenly they’ll do or say something that will leave you totally confused. That’s when you find yourself wondering if girls are really from the same planet as you. (*On the Go*, 2019: 123)

The act of othering is strongly present in these passages located at the beginning of the sections about the two genders. In the Examples 55 and 56 it is asked if the members of the other gender are from the same planet as you, which alienates them as something strange and inexplicable. There is a clear juxtaposition constructed by using the second person Singular ‘you’ that is, the reader, in opposition to the other gender as ‘them’. These practices of othering promote heteronormative gender essentialism, that is, the conception which overemphasizes intragroup likeness and

understates intergroup similarities. The following examples further reinforce gender essentialism by placing emphasis on the perceived differences, which appear to follow rather stereotypical notion of gender:

57. I don't see the point because it's not their fault that they're so childish – they're just boys. (*On the Go*, 2019: 122)
58. Boys are always saying horrible things about their mates. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 122)
59. I think girls always talk to their mates about the boy they are going out with and tell them about rows you may have had or problems you're going through. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 123)
60. Why do girls worry about their weight so much? They're always going on about how fat they are, even if they are really thin. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 123)
61. Some girls are really girly girls and say things to each other like 'Ooh I like your nails'. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 123)

In the examples, boys are depicted as childish and rowdy, whereas girls are depicted as gossiping and being appearance-centered. The word *always* used in Examples 58 and 59 furthers the gender essentialism as if all boys and all girls do these things all of the time. Again, these gender stereotypes seem to be in line with earlier textbook research (for example Blumberg 2007: 5). Yet, girls and boys are ultimately depicted as compatible:

62. The mysteries of boys might make you wonder why you bother with love. But, hang on a minute, have you thought about the things that boys find irritating and strange about you? (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 122)
63. Oh, the mysteries of girls...But they are just as confused about you. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 123)

The mutual interest between the two genders is implicit in both the examples above, and Example 63 speaks directly of *love*. Overall, this text seems to contain a strong message of how there are only two genders, and no matter how weird and cumbersome the other gender might appear, mutual interest and love is nonetheless present. The visuals adjoining the text seem to partly fortify this message, such as Example 64 below.

64. Example 64. A picture of a mixed-gender group at a dock in *On the Go 2*, 2019: 122.



As Example 64 above depicts, a male character is shown to jump headfirst into a lake while a mixed-gender group are onlookers. The fact that it is a male character who jumps seems to be in line with the way boys were depicted as childish and rowdy. In Examples 65 and 66 there are male and female characters in the pictures, but in separate groups. The physical distance in between the characters of the different genders in Examples 65 and 66 perhaps symbolizes the assumed mental distance in between them. It perhaps echoes a view of women and men as distinct yet mutually interested in one another.

65. Example 65. A picture of a girl and three boys in *On the Go 2*, 2019: 122.

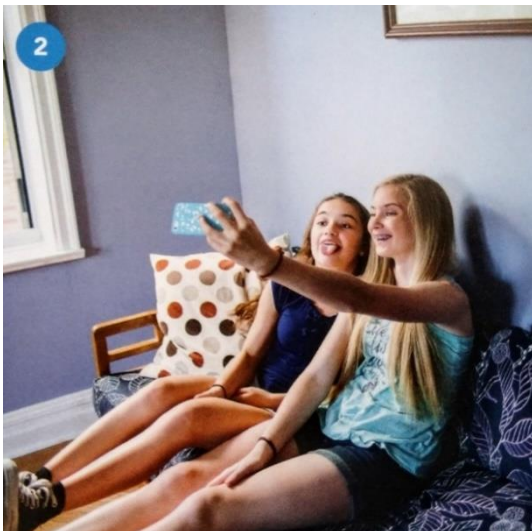


66. Example 65. A picture of a group of girls and a group of boys sitting at a table in *On the Go 2*, 2019: 123.



Example 67 below might reflect the stereotype about girls and women being appearance-centered, which was also evident in the text. Yet, even though the visuals seem to be in line with the text's contents, the visuals could be interpreted to be less heteronormative than the text itself in this case. If the visuals are examined independently from the text, they do not display gender stereotypes, gender binarism, and heteronormativity as obviously as the text. At times, visuals can hence lessen the impact of the text, although in this case, the visuals in this case do not deconstruct heteronormativity, either.

67. Example 67. A picture of two girls taking a selfie in *On the Go 2*, 2019: 123.



These two texts which were discussed last in this subsection exemplify that the explicit construction of the themes of dating and romance are lacking progressivity, inclusivity, and variety. Even small changes could open the text up for a more multifaceted interpretations, yet, they

were often not made. For example, the use of gender-neutral kinship terms would create a more inclusive tone in the texts, and even one picture with other than heterosexual couple would similarly add to the inclusiveness of the texts. Even though a neutral, low-heteronormative tone is the most common choice regarding themes of family and romance, heterosexuality has ultimately a distinct position in the textbooks due to a couple of reasons. Firstly, it is the only form of the spectrum of sexuality that is explicitly represented. Secondly, it is represented in a multifaceted way, so heterosexuality is not only constructed in an explicit way, but also in a nuanced and varied way, which reinforces its naturalized position as the sole sexual identity available within the discourse of EFL textbooks for upper secondary school learners.

4.4. Non-heteronormativity

Before moving on to the discussion section, I will make a few observations about the absence of explicitly non-heteronormative cases and the construction of gender as a binary, although as explained before, gender was not at the focus of this thesis. Even though the focus of this thesis is on the binary view regarding sexualities, gender binarism has been discussed to some extent in this thesis because it intertwines with heteronormative discourses. Thus, it appeared to be meaningful and relevant to show some examples of the ways gender binarism manifested itself within the textbook discourses. As it was apparent from Figures 1, 2, and 3 in subsection 4.1., the total number of non-heteronormative cases was zero. However, few cases came rather close to being non-heteronormative, as the two mentions of polygamy which were presented earlier in subsection 4.2. Additionally, the use of gender-neutral kinship terms, for example, exemplified that some strategies of gender non-conforming language were utilized. Yet, there were no examples of other, more radical forms of breaking the rules of referential gender, such as utilizing linguistic gender-crossing.

The textual analysis revealed the dominance of low-heteronormativity, which confirms that non-explicit, neutral tone seems to be the most common strategy which is used when it comes to discussing family, dating, and romance. Therefore, even though heterosexuality was the only form of sexuality which was explicitly constructed in the textbooks, heterosexuality was not absolute within the textbook discourse in the sense that it would have prevented making any other interpretations of the contents of the textbooks. Nonetheless, it is a rather lamentable conclusion that non-heteronormativity is present in the EFL textbooks only if one is willing to consciously read them from a queer perspective, for the texts themselves or the visuals do not support non-heteronormative reading.

To summarize, sexuality was finally rather unilaterally discussed and its nature as a spectrum or a continuum was not considered to a meaningful degree. What is more, it seemed to me that gender was also presented in a rather binary-based way. As explained above, heteronormative discourse assumes that there are only two genders, men and women. It should be noted that the majority of the next examples which will be discussed were not counted in Figures 1, 2, and 3 for they did not discuss sexual identities. To begin with, there were a couple interesting cases which discussed gender specifically:

68. Why do men have nipples? All humans begin life in the womb as females. Because nipples have already developed there before the gender of the baby is determined, the nipples stay. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 100)

69. It is time we perceive gender on a spectrum instead of two sets of opposing ideals (*On the Go 3*, 2019: 159)

Example 68 is an example of the use of the terms *gender* and *sex* interchangeably, even though as it has been mentioned earlier, the terms *female* and *male sex* are more suitable for biological contexts, whereas using the term *gender* refers to the societal point of view, in which it is also more apt to speak of *women* and *men*. In this passage these terms are used inconsistently, for the terms *men*, *female*, and *gender* are used in a mismatched way – however, this is not unusual, for the terms are often used interchangeably in daily life. Yet, it is curious that the text speaks of how all humans begin life as females – it would be more appropriate to speak of the non-determined sex of the fetus, for the human sex is not determined until later, and the fetus is neither exactly a female nor a male until the developmental line takes its direction. The text seems to suggest that the fetuses undergo a some type of a sex change during the development, and is rather gender essentialist in the sense that it presumes that the fetus cannot *not* have a gender, that it must be either male or female. In contrast, Example 69 discussed gender as a spectrum directly. This excerpt is from a speech given by Emma Watson relating to the UN sustainable development goals. This was a very interesting passage, for overall gender binarism and gender stereotypes continue to prevail in EFL textbooks as earlier studies have proven. Although gender as a spectrum is not discussed there further, it provides an excellent possibility for exercising queer pedagogy and discussing gender norms, roles, and expectations.

There were also some examples of breaking gender norms, as the Examples 70-72 presented below show:

70. Zhu dressed as a boy and pretended to be male. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 64)

71. When Jack sailed away in his ship, the *Revenge*, Anne joined him – as a man! Pirates were very superstitious, and they believed a woman on board was bad luck. (*On the Go 2*, 2019: 177)

72. Mum told me a complicated story, but the main point was this: the girl didn't want to marry the man her father picked for her. She didn't know what to do. But then a miracle happened: she grew a beard overnight! When the man saw her face the next morning, he was so shocked he ran away. (*On the Go* 1, 2019: 105)

Example 70 is an excerpt from a comic about a Chinese tale of a girl who dressed up as a boy to be allowed to attend school and fell in love with a boy. However, the girl is not depicted to identify as a male, and the boy is shown to be interested in the girl only after she was revealed to be a female. Therefore, the comic is not exactly a depiction of either transgender people or homosexuals despite gender crossing. Gender crossing is discussed in Example 71 as well, in which a woman pirate, Anne Bonny, was presented. Nevertheless, this case is also more about cross-dressing than about a non-binary gender identity, for it is not said that Anne Bonny wanted to be a man instead of appearing as one in order to get on board. Hence, Anne's relationship with Jack was counted in the heteronormative category, although gender norms and stereotypes were indeed broken which diversified the way gender was depicted. In Example 72, the passage from a tale depicts a girl experiencing a miracle and growing a beard to get rid of an unwanted husband. Again, while this case depicts a breakage of gender norms and the gender binary, the girl nonetheless was never said to identify as a man, so ultimately, it does not seem to be a depiction of a trans identities.

To summarize, even though these aforementioned cases challenged gender norms, they finally did not seem to be depictions of non-binary genders. This appears to confirm the findings of previous studies that heteronormativity also prevails in the way gender is constructed as binary. Yet, the focus of the present study was not on gender. Hence, this claim is based only on few examples and should therefore be interpreted cautiously. Notwithstanding, these cases were included, for they intertwine closely with heteronormative discourse and offer an interesting insight also to the gender side of heteronormativity. Examining the role of trans people and non-binary genders would be an interesting subject for future studies.

5. DISCUSSION

This section will spell out my interpretations of the research findings. I will recapitulate the central findings of this study and discuss how the results relate to what has been found out in other studies about gender and sexuality in textbooks. What is more, I will contemplate the possible explanatory factors behind the findings of this study. In addition, I deliberate on the shortcomings and strengths of this thesis, and, finally, I will present some alternatives to how the principles of queer pedagogy could be applied to English as a Foreign Language textbooks in Finland in order to advance more inclusive and dialogical notions of sexual identities.

5.1. The present study and earlier research

Before moving to the discussion of how the present study compares with earlier research, I will briefly recapitulate the central findings of this thesis. In the present study my research question was how the heteronormative discourse is constructed within English as a Foreign Language textbooks for secondary school learners in Finland. To begin with, this study showed that low-heteronormative constructions were the most common strategies utilized. This is to say, constructions which did not reveal explicit information about sexual identities when it came to kinship terminology, family and relationship models were the most common. This was against my initial hypothesis, for I expected that explicit heteronormativity would have been the most predominant category.

Yet, explicitly heteronormative cases formed the second largest section of the discursive constructions of sexuality. Heteronormativity prevailed within kinship terms, family models, the heterosexual relationships between characters, and inter-character affection and attraction. Visuals proved to be quantitatively more heteronormative than low-heteronormative, and the dominating heteronormativity of visuals was significant in co-constructing the discourse within the textbooks as heteronormative. Heterosexuality was the only explicitly constructed form of sexuality, which was contrasted by the total lack of explicitly non-heteronormative, non-heterosexual cases. The studied materials contained no LGBTQ+ topics or queer characters. The most non-heteronormative cases were two mentions of polygamy in non-Western contexts and some cases in which gender roles and norms were broken. However, these instances did not fill the criteria for being classified as straightforwardly non-heteronormative, thus, that category was left empty.

As argued by Motschenbacher (2011: 152), heteronormative ideologies do not accept non-hetero identities nor non-normative heterosexual identities as valid, acceptable, or normal. Likewise, Nelson (1999: 376) remarks that heteronormativity is thereby descriptive as well as normative: it does not only create essentialist categories, but also places them in a hierarchical order. Therefore, it is apparent that the heteronormative discourse was indeed apparent in the EFL textbooks' discourses: the texts and images co-constructed a monosexual worldview in which only heterosexuality was made visible. What is more, heterosexuality was depicted in a nuanced way, for such matters as problem points in relationships and age differences were discussed in relation to it. Hence, the contrast in between nuanced heterosexual depictions and the total lack of queer identities became highlighted. Even though there were no depreciating discourses about LGBTQ+ people either, it could be argued that the fact that the invisibility of all queer identities constructs them as the marginal other and even erases them completely. The prevailing low-heteronormativity and the fact that sexual identities were not explicitly discussed in the materials indicate that sexual identity is not perceived as a relevant social parameter alongside ethnicity or gender. The fact that sexual diversity is erased from the textbooks reinforces the positioning of heterosexuality as the norm, for the silence does not enable recognizing, contesting, or criticizing it.

Nelson (2002: 49) argued that heteronormativity has a strong foothold in western societies, and it seems that its impact is perceivable in EFL textbooks as well. Heteronormativity has been confirmed in textbook studies. For example, Paiz (2015: 89) confirmed its presence in textbooks used in the United States, and Smestad (2018) showed that it prevails even in the relatively progressive Nordic countries. Kjaran and Lehtonen (2017) and Tainio and Teräs (2010: 11) reasserted that this the case with Finnish textbooks as well: LGBTQ+ topics and characters are either missing altogether, or are handled as isolated, marginal topics only in some subjects such as health education, thereby dismissing the role of sexualities as a meaningful parts of identities and as impactful social parameters. Hence, the lack of visibility of LGBTQ+ identities found in this study is in line with earlier research. Even if low-heteronormativity was the most dominant category in the present study, the combination of low-heteronormativity and explicit heterosexuality results in a discourse in which sexuality is not openly discussed, but heterosexuality prevails nonetheless constantly in the background.

Heteronormativity has been revealed to prevail in textbooks also when it comes to family models. Motschenbacher (2010: 40) summarized the way in which many studies have shown that families depicted in textbooks tend to consist of married heterosexual parents with children. A similar conclusion was also drawn by Neto (2018: 600) who established that the average child count

is two in families depicted in textbooks. This typical western nuclear family structure with two heterosexual parents and two children was also present in the present study. Nonetheless, there were a few cases in the textbooks which diversified the family and relationship models, most of them being divorced parents and single parent families. As exemplified in section 4.2., there were two cases of polygamous relationships in the books which broke the heteronormative standards more radically. Yet, these cases, too, were inherently heterosexual and distal, and they were not further discussed within the texts. Furthermore, there were low-heteronormative constructions of families in the books, but in some cases, the visuals depicting them shifted these cases towards heteronormativity. Therefore, the findings of this study regarding family models depicted in the data were also in accordance with previous studies.

Gender issues were not a research focus in this study. Yet, the topic was touched upon in this thesis as well, because heteronormative discourse entails two binary divisions: relating to sexuality, it presumes a hierarchical dichotomy of heterosexuals and homosexuals, and regarding gender, it presumes that there are only two genders, men and women. Earlier studies have shown that a gender bias continues to prevail in textbooks in the stereotypical gender representations (see e.g. Blumberg 2007: 4). In the same vein, Neto (2018: 598) confirmed that genders continue to be presented through a binary model in textbooks, and that non-binary genders are rarely, if ever, apparent. In section 4.4., I discussed some cases from the textbooks in which gender norms were broken. Notwithstanding, these cases did not ultimately seem to contain representations of non-binary genders. Most of these cases depicted crossdressing females, and it is interesting that no similar examples of crossdressing males were found – the data is too small to make any conclusions, but it might be that the threshold for breaking gender norms is higher for male characters than for female characters. In any case, queer linguistic approaches problematize rigid categories because they create intergroup demarcations as well as intragroup regulation. This is to say, rigid binary-based gender roles do not only exclude those with non-binary gender identities, but they also reinforce narrow gender stereotypes that pertain to all learners. Therefore, deconstructing rigid gender binaries would benefit all students regardless of their gender identity.

5.2. Explanatory factors

Next, I will move on to the possible explaining factors behind the prevalence of low-heteronormativity, distinct position of heterosexuality, and lack of non-heteronormativity. To begin with, the prevalence of low-heteronormativity can be traced back to various reasons. In earlier

sections, I have already discussed the possibility that there was no similar criterion of explicitness for low-heteronormative cases as there were for heteronormative and non-heteronormative cases. Therefore, this category had potential to become the most prominent one, due to technicalities during the coding process. However, the challenge with this category was that it encompassed precisely the neutral, vague cases and the side mentions which reveal little explicit information, which is why I could not construct a similar criterion of explicitness about it, as with the other two categories. Low-heteronormativity often lies at the conjunction of heteronormativity and non-heteronormativity, where information is either not available or it is conflicting. Encapsulating that non-specificity with more stringent criteria is a challenge that some other researcher could have solved otherwise, for example, by distinguishing neutral, unclear, and conflicting cases as separate categories, instead of incorporating them under the same category. In the present study, making as fine-tuned distinctions was not seen as meaningful, but it might be one possible way to conduct future studies of heteronormativity within textbooks.

Nonetheless, the low-heteronormative strategies regarding word choices, family and relationship models, and portrayals of affection and attraction were rather often singular mentions which disclosed little information from which to make inferences. Because language textbooks contain plenty of characters and their interaction in order to model communicative skills, relationship and family models are commonly apparent also indirectly. These side mentions of families and relationships added considerably to the number of low-heteronormative cases. Hence, I argue that the dominance of low-heteronormative cases holds true despite the critique concerning the categorization.

Yet, even if the outwardly neutral, low-heteronormative cases predominate, it could be argued that their prevalence is not enough to form a counterbalance to the distinguished position of heterosexuality and the lack of non-heteronormative cases. Even if explicitly heteronormative cases formed 37% of the total count of textual cases, 100% out of all cases which made sexuality explicit in some way were heterosexual.

There may be numerous reasons for why queer identities were not included in the textbooks. To begin with, the relevance of sexual identities in language learning might not be recognized by textbook producers. However, language learning is not an entity separated from the rest of the learners' lives. If sexual identities are demarcated as irrelevant in some areas of education, that will only serve to fortify the dominating heteronormative ideologies. If sexual diversity is demarcated to be relevant only in some areas of educational contexts, it does not serve deconstructing the stigma of deviancy so often attached to other than straight identities. What is

more, language learning often involves rehearsing such skills as disclosing information about oneself. If sexual identities are not seen as relevant, learners who identify as LGBTQ+ are excluded from participating in these kinds of tasks authentically. Nonetheless, it is possible that this relevance is not recognized by textbook producers. Moreover, perhaps language teachers have not realized the importance of it either, thus no emphatic demands to change the current practices have been made from their part. This lack of consideration of sexual identities in foreign language education creates a distance between it and the authentic life of the foreign language learners.

The one-sided depictions of sexuality might stem from perceptions according to which sexuality is irrelevant. However, it is possible that the matter continues to be perceived downrightly as taboo. As Sanders and Mathis' (2012: 3) argue, LGBTQ+ themes are still often considered a taboo in educational contexts. The conception of queer themes as adult topics is actually a part of heteronormative discourse, for it is similar to viewing queer topics as unsuitable, deviant, or harmful. Paiz (2018: 360) remarks that due to economic pressure, most textbook publishers prefer to maintain a rather conservative course in order to maximize the appeal to a variety of markets. There are competing products and publishing houses, and it might be seen as an unnecessary risk to take a visible stance towards LGBTQ+ inclusivity. It is in the financial interest of textbook publishers to be able to appeal to a large number of possible clients; therefore, it is sensible to choose a rather conservative approach to LGBTQ+ issues in order to avoid controversy. Regardless, silence about queer matters has serious implications. Being silent is undoubtedly one of the most common and powerful strategies of ideological construction; direct hostility often provokes protests and resistance, which can weaken the ideology. Silence, however, does not similarly arouse counteraction due to its lack of visibility. Heteronormativity is a pertinent example of this, for it is the ideology which maintains heterosexual normativity by regarding the rest of the sexuality spectrum as deviations and exceptions, thereby undermining their voices as the voices of the others.

Alternatively, the lack of representations of LGBTQ+ characters and topics might stem from the lack of knowledge instead of prejudiced attitudes. In order to be able to construct LGBTQ+ topics, themes, and characters the textbooks producers need to have actual knowledge of the diverse nature of sexual and gender identities. If the textbook copywriters and the other participants in the textbook formation process lack expertise about LGBTQ+ issues, they may experience lack of confidence about their ability to implement non-heteronormative identities. The fear of misrepresentation might prevent them from including these topics altogether, for silence is perhaps seen as a better alternative than accidentally insulting some groups and thereby causing damage to the product's image. Therefore, this insecurity deriving from the lack of knowledge

might explain the avoidance of queer topics. Because of the lack of LGBTQ+ representation in textbooks, constructing them would require plenty of work, for there are no ready-made models to follow. What is more, there would be several practical dilemmas to solve, regarding who gets to be represented, in what way, and to what extent.

What is more, perhaps the lack of knowledge is not the only resource lacking. Textbook content creators work within tight deadlines, and textbooks are often produced in a project-based style; hence, there might not be enough resources of time and energy for making the effort to work actively towards LGBTQ+ inclusion. For example, Tainio and Palmu (2011: 18), among others, concede that textbook creation is mostly project-based work with inflexible timetables, and in addition, the publishing companies' interest in matters of social justice vary. Flowerdew and Richardson (2017: 525) remark that the textbook formation process subjects the books to numerous screening and filtering processes, so there would be a need for a strong initiative and incentive to promote inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics through the whole process in order to change the status quo. If these matters are not perceived to be a priority by those in positions of power in the publishing company, the responsibility for including queer representations is left solely to the already busy textbook content producers. Therefore, even if the content creation team would possess skills and knowledge to produce authentic and timely LGBTQ+ representations, textbooks as finished products do not necessarily reflect the intended worldview the textbook makers hope to convey due busy schedules, rapid pace of work, and lack of support from management.

Finally, I will contemplate on the reasons behind the results of the visual analysis conducted in this study. In this respects, two key findings of this study were that visuals were quantitatively more heteronormative than the textual cases, and that images were influential in co-constructing the textbook discourse as heteronormative. However, it is possible that the causal relation also works the other way around. It is possible that the heteronormativity of visuals stems from their dependence on the textual content. Visuals in general are chosen on the basis of the text, that is to say, the visuals rarely are the topic of texts in themselves. Pictures are therefore dependent on the texts that they accompany. Since there are no texts about non-straight people and topics, this is possibly reflected on the visuals. Including non-heterosexual imagery just for the sake of them might be seen as a risk of being too political or biased by the textbook producers, therefore leading these visuals being left out.

Furthermore, perhaps such visuals are not available in the first place. It is possible, and even likely, that the dominance of heteronormative ideologies on a societal level prevent the development of illustrations with queer characters and imagery. Perhaps visuals with non-straight

couples or rainbow families are considered too deviant or radical to produce. Visuals in textbooks come from various sources; there are photographs, drawings, and comics, which usually are produced by different content creators. Because the visuals come from various sources, the textbook content creator team might have some power over the production of some visuals, whereas in other cases there might be less freedom to choose. For example, a hired illustrator can be asked to produce certain kind of characters and imagery, whereas some pictures might have to be chosen from a pool of stock photos and illustrations. Tracing the path through which visuals get produced and selected would be needed to make sound conclusions about the heteronormativity of textbook imagery, which was not realistic within the scope of the present study.

5.3. Limitations and advantages of the present study

In this subsection, I will discuss some of the limitations and advantages of the present study. The key weaknesses of this thesis were twofold: some related to the scope and methods of this study, and others were linked to the uncertainties relating to interpreting the results. I will first discuss the problem factors pertaining to the setup of the study, and the factors which complicate making inferences from the research findings will be discussed at the latter half of this subsection.

First and foremost, the amount of research data in this study was inadequate for making broad generalizations about the construction of heteronormativity in English as a Foreign Language textbooks. The selected textbooks represented only one publishing house, therefore, the findings could have been different if the textbooks would have been chosen from another publisher or if the data had been collected from textbooks from various publishers. Nine textbooks altogether were analyzed for this study, which means that the results have to be interpreted with caution. What is more, they represented secondary education textbooks, that is, for grades seven to nine, hence, the results do not necessarily apply to textbooks for other levels of education.

Nonetheless, the data set revealed consistent patterns in the way heteronormativity is present in EFL textbooks despite small sample size. The fact that the findings were consistent with earlier studies also reinforce its reliability. Moreover, this study could be argued to be meaningful despite its small scope due to the fact it partakes in the accumulation of criticism towards dominant heteronormative discourse. This was one of the objectives set for the present study, and because this goal was achieved, it could be argued that this study has filled its purpose.

Secondly, there were some issues regarding the coding process of the research data. I have already discussed some of the questions relating to the categorization process: the low-heteronormativity category had slightly different criteria than the other two categories, heteronormative and non-heteronormative. However, as I have already explained in section 5.2., I finally deemed the criteria for this category to be valid, since the category contained precisely the conflicting and unclear cases, hence, creating more exact criteria was not viable or meaningful.

Regardless, there were other complications regarding coding the data. Some cases were difficult to categorize, as they could have been categorized in more than one category, such as the two examples of polygamous relationships presented in section 4.2. These could have technically been categorized as either low- or non-heteronormative but were finally coded as the former due to the inherent heterosexuality that was present in them. Besides borderline cases, there were instances in which it was unclear whether they ought to be included in the analysis or not. For example, the cases which discussed friendships presented in section 4.3. could have been excluded in another study, but I interpreted them to reproduce heteronormative discourse, hence including them in the analysis.

Ambiguity is a rather typical challenge when examining and analyzing discourses, for category boundaries are often finally blurry and there are no definitive answers how the coding process should be executed. Classifying instances which contain a representation of sexuality are ultimately often based on impressions and no exact criteria can be contrived. Another researcher would likely make slightly differing delineations regarding coding the data. I aimed to solve this challenge by presenting the category criteria in a transparent manner, and to my mind, this was done in an adequate manner.

Yet, the issues relating to categorizing are repeated in the visual analysis. Despite my goal for objectivity, it is possible that my own biases and internalized heteronormative ideologies have affected the way I interpret the visuals. Some of the cases included in the heteronormative category were quite straightforward, such as a different-gender couple kissing. Nonetheless, others were less unambiguous, such as characters hugging, which is an act of affection seen both in romantic and platonic relationships. In unclear cases, text often offered help in interpreting the nature of the relationship, and because the texts were used as an aid to reveal the nature of the relationship or the gender of the characters in a partnership, the analysis did not need to rely on visuals alone in these cases. Yet, at times, the visuals were more loosely linked to the text. Therefore, it is possible that I interpreted visuals with different gender characters more readily as being romantically involved, and therefore classified them as heteronormative in those cases in

which there was little supplementing information available about the visuals. Determining whether characters are in a partnership or not without textual cues proved a challenge, because textbook visuals typically depict young people engaging in various activities and being physically close to each other. Hence, the boundaries between romantic and amicable relations are often blurred in the textbook imagery, and the risk of the analyzer's own biases affecting the interpretation of the visuals increase. Again, I aimed at solving this problem by articulating the category criteria clearly. In my opinion, I succeeded in doing that appropriately.

However, analyzing the visuals also posed another challenge relating to the visual identity markers. As for example Smestad (2018: 15) has noted, identifying marginalized sexual and gender identities is difficult based on visual cues only, because identities are not always outwardly apparent. To illustrate, straight-passing non-heterosexual relations are not visible on the surface. For example, the individuals in an outwardly heterosexual-appearing relationship might be bi-, pan-, or asexuals or trans or non-binary people. In the present study the choice to interpret straight-passing relationships as heterosexual was motivated by the prevalence of heteronormativity as a dominant ideology on a societal level. A degree of explicitness has been the guideline throughout the whole coding process in this study, and it was also applied in this case; only those cases which explicitly broke the heteronormative standards were counted as non-heteronormative. Interpreting the visuals as heterosexual instead of straight-passing was not purposeful for the analysis, for in that case none of the cases could have been coded in any of the categories.

Ultimately, the key weakness with the visual analysis was in a supplementary role in this study. This weakened the reliability of the results of the visual analysis, for the visuals were not treated with a similar precision as the textual cases due to the limited scope of the present study. The main focus of the visual analysis was on the ways images and texts co-constructed heteronormative discourse. A more in-depth study of English as a Foreign Language textbook visuals with a larger data set and a more precise focus on the visuals would be needed in order to gain accurate results. What is more, a study of the visuals which would take into account the visuals' production process would further obtaining a more holistic picture of the relation of textbooks visuals and heteronormative discourse. The scope of the present study did not allow a more stringent analysis process. Therefore, examining the heteronormativity of textbook visuals is one possible prong of future studies of heteronormative ideologies in language textbooks.

Finally, I move on to the factors which complicated interpreting the significance of this study on the level of institutional learning environments as entities. One crucial observation to make here is the fact that textbooks are not the only affordance in the classroom. The learners, the

teachers, and the school community are examples of typical affordances present in an educational context besides the learning materials. In this thesis, I justified examining English as a Foreign Language textbooks with various factors: teaching materials have maintained a central position in teaching (Tainio and Teräs, 2010: 10), the sociocultural level is always present in EFL textbooks (Paiz, 2015:78-79), and textbooks are potent in (de)constructing worldviews, lifestyles and identities as desirable or unwanted (Flowerdew and Richardson, 2017: 525). Notwithstanding, the learners, instructors, and the educational institution are all central in shaping the way textbooks become to be used and perceived. The impact of these surrounding affordances should be kept in mind because they affect considerably what practical effect the textbooks finally have.

To specify, there are two considerable factors which complicate drawing conclusions about the significance of this study: the reader response and the role of the instructors. Readers are never passive subjects or mere recipients of input. Instead, readers have the capacity to modify, challenge, or reject the messages within books, as Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 17) remark. Hence, the discourses in the EFL textbooks are not automatically left uncontested. Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 18) point out that texts in themselves do not have unique, determined meanings. Hence, the same text can be interpreted in a myriad of ways. The factors shaping reader responses can vary: readers' background knowledge, life experiences, and the surrounding environment steer them in their interpretative process. Then again, as argued by Morrish (as cited in Livia and Hall, 1997: 225), meaning is never solely dependent on the reader either. For example, teachers as authoritative figures are influential in how learning materials are handled in educational contexts. Teachers are ultimately responsible of what is the role of the textbooks, which tasks are given to the students, and which topics are discussed. Due to the instructor's role, the same textbook can become perceived in vastly different ways by learners. A teacher who initiates critical discussion of ideologies and normativity can utilize even highly heteronormative materials to create an inclusive learning environment. Hence, on top of the students themselves as a variable, there is the teacher variable. The way students and instructors co-construct the learning situation has an effect on the role and impact of the materials, which has to be taken into account when contemplating the results of the present study.

5.4. Queering EFL textbooks

In this final section, I will discuss some possibilities for deconstructing the heteronormative discourse in EFL textbooks and for diversifying the way sexual and gender identities are

constructed. I propose that queer pedagogy, which was introduced in section 2.4., can be applied in foreign language education to achieve these objectives. To briefly recapitulate, queer pedagogy is pedagogy informed by queer theory and it takes a critical stance towards heteronormativity within education (Neto, 2018: 591). Paiz (2019: 2) explains that, in practice, it aims at queering education, which is to say that it aims at promoting critical discussion about normativity regarding identities. Therefore, queer pedagogy does not only aim at advocating the right of marginalized groups, instead, its object is also to increase the understanding of the fluidity, overlap, and interaction of identities and the norms and values that are attached to them. However, the increased understanding of the diversity of identities will in successful cases is likely to lead to decreased discrimination as well. Hence, as Neto (2018: 591) argues, queer pedagogy strives for deconstructing strict binary identity models in educational contexts in order to create space for a more inclusive and respectful learning environment.

Regarding teaching materials, there are various ways to apply the principles of queer pedagogy. One of the most urgent ones would be to break the silence about queer identities that seem to characterize textbooks, confirmed by the results of the present study. The reason for including explicitly queer materials is not only to diversify identities represented in the learning materials for the sake of the non-straight learners. Instead, breaking the silence would be necessary to deconstruct the way LGBTQ+ topics continue to be treated as a taboo subject. This is important, as Sanders and Mathis (2012: 4) argue, because silence about non-straight identities is never neutral. The ignorance and denouncement of queer lives and identities conveys a message of them being a deviant identity and a taboo. As it has been discussed previously in this thesis, heteronormativity rarely manifests itself through direct homophobia. As Motschenbacher (2010: 10) remarks, heteronormativity is rarely direct hostility towards sexual and gender minorities, instead, it maintains its dominance by disregarding the voices of those groups as marginal, deviant, and invisible. Heteronormativity is a banal phenomenon, and it is precisely because of this it is so powerful and often difficult to detect, as argued by Baker (2008: 110). Moreover, textbooks in particular are often overlooked as vehicles for ideological construction, for they are in many cases seen as neutral, educational materials void of biases. Including queer content in the textbook discourse would create a counterbalance to the predominant heteronormativity and normalize representing the spectrum of sexual and gender identities as one human variable alongside ethnicity and gender in English as a Foreign Language textbooks.

More specifically, there are various ways through which the silence regarding queer identities within textbook discourses can be broken. In order to avoid the monosexuality that has

continued to prevail, queer topics, characters, and visuals ought to be included. Topics could consist of handling LGBTQ+ rights alongside other human rights such as women's rights, bringing up prominent queer figures and their achievements, and discussing sexuality as one part of the continuum of identities to give a few examples. Sanders and Mathis (2012: 2) argue that there is a variety of age- and classroom appropriate LGBTQ+ literature available for children and adolescents which could be utilized to break the normative practice. Queer characters could be included in the group of main characters that language textbooks typically have, or they could be included as minor characters, such as in the characters' families. There are various options for incorporating queer identities ranging from homo-, bi-, and pansexuality to asexuality. Additionally, non-binary genders and trans people ought to be considered, not to mention intersectional identities such as disabled queer characters. What is more, visuals can be used as an aid. For example, pictures of queer couples and rainbow families would incorporate queer identities in the discourse seamlessly.

Constructing queer identities does not have to be complicated or overemphasized. Putting too much emphasis on the queer identities as 'special' would only serve to construct it as an exception and as the other. What is more, discussing non-straight identities only in the context of discrimination and bullying would be harmful, for it would again mark being queer as a deviant trait. Incorporating queer identities should not be done in a dramatic manner; the object would be to normalize LGBTQ+ identities, not alienate them further. This means that a balance has to be found in between not overemphasizing the queerness of identities and hiding them. What is more, inserting queerness just for the sake of appealing to the audiences would be an act of conflict avoidance rather than an act of inclusion. As Van Dijk (1998: 127-132) explains, one means of ideological control and dominance is the surface acceptance of popular non-dominant ideologies in order to avoid conflicts. Ultimately, there are no undisputed answers to which amount of queer representation would be enough and how its representation should be executed. Undoubtedly, if and when queer representation will become incorporated in textbooks, controversies about who gets to be represented and to what extent will emerge. Then again, reconstructing the textbooks discourses ought to be started somewhere, and with experience, a balance can be found.

However, if LGBTQ+ materials are to be included, their quality has to be a priority. The presence of queer content within a discourse can be implemented successfully only if the execution is carried out in a suitable manner. Nonetheless, the question of what type of material would be of a sufficiently high quality is complicated and multifaceted. There are various types of materials that could be utilized; hence, defining a common set of criteria proves a challenge. Yet, some criteria can be determined. Sanders and Mathis (2012: 3) propose that the quality criterion for

classroom LGBTQ+ texts would be that the queer themes are so deeply entwined in them that a heteronormative reading is not even possible. When non-heterosexuality would be inherently present in the materials, it would be a natural and readily available topic to discuss in the learning event. If diverse sexual identities are merely implied in the materials, some educators might overlook them altogether. Avoiding queer topics reinforces the message of queer themes as undesirable, unsuitable, or a taboo, which is why explicitly queer materials would be useful when implementing queer pedagogy in foreign language learning. Aiming for superficial neutrality by being silent about all sexual identities would have little benefit, for that would merely bury the diversity of sexual identities under a sense of false equality. Heterosexuality presents one part of the sexuality spectrum; hence, its presence should not be concealed. Instead, it ought to be presented alongside the rest of the continuum. The key to understanding normativity is to diversify the representation, for avoidance does not equal to inclusion.

What is more, taking the context into account is another key to successfully incorporating queer identities into textbook discourse. There is no one-size-fits-all solution that would apply in all cases; the age and developmental phase of the learners has to be considered alongside cultural and religious factors, for example. Of course, here the role of the instructors becomes significant, for the way the teachers react to LGBTQ+ content has an impact on the overall atmosphere of the language classroom. If a teacher disparages queer content and identities in the classroom, the potentiality of the materials in deconstructing heteronormativity is diminished. On the other hand, also the learners might come from a background in which prejudices towards sexual and gender minorities are prevalent. In these cases context appropriateness becomes an essential pedagogical tool. For example, O'Mochain (2006: 51) reported of a case in which locally gathered narratives were successful in introducing queer perspectives to a classroom of cultural studies in a Japanese women's Christian college. Originally queer identities might have appeared as alien and distant to the learners who held religious beliefs which condemn non-heterosexuality, but the materials rendered queer people as something familiar through the way queer perspectives were presented through the viewpoint of local, relatable, mundane people. O'Mochain's study is evidence of how a queer perspective can be applied even in challenging educational environments when it is done contextually appropriate materials and methods which are chosen on the basis of the audience's needs.

Yet another key to succeeding in exercising queer pedagogy seems to lie precisely on the interaction of context, materials, and instructors' actions. It would be a crude overstatement to claim that queer content within EFL textbooks' discourse would alone suffice for creating a

dialogue about the hierarchical normativity of identities and to deconstruct it. Instead the tasks that are given to the learners are central. Sanders and Mathis (2012: 3) highlight the role of dialogue when it comes to LGBTQ+ texts. In order to provoke a dialogue which inspired reflection and empathy, the texts ought to be handled in an interactive manner so that the learners are given a chance to interact with them and to analyze the emotions and ideas they evoke. Hence, to achieve this, the role of the instructors is again crucial. A discussion about the text would help deciphering the thoughts, attitudes, and emotions evoked by the texts, as explained by Sanders and Mathis (2012: 4). What is more, tasks that encourage media literacy, communication, and empathetic positioning help the learners face and deconstruct the possible prejudices that they might have towards gender and sexual minorities. The tasks naturally have to be adjusted to the learners' stage of development and skills.

However, there are some obstacles to be tackled before queer pedagogies can be fully integrated within educational systems. To begin with, queer pedagogy is a marginal approach not known by many instructors. Marginalized gender and sexual identities have gained recognition during the previous decades also within educational institutions, but the responses and strategies for including them varies locally. As noted by Lehtonen (2015: 104), the diversity of sexuality and gender is rarely included in teacher education; therefore, many teachers continue to confuse sexual identity with sexual acts, and, hence, might consider queer issues as a taboo. In order to clarify the role of sexual identity as a meaningful part of the learners' life, allocating a part of subject teacher education to discussing diversity and relevancy of learners' sexual identity in learning might be necessary. What is more, it would be an opportunity create a safe space within teacher education for future teachers to discuss and possibly deconstruct their attitudes and beliefs regarding sexual and gender minorities.

Moreover, for many instructors, the importance of including a variety of identities might be forgotten or unrecognized in the midst of their hectic work. What is more, even if the instructor would be aware of the importance of including learning materials which hold various worldviews and present diverse identities, they might not know where to obtain such materials, and the limitations of time and energy might reduce the eagerness to search for those type of materials. Yet, solutions are available. For example, Paiz (2018: 360) notes that educators can utilize whatever materials are at hand to apply the lens of queer pedagogy. All kinds of materials can be used as a basis for identifying ideologies and for problematizing the hierarchies and norms assumed by them. In addition, Paiz (2018: 361) proposes that instructors could co-establish a databank of sorts which would contain locally relevant LGBTQ+ materials. This shared source of materials would be

beneficial for numerous reasons: it would compensate for the loss of time used to make and collect the materials, and the shared effort would ensure a plurality of localized perspectives. This would be a potential option, although the need arises for someone to take the role of administrator and motivate others to join this endeavor.

6. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I analyzed nine English as a Foreign Language textbooks for secondary school learners through a queer linguistics informed critical discourse analysis method inspired by Paiz (2015). In the analysis, my objective was to find out how heteronormative discourse is co-constructed in the interaction of texts and visuals within the textbook discourses. First, I identified cases in which heteronormative ideologies had potential to appear. Familial and romantic kinship terms, family and relationship models and portrayals of attraction and affection in between the characters proved to be the most central sources of data regarding the construction of heteronormativity. There were few cases which discussed romance and dating explicitly, which also provided intriguing insight into the construction of heteronormative discourse. These cases were then counted and coded into three categories: heteronormative, low-heteronormative, and non-heteronormative.

Sexual identities are a relatively novel research object in the field of textbook study; however, the results of the present study are in line with earlier research on gender and sexuality norms in textbooks which have proved the dominance of heteronormative views and the invisibility of LGBTQ+ issues worldwide. The findings of this study revealed that, in contrast to my initial hypothesis, the studied textbooks were not throughout heteronormative, instead, low-heteronormativity was the most common strategy in constructing representations of sexualities. However, when this finding was paired with the prominent levels of explicit heteronormativity and the predominant heteronormativity in the visuals, the general tone of the textbooks was ultimately rather heteronormative, because there were no explicit cases of non-heteronormativity. If, however, there had been non-heteronormative textual or visual cases in the studied materials, it would have formed a counterbalance to the explicitly heteronormative instances. Yet, since there were none, heterosexuality had a naturalized, hegemonic position in the textbook discourses, and the invisibility of queer identities in the textbooks constructed them as the marginal others. My research question was how the heteronormative discourse is constructed in EFL textbooks for secondary school learners in Finland. My answer to this question is that it is constructed through silence about other than non-heterosexual identities and through the construction of a monosexual world where heterosexuality is represented as the only sexual identity. Heterosexuality was not depicted as one variable of the sexuality spectrum, but instead, as the norm.

Current queer linguistics aims at identifying, revealing, and deconstructing hegemonic, binary-based discourses which promote dichotomous, hierarchical views of sexuality

and gender (Flowerdew and Richardson 2017: 389). The normalized position of heterosexuality and the marginalized position and erasure of other sexual identities cannot be challenged unless they are first recognized. By recognizing and naming ideologies they can not only be understood, but also criticized, challenged, and transformed. Taking part in the accumulation of criticism towards dominant heteronormative discourses of sexuality and gender fortifies critical discourses, thus increasing their potential for inflicting social change (Eckert and McConnell 2003: 53). This was one of the main motivations for the present study, too. Therefore, it could be argued that this study was meaningful, despite its limitations.

Because heteronormativity in Finnish textbooks have not been studied much, there are numerous possibilities for conducting future studies on the matter. For example, more large-scale studies would be needed in order to gain reliable and generalizable data. In Finland, a comparative study with textbooks from more than one publisher would offer intriguing and novel data on the varying degrees of heteronormative discourse within various Finnish EFL textbooks. Another possible prong of studies would be a more profound analysis of the role of visuals in constructing heteronormative discourse, for this matter was only touched upon in the present study. Additionally, yet another interesting object of research could be the study of both the sexuality and gender aspects of heteronormative ideologies within EFL textbooks. In the present study, the construction of gender through binary models was only touched upon. Whereas gender roles have been studied to some extent in EFL textbooks in Finland, approaching the topic from the point of view of heteronormative discourse and the gender binary might provide interesting and fresh insight into the matter.

What is more, in this research some attention was paid to during which National Core Curriculum of Basic Education they were published originally. However, in this study it was concluded that the results were inconsistent, and that the causality between NCBE and degree of heteronormativity in textbooks is unclear, because the sample size is inadequate. Therefore, researching the effect the NCBE has on the heteronormativity within EFL textbooks in more depth would be another interesting research topic. Additionally, a historical linguistics analysis of the changes in the degree of heteronormativity within EFL textbooks would provide an interesting insight into the development of the construction of sexual identities in textbooks. Moreover, it could possibly also illustrate the causal relation in between the NCBE and the heteronormativity within textbook discourses.

Critical thinking skills and the competence to identify and decipher ideologies are crucial abilities in the era of constant media exposure. Ideologically diverse environments

encourage critical thinking and media literacy, which are seen as essential also in the Finnish basic education. Yet, ideologically one-sided environments have the adverse effect, for they ossify what is seen as a norm and what are the acceptable and valid ways of being. Narrow societal roles are harmful for all, not just marginalized groups. Rigid categories set narrow social standards and fulfilling those standards can cause stress and inflict anxiety also in the members of the majority. Regarding identities, the amount of variability is endless. The diverse, fluid, and interactive net of genders, ethnicities, social classes, ableness, beliefs, and sexual identities cannot be contained by rigid, essentialist categories. Deconstructing the hierarchical and oppositional identity categorizations would make room for a more individual, authentic identity expression, and the emergence and rise of modern identity labels relating to gender and sexuality prove that this process is already taking place. While the acceptance of these identities has increased steadily, their visibility is yet to be seen within textbooks. Whereas breaking the patterns in how sexual identities are represented within EFL textbooks might be a challenge, there are tools and knowledge available which can contribute to taking the first steps. After all, queer matters cannot be demarcated to only certain marginal areas of society and education, because queer lives are not confined to only certain areas of life. Queer people are present everywhere, and individuals' authentic way of being should never be limited to the margins.

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