Gender representation in the Finnish EFL textbook series *On Track*

Aija Holopainen
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English philology
Department of Languages
University of Helsinki
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Tutkielman aiheena on sukupuoli ja seksuaalisuus Sanoma Pro Oy:n *On Track* -nimisessä lukion englannin oppikirjasarjassa. Oppikirjojen sisältö voi vaikuttaa opiskelijoiden ajattelutapoihin ja asenteisiin, minkä vuoksi eri sukupuolten ja seksuaaliryhmien tasa-arvo oppikirjoissa auttaa edistämään opiskelijoiden tasa-arvokasvatusta kouluissa. Oppikirjatutkimus antaa täten tärkeää tietoa eri sukupuolten ja esimerkiksi seksuaalivähemmistöjen näkyvyydestä kirjoissa, ja uudet tutkimukset uusista kirjasarjoista mahdollistavat sarjojen kehityksen seuraamisen.

Keskeinen tutkimusmetodi on diskurssianalyysi, ja tutkimuksessa käytetään sekä kvantitatiivisia että kvalitatiivisia menetelmiä. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, mitä sukupuolia on edustettuina sarjan teksteissä ja niiden kuvissa, mitä ystävyys- ja romanttisia/seksuaalisia suhteita tekstien henkilöiden välillä on sekä miten sukupuoli näkyy tekstien kielessä ja sisällössä. Aineisto koostuu *On Track* -sarjan seitsemästä ensimmäisestä oppikirjasta, ja se rajattiin kirjojen keskeisiin lukukappaleisiin. Myös lukukappaleiden äänitteitä hyödynnettiin analyysissä.

Tutkimuksen mukaan miespuolisten hahmojen lukumäärä teksteissä ja kuvissa on huomattavasti naispuolisten hahmojen lukumäärää suurempi. Naisten ja miesten lisäksi teksteissä ei esiinny muiden sukupuolten edustajia. Yleiset viittaukset esimerkiksi LGBT-yhteisöön tai samansukupuolisiin pareihin ovat luonteeltaan positiivisia ja tukea ilmaisevia, mutta konkreettisia LGBT-henkilöhahmoja ei ole juuri lainkaan. Sekä ystävyyssuhteissa että romanttisissa suhteissa naisten keskinäiset suhteet jäävät lukumääränsä puolesta taka-alalle miesten välisiin suhteisiin verrattuna.

Näiden tulosten perusteella voidaan sanoa, että *On Track* -sarjan osat 1–7 ovat lukukappaleidensa puolesta sekä jokseenkin miesvaltaisia että jokseenkin heteronormatiivisia, joskin esimerkiksi naisten asemaan ja seksuaalivähemmistöjen näkyvyyteen on selkeästi pyritty kiinnittämään huomiota nostamalla esille niihin liittyviä teemoja.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords Oppikirjatutkimus, EFL, sukupuoli, seksuaalisuus, LGBTQ+, diskurssianalyysi
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Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information

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1. Introduction

Gender, sexuality, and gender and sexual equality are significant matters in schools and other educational settings, and school textbooks can, for their part, affect their users' values and attitudes regarding these matters. The topic of this study is gender and sexuality in the *On Track* EFL textbook series for the Finnish upper secondary school. The focus of the analysis is on gender representation and relationships between characters of the same and characters of different genders. For example Motschenbacher (2011, p. 150) argues that examining gender without referring to sexual identity seems just as surreal as conceptualizing sexual identity without referring to gender. If we accept that gender and sexuality cannot be separated from each other (see e.g. Morrish & Sauntson, 2007), it seems fruitful to research gender and sexuality in relation to one another.

From the 1960s onwards, many studies from different countries have revealed the stereotypical portrayal of men and women in school textbooks; for example, in many cases female characters have appeared more rarely than male characters and had less active roles (Lahelma and Gordon, 1999, p. 100). It has been speculated that while blatant sexism may be absent from newer textbooks, even subtle forms of sexism can have a negative impact on students. Furthermore, for example in UK-produced ELT materials LGBT[1] inclusivity has not increased at a similar rate as the portrayal of women has improved (Gray, 2013, p. 42; Thornbury, 1999, p. 15), and the same can be said for the visibility of non-binary gender identities. The reason why researching gender representation in textbooks is important for the development of gender and sexual equality is that school textbooks may have an especially powerful impact on the attitudes and values of students. This is partly because many students are regularly exposed to their contents (Fairclough, 2003, p. 8), and partly because the attitudes textbooks convey seem to be authorised at an institutional level (Mills, 2008, p. 127). Gender stereotypes are harmful to both males and females, because often they are not in accordance with our own perceptions of ourselves (Mills, ibid.). As for the visibility of gender and sexual minorities, Gray's 2013 study indicates that the silencing of LGBT

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[1]In this study I generally use the acronym LGBTQ+, but for the sake of accuracy, when quoting or paraphrasing someone else's work I use the acronym they have used.

students or their feelings of invisibility caused by pervasive heteronormativity in ELT materials can have a negative impact on their language learning (p. 56-7).

The main theoretical approach employed in this thesis is a form of discourse analysis that includes both quantitative and qualitative elements. There are many previous MA theses about gender representation in textbooks from different Finnish universities, for example Piironen, 2004, Laakkonen, 2007, Ilvola, 2011, Saarikivi, 2012, Kujanpää, 2015, and Rapp, 2015. All of these (apart from Rapp, 2015) focus on the roles of men and women rather than gender and/or sexual minorities, and they all report at least some instances of stereotypical portrayals of men and women, as well as greater presence of male than female characters. In order to keep up with the development of gender representation in EFL textbooks, this study aims to find out whether similar patterns can also be found in a new series of English textbooks, and also whether there are more genders than just "male" and "female" represented. As for gender relations, the aim is to find out what relationships there are between characters[2] of the same gender and characters of different genders, mainly in terms of romantic relationships and friendships. Previous studies on gender relations have focused for example on heteronormativity and LGBT invisibility (e.g. Gray, 2013), or gender roles in spoken interaction (e.g. Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997).

My research questions are the following:

1. In the *On Track* series, how many male and female characters are there in the main text chapters and their visuals? Are any other genders represented?

2. How are different genders and gender roles explicitly commented on in the texts?

3. What instances of gendered language are there in the texts in terms of grammar and vocabulary?

4. What relationships are there between characters of the same sex and characters of different sexes?

The first seven *On Track* books were included in the analysis, and the data was limited to the main text chapters, their visuals and to some extent their audios. A major aspect of the quantitative part of the analysis was to count all the male and female characters in

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[2] In this study, the word "character" is used as an umbrella term to refer to fictional characters, real people who appear in the texts, and even some non-human beings or inanimate things that are gendered. An exception is made in section 5.6.1. that is specifically about authentic texts; in this section "character" does not refer to the authors of these texts.

the chapter texts and visuals, and some chapters were later chosen for further, qualitative analysis.

In this study, chapter 2 presents the theoretical background for the analysis, starting with discourse analysis and moving on to gender and sexism in language and gender equality in Finnish education and working life. Lastly, chapter 2 introduces some important aspects of textbook research. Chapter 3 presents the data, i.e. the *On Track* series, in the light of the course themes for the English subject as defined by the National Core Curriculum, and chapter 4 describes how the analysis was carried out in terms of all the data components. The quantitative and qualitative results are presented in chapter 5, after which the implications of the study are discussed in chapter 6. Finally, chapter 7 concludes the study and its results.

2. Background

The issues considered in this chapter are mainly in the fields of textbook research and gender studies, specifically gender and sexuality in language. I begin by introducing the quantitative and qualitative forms of discourse analysis used for studying the *On Track* series in this thesis, and move on notions that are central to the (linguistic) study of gender and sexuality, and describe the current situation in Finnish education and working life from a gender- and sexual equality point of view. I then turn to present previous research on textbooks and discuss the influence textbooks can potentially have on their users' conceptions of themselves and others.

2.1. Discourse analysis

This section introduces a form of discourse analysis that is the main theoretical approach employed in the analysis of the *On Track* series. Section 2.1.1. describes that definition of the term "discourse" that is used in this study, and goes on to address some methodological and terminological issues surrounding discourse analysis as a research method and to explicate the choice of methods and terminology used in this thesis. Section 2.1.2. introduces Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse analysis that include language analysis of a given text, analysis of discursive practices and analysis of social dimensions around a piece of text. The analysis of textbooks in this study takes account of all these three dimensions of analysis.

2.1.1. Discourse analysis vs. content analysis

Fairclough (1992, p. 3) states that the concept of "discourse" is a difficult one to define, largely because there are a great number of conflicting and overlapping definitions that have been formulated from various standpoints. In linguistics, "discourse" has been used to refer to spoken as opposed to written language, but more commonly, it is used to refer to "extended samples of either spoken or written language" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). According to Fairclough (1992, p. 3), this definition of "discourse" stresses interaction between "speaker and addressee or between writer and reader". Additionally, the term "discourse" is used for specific types of language used in

different social situations, for example "classroom discourse" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). Furthermore, Fairclough (1999, p. 4) points out that a common practice in linguistics is to use the word "text" to refer to any written or spoken product. However, in this study the word "text" is also used to refer specifically to the text parts of *On Track* chapters, as opposed to for example chapter visuals.

I will now turn to the relationship between "discourse analysis" and "content analysis" that as research methods are often used alongside one another, and that seem to overlap rather easily as far as terminology goes. According to Jones, Kitetu and Sunderland (1997, p. 470), current literary theory emphasises that different readers will respond to a given text in different ways. Therefore, mere content analysis has major limitations when analysing textbooks, because it does not allow for different interpretations of a text (Jones, Kitetu, Sunderland, 1997, p. 471; Mills, 1995, p. 14-15). For example Weber (1990, p. 9) defines content analysis as a research method that employs a set of procedures to make credible inferences from text, and these inferences are about the message itself, the sender(s) or the audience of the message. Mills (1995, p. 15) states, "although content analysis is important...it needs to take place alongside, and not instead of, analysis of the language of a text in the context of its production and reception process". Therefore, in order to take account of the wider context around the textbooks being studied, in this study I employ discourse analysis as the main theoretical approach. I do not apply any specific, pre-existing framework within discourse analysis to my data, but rather use methods that I found suitable for researching gender representation in the *On Track* series in particular. Furthermore, while both Mills (1995) and Jones et al. (1997) acknowledge the usefulness of content analysis alongside discourse analysis, in this study I only refer to the concept of discourse analysis, since it can include both quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative part is what perhaps comes close to content analysis, so the elements of content analysis are not absent from this study – rather, this is a choice of terminology. In this study I employ a range of perspectives, both close and detailed ones and larger-scale ones. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion about where content analysis ends and discourse analysis begins I only use the term "discourse analysis", which covers both the quantitative and qualitative methods of the study.

2.1.2. Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse analysis

Drawing on Van Dijk, Fairclough (2004, p. 2) states that there are many versions of discourse analysis, but one important division is between approaches that include detailed analysis of texts, and ones that do not. This study does include some detailed analysis of text that is carried out selectively when it is essential for detecting gendered patterns in the texts. Further, Fairclough employs a three-dimensional concept of discourse and discourse analysis, which means that any instance of discourse "is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice" (1992, p. 4). The text dimension involves language analysis of a given text, while the discursive dimension deals with text production and interpretation, e.g. what types of discourse can be detected and how they are intertwined. For instance, textbooks are produced in specific ways that differ from how for example letters between friends are produced, and consumed in specific ways according to their specific social contexts. Furthermore, it is worth noting that especially the social practice dimension that attends to issues like institutional circumstances that surround a discursive event can be approached in different ways when studying language textbooks. For example, if a text that is being studied in the classroom is a fictional interview, the dimension of social practice could involve the school where in reality the text is being read, but it could also be the fictional, institutional context of the interview *in the story*. Additionally, with regard to the topic of this study, it could refer to some of the norms that govern gendered discourse. In order to form an in-depth understanding of the texts chosen for the qualitative part of the study, it is important to consider these different dimensions of discourse to the degree it is possible when just looking at the textbooks themselves.

2.2. Gender and sexism in language

The purpose of this section is to consider gender, sexuality and sexism as topics of linguistic research in general and in relation to textbooks in particular. The following sections define some concepts that are essential to the topic of this thesis, such as "sex", "gender", "heteronormativity", "gender binarism", and gender as performative. After this, section 2.2.5. addresses some current challenges related to researching gender and sexism in language.

2.2.1. "Gender" vs. "sex"

When discussing gender representation, it is important to note the distinction between two key concepts: "sex" and "gender". Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 10) define sex as a biological categorization that is primarily based on reproductive potential, and gender as "the social elaboration of biological sex". They argue that besides building on biological sex, gender exaggerates biological difference. Furthermore, the biological categories of male and female sex are also social in nature, because sex assignment is largely based on cultural beliefs about what makes a person male or female. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 11) write that many individuals do not fit the dichotomous male and female prototypes that biology offers us, and they may be subjected to "surgical and/or endocrinal manipulations" in order to make their bodies better conform to either the male or the female category. Also for example Motschenbacher (2011, p. 156) writes that genital surgery is often used to make bodies that are "not clearly gender-distinct" to fit one of these two categories. So, it is important to note that while "gender" is defined as a socio-cultural concept and "sex" as a biological one, "sex" as a biological concept is far from straightforward; sex cannot be separated from social and cultural beliefs, as they have a major impact on sex assignment and our understanding of what makes someone a man or a woman.

2.2.2. Gender as a performance

I will now turn to address the concept of gender as *performative.* According to Eckert and McGonnell-Ginet (2003, p. 10), gender is not something we have or are born with, but "something we *do*". Butler (2004, p. 1) writes that gender is "a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint", and it is not performed alone, but in relation to other people. In order to critically evaluate gender representation, it is important to acknowledge the performative nature of gender. So, my viewpoint in this study is that gender is (at least to some extent) something we *learn*, not something that is *essential* to us. If gender was seen as something essential, this study would look at whether men and women in the textbooks are presented as they *are* in reality – a viewpoint that could allow gender stereotypes and inequalities to be put down to natural differences. Rather, this study looks at whether men and women are represented equally in quantitative terms and whether the discourse around gender promotes the breaking of traditional gender norms.

2.2.3. Gender binarism vs. non-binarism

Sex assignment at birth to either "male" or "female", especially through surgical procedures, has a strong link to the concept of gender binarism (the belief that there are only two sexes: male and female), which is another essential concept when studying gender representation. Motschenbacher (2011, p. 156) argues that the concept of only two sexes, male and female, is so established in Western societies that it has become a natural fact according to public opinion.

A point of interest when studying gender representation in textbooks is whether the books play into the idea of gender binarism by only including male and female characters. Additionally, a somewhat noteworthy aspect of this is how prominent the role of gender in the *On Track* series is in general, for example how often the reader is made aware of the genders of the major characters for example through the use of gendered pronouns. If there are many characters whose gender is not known to the reader, this leaves open the possibility that these characters are neither male nor female. Nonetheless, to break norms of binary thinking, it is not sufficient to have characters that *could potentially* be non-binary. To bring visibility to non-binary identities, we also need characters that actually *are* non-binary so that the reader knows it.

Finally, Motschenbacher (2011, p. 157) brings up an important linguistic consideration relating to non-binary identities: most of the time identities outside gender norms are still conceptually based on discursive structures that *are* binary in terms of gender. He points out that concepts like *intersexuality*, "between the two", or *transsexuality*, "from one to the other", "compare the respective identities to normative gender binarism and therefore lose some of their subversive edge" (2011, p. 157). Due to the lack of terms that totally evade binarism, in this study I use terms such as *transgender*, but it is important to note their linguistic bias towards the established binary frame. Another term used in this thesis is *cisgender* that refers to a person who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth.

2.2.4. Heternormativity

According to Jones (2016, p. 211), the concept of heteronormativity refers to the cultural expectation that people both conform to the gender order (i.e. gendered roles and the hierarchy of these roles), and naturally desire the "opposite" sex. So,

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heteronormativity cannot be separated from ideas of "femininity" and "masculinity", as it includes gender-based expectations about what roles individuals should take up and how they should behave. Therefore, the term "heteronormative" has two essential meanings, one being the cultural dominance of heterosexual identities and the marginalization of non-heterosexual identities, and the other being the way (heterosexual) men and women are expected to be and behave. Similarly, the term "non-heteronormative" can have two different readings: "*non-hetero*normative", which means all sexualities apart from heterosexualities, or "*non*-hetero*normative*", which means non-normative heterosexualities (Motschenbacher, 2011, p. 152, italics original).

In this study, the concept of heteronormativity is essential in two different ways: on the one hand it is part of the research subject, gender representation, i.e. this study aims to determine whether the *On Track* series represents gender in ways that can be characterised as heteronormative in either of the two ways described above. On the other hand, the avoidance of heteronormativity when conducting the study is a methodological and ideological issue, because in order to gain a profound understanding of gender representation in this textbook series, one cannot overlook sexualities and gender identities that deviate from the normative gender order. For example Motschenbacher (2011, p. 150) and Morrish and Sauntson (2007, p. 13) argue that gender and sexuality cannot credibly be separated from each other, and Morrish and Sauntson's analysis demonstrates how "sexuality, as a form of social identity, is linguistically constructed through coded references to forms of gendered behaviour" (2007, p. 14). So, researching sexuality in the textbooks is an important aspect of researching gender representation, and in order to promote sexual and gender equality, this study aims to avoid heteronormative biases.

2.2.5. Gender as a topic of linguistic research

Finally, I will discuss a couple of selected issues regarding gender and sexism as topics of linguistic research. One issue is the difficulty of identifying indirect sexism. In her book Mills (2008, pp. 11-2, 34) talks about overt and indirect sexism, overt sexism meaning for example utterances that could, in their contexts, be interpreted as blatantly sexist, and indirect sexism meaning "that sexism which is masked by humour and irony and is consequently quite difficult to classify as sexism" (p. 34). Also, Mills (2008, p. 21) suggests "overt sexism has been 'driven underground' and that other more subtle forms of expression which are equally pernicious and discriminatory have been used

instead". So, indirect sexism can be hard to detect, as it can be very subtle and take on many different forms. For example, Mills (2008, pp. 145-6) uses the phrase "Have you women finished gossiping?" as an example of indirect sexism based on presupposition. The phrase includes a number of presuppositions, such as that women gossip more than men or that women's conversation is trivial. Furthermore, the way the question is formulated demands a "yes" or "no" answer, which is problematic for those who wish to question the presuppositions, and which makes the sexism more difficult to challenge. If utterances that would not be sexist in one context but are in another appear in textbooks, it is left to the researcher to consider the context and style of these utterances in order to determine what they say about gender roles, and often this is by no means an easy task. In order to take this context into account, qualitative methods besides quantitative ones are essential, as they allow a researcher to view utterances in the light of their various textual contexts and the context of the classroom, and to thus determine whether they carry for example sexist undertones or not.

Another issue is the relationship between a "localized" and a "generalized" approaches to sexism. Mills (2008, p. 22), who uses Third Wave Feminism as her theoretical position remarks that Second Wave feminism generally focuses on the language of women as a group, a group that is subordinated, while Third Wave feminism challenges the idea of women being a homogenous group, and focuses on localized studies instead. However, she also states that her approach "allows for an analysis which is both localised, i.e. analysing how gender is addressed/oriented to/ constructed within a particular context/text, and generalised, i.e. analyzing the general and fairly regular patterns of production and interpretation of discourses" (2008, p. 140). An important issue to consider when analysing a textbook series is how to take account of the *local,* the individual context of each utterance and each text, while at the same time grouping the findings under some general categories and drawing conclusions about them. Lähdesmäki (2004, pp. 539-40) states that Finnish EFL materials are, to a great extent, designed from the point of view of an "ordinary" Finnish teenager, and that the English language textbooks used in Finnish schools are almost exclusively from Finnish publishers. One could say this creates a context that can be referred to when analysing Finnish textbooks, a context which findings can be related to. However, the texts and other content included in the textbooks can still be from various different sources, and one must be careful not to erase these various contexts when grouping items under general categories.

2.3. Gender equality in Finnish education and working life

When assessing the influence of textbooks on students' conceptions of gender and sexuality, it is important to look into the actual educational choices students have gone on to make after lower or upper secondary school. On the one hand, identifying gendered divisions in further education and working life allows us to better recognize the issues that schools and textbook creators need to address in order to contribute to gender equality in working life. On the other hand, identifying these divisions helps back up the assertion that what students are exposed to in the school world *matters,* because we are not only talking about consequences learning materials (among other factors) could potentially have, we are talking about consequences that are more or less the reality we are currently living. Section 2.3.1. introduces some statistics of further education and career in Finland, while section 2.3.2. presents the role of gender in the new National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools in order to highlight the legal demand for Finnish schools to promote gender and sexual equality.

2.3.1. Influence of gender on educational and career choices

In Finnish educational institutions that students can enter after lower secondary school, the gender division into different fields seems to a great extent to conform to gender stereotypes such as women being more nurturing than men, or men being more technology-oriented than women. For example in 2014, 88,5% of students in the health care and social services education were women, while 84% of students in technical studies were men. Also for example studies in education, humanities and arts, service industries, and commercial and societal fields were clearly female dominated, while studies in the natural sciences, agriculture and forestry were clearly male-dominated (Tilastokeskus, 2016, p. 23, section 2.3). Since these statistics only represent two genders, male and female, and some individuals who are "officially" male or female have a gender identity that lies outside of these two categories or is the other one of these two than the one they were assigned at birth, these statistics are not fully reliable. Even so, the numbers show such a clear gender-based division it cannot be ignored. Also the 2014 statistic of the most common professions for men and women in the work force shows that for example health care and service industries are female dominated, while for example technical industries, natural sciences and the construction industry are male dominated (Tilastokeskus, 2016, p. 49, section 3.16).

The statistics presented above indicate that stereotypes and established, old-fashioned ideas of gender roles are not harmless, and they can have an effect on the choices young people make regarding their education, as there is no biological reason why for example women would be better at a cleaning job than men. Obviously, this is not to say that for example women who want to work in health care should not do so, or that men who want to be construction workers ought to do something "norm-breaking" instead. Rather, the harmful effect of gender stereotypes is the narrowing of individuals' conceptions of what jobs are suitable for them. While there are many different factors that affect the choice of further education for young people, the school system can do what is in its power to promote equal opportunities and an equal range of educational possibilities for all genders by exposing the students to materials that present different genders in a wide range of different (professional and other) roles.

2.3.2. National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools

Besides other ethical and educational demands, Finnish upper secondary schools have a legal obligation to plan and carry out their teaching according to the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools. The curriculum was updated in 2015, and enforced on August 1st, 2016 (Opetushallitus, 2015, p. 3). The document states that the basis of general upper secondary education is a respect for life, human rights and human dignity, and that the education promotes equality, well-being and democracy (Opetushallitus, 2015, p. 12). It also states that upper secondary school encourages students to consider possibilities for societal development both in Finland and abroad (Opetushallitus, 2015, p. 13).

While the concepts of human rights and equality entail the concept of gender equality, its importance is made more explicit further on in the document; it is stated that as to choosing study methods and instructing the students in class, attention should be paid to recognizing and changing gendered attitudes and practices (Opetushallitus, 2015, p. 14). Regarding the general aims of general upper secondary education, one goal is to strengthen the students' identities, as well as their understanding and appreciation of their personal uniqueness. It is then asserted that understanding the diversity of sex/gender (Finnish *sukupuoli*) and sexual orientation creates conditions for well-informed teaching about gender and equality (Opetushallitus, 2015, p. 35). This is not an explicit directive, but a call for educators to check their views on gender. In the curriculum's instructions for the teaching of foreign languages, including English, it is

said that in language studies gender equality is to be reinforced by encouraging students to be open-minded and by covering a wide range of different topics in teaching.

What is noteworthy about these guidelines is that they do not address the equality between "men" and "women" but "genders", without defining any number of different genders. Neither do they make it clear what is meant by "the diversity of sex/gender" (see above) – it can refer to the non-binary nature of sex and gender, but it can also refer to qualities or behaviour that cross traditional gender boundaries. Therefore, while the curriculum clearly calls for gender equality, it gives teachers and other educators quite a lot of leeway in covering gender issues in teaching. Furthermore, no requirements concerning specifically the content of textbooks or other learning materials are stated. For example in the UK, guidelines for producing content that avoids gender bias were created in the 1980s and accepted by the British ELT Publishers Association, and consequently by individual publishers and organizations (Gray, 2010, p. 113). In Finland, however, the content of textbooks is not regulated or checked on any official level (see e.g. Kalmbach, 2012; Kähkönen, 2017; Myllykoski, 2013).

2.4. Textbook research

Since the object of research in this study is a textbook series, it is important to consider the relevance of textbooks as a mediator of gendered beliefs and attitudes. Section 2.4.1. addresses the influential position textbooks have due to their institutional status and their long-term presence in the lives of students, while section 2.4.2. considers the relevance of textbooks in teaching as compared to other influential factors, and addresses some issues related to the study of textbooks.

2.4.1. Previous studies on gender and sexuality in EFL textbooks

Lähdesmäki (2004, p. 540) states that gender stereotypes and the role of women in English textbooks have been the topic of textbook research particularly often, and that the study of gender in textbooks has a long-standing tradition. These analyses often used to concentrate on the thematic content of textbooks, but later on also linguistic analyses became more numerous (ibid.). For example Michel (1986, pp. 31-3) introduces several studies from different countries that found blatant gender stereotypes

in English textbooks. Lahelma and Gordon (1999, p. 100) also state that from the 1960s onwards, studies from different countries reveal the stereotypical portrayal of men and women in textbooks; for example, female characters appeared more rarely than male characters, and they were more rarely depicted in active roles. According to Sunderland et al. (2000, p. 252-3), in the 70s, 80s and 90s many foreign language textbooks were found to be blatantly sexist, while the textbooks of the day (2000) could be quite equal in their portrayals of men and women because of changing attitudes and values regarding gender. Referring to Sunderland et al.'s study, Lähdesmäki (2004, p. 542) echoes their view that blatant stereotypes can hardly be found in modern textbooks.

However, at least in Finland, many previous MA theses about gender in EFL and other language textbooks (e.g. Piironen, 2004, Laakkonen, 2007, Ilvola, 2011, Saarikivi, 2012, Kujanpää, 2015, Rapp, 2015) report both stereotypical portrayals of men and women, and greater presence of male than female characters, and many of these studies are even newer than the textbooks Sunderland et al. and Lähdesmäki refer to. Similar results have also been found in Finnish textbooks of other school subjects (see e.g. Tainio & Teräs, 2010). Of course, one should note that the studies conducted by Sunderland et al. are not set in Finland, and that Lähdesmäki is referring to *blatant* stereotypes rather than subtle ones. In this thesis, one aim is to find out whether the new *On Track* series (2015–) also conveys gender stereotypes like many of the older Finnish-produced series in EFL and other subjects have done.

While for example the portrayal of women in UK-produced ELT materials has notably improved, LGBT inclusivity has not increased at a similar rate (Gray, 2013, p. 42; Thornbury, 1999, p. 15). Gray (2013, pp. 60-1) argues that while discussion and research on LGBT issues has increased in a way that can no longer be ignored by commercial ELT, "LGBT invisibility and pervasive heteronormativity remain entrenched in mainstream ELT materials, largely because of commercial considerations and the refusal to segment markets". In Finland, previous studies conducted on gender in ELT materials seem to focus on gender stereotypes and equality between (heterosexual) men and women rather than LGBT representation in particular (see the MA theses listed above), but there are many studies on LGBT visibility regarding Finnish learning materials used in other school subjects. Tainio and Teräs (2010, p. 11) mention several studies that found Finnish textbooks for example in biology, Finnish language, religion, psychology, ethics studies, health education and social studies to be heteronormative. Also for example Lehtonen's study (2003, p. 65-71) brings out LGBT youth's experiences of inadequate or problematic teaching about LGBT issues in classes

that include sex education in Finland. Additionally, Lehtonen (2003, p. 71-7) introduces studies that found heteronormative portrayals of gender and sexuality in the teaching and teaching materials of other school subjects besides ones that explicitly include sex education.

Furthermore, according to Gray (2013, pp. 52-6) references to LGBT individuals that *are* present in textbooks are often problematic for different reasons, including framing the discussion in a way that implies homosexuality to be potentially negative or taboo, which restricts the points of view students are likely to bring up in their discussion. Also, Gray (2013, p. 56) points out how a gay couple in one of the textbooks he studied is presented as "good gays" (Richardson, cited in Gray, 2013, p. 56) who lead comfortable middle-class lives they have chosen for themselves, and are without problems fully accepted by their local community. Richardson (2004, p. 407) writes about so-called "equal rights" approaches, where the concepts of "equality" and "normalcy" are "defined in terms of sameness with heteronormative mainstream values and practices", such as family values and marriage. According to Richardson and Seidman (2002, p. 8), these approaches have become dominant in lesbian and gay politics, especially in the USA, but also in Europe. Richardson and Seidman (2002, p. 9) state, "The move is towards making lesbian and gay sexualities respectable, rather than making being anti-gay immoral or unrespectable". Besides being ideologically problematic in this way, "equal rights" approaches are not necessarily effective in combating homophobic attitudes. Richardson (2004, p. 394) argues that while these "integrationist strategies" have often been successful regarding social and legal recognition of for instance parenting rights or domestic partnerships, discrimination, hostility and marginalization of gay and lesbian people continues, and any progress that has taken place has been slow.

2.4.2. Influence of textbooks on students' attitudes

This section addresses the effect textbooks can have on the students' way of thinking and acting. When discussing the social effects of texts, Fairclough (2004 p. 8) argues that most immediately texts can affect our beliefs, attitudes and values, and in addition they can have longer-term causal effects. For example, one might argue that prolonged exposure to advertising contributes to moulding one's identity as a consumer, or one's gender identity. Similarly, if students are exposed to repeated patterns of gender roles in textbooks, these patterns might affect the development of their identities. However, as

Fairclough (ibid.) remarks, it is not "a simple mechanical causality", because we cannot assume a text to automatically cause a change in someone's thinking or behaviour.

Nonetheless, for example Cameron (1998, cited in Mills, 2008, p. 17) argues that the "gatekeepers" of language, for example newspapers and dictionary compilers, need to accept a reform for it to be effective, because the reform cannot be effective unless those who are in influential positions promote it. Also, Mills (2008, p. 127) remarks that "--stereotypes are often authorised, in some sense, through being mediated by the media and thus they have an impact on us; they are not simply someone else's personal opinion of us but they appear to be affirmed at an institutional level". As for heteronormativity, Gray's 2013 study indicates that the silencing of LGBT students or their feeling of invisibility caused by pervasive heteronormativity in ELT materials can have a negative impact on the language learning of LGBT students (pp. 56-7). As textbooks are compiled by the so-called "gatekeepers" of language, and are widely used in education, they have an official status that may increase their influence on students. So, textbooks may influence the students' thinking, but how much does the textbooks' influence weigh as compared to other materials or other influential factors? This question is addressed in the following section about the role of the textbook in the classroom.

2.4.3. Textbook in the classroom and as an object of research

Lähdesmäki (2004, p. 532) states that textbooks are still in a central position in our culture, and this statement is still more or less true today, even though many teachers also actively use other materials besides textbooks. However, according to Lähdesmäki (2004, p. 548), many researchers who have studied textbooks think that besides or instead of merely examining a textbook, one should research how the textbook is used in the classroom. Also Lahelma and Gordon (1999, p. 100) note that textbooks are only part of the materials used in the classroom. They also remark that even though the curriculum, the teaching materials and the teacher all play a role, the students themselves are also actively involved in creating and defining the relationships between genders in the everyday life of the school.

In addition, Harwood (2014, p. 2) argues that it is important to study textbooks on three different levels: content (what textbooks include and exclude), consumption (how textbooks are used in the classroom), and production (how textbooks are created and distributed). Harwood (ibid.) also remarks: "Although content analysis is excellent

at determining what is present or absent in textbooks, it is much less good at determining why this content looks the way it does."[3]

I acknowledge this limitation that comes with only looking at the content of textbooks, but on the other hand, knowing why the content is the way it is does not generally make a difference for the textbooks' users, because they only see the content, not the reasoning behind it. Furthermore, for example Littlejohn (1998, p. 191) discusses the difference between analysing materials in use and materials in themselves; drawing on Candlin and Breen, Littlejohn suggests that analysing the materials themselves is about analysing "those predesigned tasks which are offered to teachers and learners as a 'frame' for learning and teaching opportunities". Also, many teachers do rely heavily on textbooks, so it is worth looking into what kind of framework they provide. For example Lähdesmäki mentions Pitkänen-Huhta's doctoral dissertation about the use of textbooks in the English classroom; Pitkänen-Huhta found in her study that textbooks played a very central role in English teaching in a Finnish school (ibid.) Also, in his study Harwood (2014, p. 13) characterises many teachers as "curriculum-transmitters" who stick strictly to the textbook in their teaching. So, due to textbooks' central role in the classroom it is important to look into the framework they provide for many English teachers. As to how the content can be analysed, for example Michel (1986, pp. 49-54) introduces an extensive checklist for the identification of sexism in textbooks. This checklist consists of three major areas that in turn consist of various different factors: "quantitative analysis of content", "qualitative analysis of content", and "analysis of sexism inherent in the language". I am not going to follow Michel's checklist in a detailed manner, but will pay attention to all these three major categories of analysis, as this study will include both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the texts, as well as an analysis of linguistic factors.

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[3] The term "content analysis" as it is used by Harwood here refers to the analysing of the textbooks themselves, as opposed to for example observing their use in the classroom or interviewing publishers. Therefore, the difference between "content analysis" and "discourse analysis" in this context is less relevant than in the context described in section 2.1.1.

3. Data

This section introduces *On Track*, the textbook series being studied, and goes on to present the specific parts of the textbooks that were included in the analysis: Key texts and Read on texts in the case of *On Track 1–6*, the main text chapters in the case of *On Track 7*, chapter visuals, and to some extent the chapter audios.[4] In addition, the seven *On Track* books analysed in this thesis are further described in terms of their specific themes and goals, as outlined by the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education (2015, enforced 2016).

3.1. On Track -textbook series

On Track by Sanoma Pro Oy (Daffue-Karsten, Davies, Kae, Myller, Rantanen & Vuorinen, 2015–2017) is a textbook series for studying English in upper secondary school. Sanoma Pro is a Finnish educational publisher, with its headquarters located in Helsinki. Therefore, *On Track* is designed for students in Finnish upper secondary schools. In this study, the first seven *On Track* books were included in the analysis, while *On Track 8* that was not published until November 2017 was excluded.

I will now turn to describe the structure of *On Track 1–6*, and then move on to *On Track 7*, the structure of which somewhat differs from that of the first six books. *On Track 1–6* consist of four "units", and each of these units consists of four "topics". The first two topics of each unit contain two Key texts, the third topic contains vocabulary that is related to the theme of the unit, and the fourth topic contains a Read on text that is meant to be read more quickly than the Key texts. Besides the texts and vocabularies, each topic includes various written and spoken exercises. Additionally, there is a Precourse section before and a Grammar on track section after the four units. There are

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[4] In this thesis, the term "chapter" is used to refer to the entities being analyzed, e.g. a given Key text including its text parts, visuals and audio. While e.g. "Key text" or "Text 1" may in the textbooks themselves refer to what I mean by "chapter", in this study it is clearer to use "chapter" rather than "text" when referring to an entity of text, visuals and audio, because the word "text" is used to refer to the text parts in particular, e.g. as opposed to the visuals.

no separate workbooks. Besides the printed versions of the books, the textbooks can be found online on Sanoma Pro's websites, where there are also exercises for students and material for teachers. The online books only differ slightly from their printed versions, and there is a symbol (an octopus) that tells students when they can go online for some more information or examples.

On Track 7 differs from the preceding six books in terms of its structure. Units 1–3 include four topics each, and in each unit the first three topics include texts and related exercises, while the fourth topic includes a theme vocabulary and exercises. Instead of Key texts and Read on texts, there are simply "texts", for example Text 2, Text 3 etc. Besides these three units that include the main text chapters, there is Unit 4 that is called "Final exam focus" and it is designed to help students prepare for the matriculation examination in the English subject. Like in *On Track 1–6*, there is also a Precourse section and a Grammar on track section. In the case of *On Track 7*, only texts in the first three units were included in the analysis, because the fourth unit is designed for a very specific purpose, and differs from all the other units in terms of its structure and content.

3.2. Main text chapters and their audios and visuals

In this study all the Key texts, Read on texts, and in the case of *On Track 7*, the main text chapters that had any references to gender in the text parts or chapter visuals were included in the analysis. The theme vocabularies and exercises were left out, because the main purpose of these is to support the understanding of the ideas, cultural knowledge and vocabulary introduced by the main chapters. Therefore the key elements for analysing gender are in these chapters. Also the online exercises were excluded from the analysis, because they are mainly for practising grammar and vocabulary that appear in the main chapters. Where the printed textbooks differ from the online versions, the additional online material was included when it appeared as part of a main text chapter.

Male and female audio voices were also taken into consideration, because students generally listen to textbook chapters besides reading them, and hearing a male or a female voice can leave an impression of a character being male or female, if their gender does not become apparent in the text itself. One could argue that a male or a female voice does not necessarily indicate a male or a female character, because anyone could read out loud anyone else's story. However, the chapters seem to feature male and

female voices according to gender where the gender of a given character is known (with the exception of short direct quotations immersed in the text), which is why it is reasonable to assume that gendered voices are meant to assign genders to characters in general. In the analysis of chapter visuals, I included all the images that are part of the main chapters; also ones that appear on the chapter vocabulary pages, as they illustrate the stories the chapter vocabularies are for. I excluded all other images, for example ones that appear alongside exercises, because I did not include exercises in my analysis. This way, the analysed images can be viewed with regard to the context in which they appear.

3.3. Course themes

To give a general idea of the central themes in each *On Track* textbook, this section introduces the courses *On Track 1–7* are designed for. As Sanoma Pro is a Finnish publisher and the series is for Finnish upper secondary schools, each textbook is designed to support the learning goals of a particular course as they are described by the National Core Curriculum (2015). *On Track 1–7* are meant for the first seven English courses in upper secondary school, officially abbreviated ENA1–ENA7, so that for example *On Track 1* is for ENA1, *On Track 2* for ENA2 etc. Generally speaking, students in ENA courses have started studying English in primary school.

The first six courses, ENA1–6 are national obligatory courses, while ENA7 is the first of the two national optional courses (the other one being ENA8 that is not considered in this study). The course descriptions below are mostly based on the National Core Curriculum (2015), but also some of the *On Track* textbook or course descriptions on Sanoma Pro's website have been used. The descriptions below are not complete descriptions of the courses, and they focus on course themes and topics like sports, nature or arts rather than specific language learning goals, because those goals are not as relevant for the purposes of this study.

ENA1

ENA1 is the first of the six national obligatory courses, and central themes in the course are English as a global language and different varieties of the English language, and language skills as a means to increase one's cultural competence. The texts and other material in *On Track 1* have to do with studying and other aspects of a young person's

life (Opetushallitus, National Core Curriculum, 2015, p. 110). The themes of the first course have to do with everyday life and spoken communication is emphasised (Sanoma Pro Oy, 2016).

ENA2

ENA2 includes themes that have to do with relationships and one's psychological, physical and social wellbeing, as well as the significance of technology and digitalisation for communication and wellbeing (National Core Curriculum, 2015, p. 110). Besides these, the texts in *On Track 2* are about free time, sports, intercultural communication, and social media (Sanoma Pro Oy, 2016).

ENA3

Important themes in the third obligatory course are different cultural phenomena, English-language media and creative activities (National Core Curriculum, 2015, p. 110). More specifically, central topics in *On Track 3* are for example music, cinema, photography, visual arts, literature, and fashion. Some topics are looked at from a historical perspective, some in the context of the present day and also future scenarios are included (Sanoma Pro Oy, 2016).

ENA4

ENA4 is about different societal phenomena from the point of view of active citizenship, and individuals' and communities' responsibilities and possibilities to affect for example human rights issues and different societal issues (National Core Curriculum, 2015, p. 110).

ENA5

The central themes in ENA5 come from different scientific fields and disciplines. The course examines the role of the English language as a global language of science and technology, as different visions of the future are contemplated especially from the points of view of technology and digitalisation (National Core Curriculum, 2015, p. 111). In *On Track 5*, the central topics are about the relationships between nature,

humans and technology, and the curiosity and inventiveness of humans are illustrated through different examples (Sanoma Pro Oy, 2016).

ENA6

The last obligatory course is about further studies or career plans and working life, also in an international context. Other important themes are economic issues that are relevant for a young person who is becoming independent and entering working life, and also broader economic phenomena (National Core Curriculum, 2015, p. 111).

ENA7

ENA7, the first national optional course, continues with some themes of the mandatory courses, taking account of a way of life that is ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable. Also the students' interests and needs are taken into account (National Core Curriculum, 2015, p. 111). The *On Track 7* book description names specifically nature, the environment and a sustainable way of life as central themes in this course (Sanoma Pro Oy, 2016).

4. Methods

This section describes how the analysis was carried out in terms of the different data components introduced in section 3 above: the main texts and their visuals, and some of the audios. I begin by explaining the need for both quantitative and qualitative methods in this study, and move on to describe how the texts in *On Track 1–7* were categorised in order to apply appropriate forms of analysis to different types of texts. I then describe how gender was analysed in authentic texts and dialogues, and then move on to how male and female (and possibly other) characters were counted in the texts and their visuals. I then address the role of the chapter audios for the analysis, and move on to describe the way relationships between characters, mainly romantic relationships and friendships, were accounted for. Finally, I recount the way a further qualitative analysis was carried out on two selected chapters that are specifically about professional women.

4.1. Quantitative and qualitative methods

My research method is discourse analysis, and I use both quantitative and qualitative types of analysis. The purpose of the quantitative part of the analysis is to form an idea about whether different genders (male and female) are represented equally, whether any other genders are included, and what romantic relationships and friendships there are between characters in terms of gender and sexuality. Another aim is to see how the numbers of male and female characters are linked to the themes of the textbooks and individual texts; in one textbook male and female characters may appear about equally often, and in another the difference in numbers might be very notable. So, quantitative analysis serves to give an overall picture of gender balance in the *On Track* series, and also to break it down thematically.

However, a quantitative analysis can only give limited insight into gender in the textbooks, because it does not give much information about the roles of the characters, for example the way they talk and are talked about or whether they are major or minor characters. Furthermore, there are other factors that affect how the textbooks' view on gender should be seen. For example, in a text about superheroes (*On Track 3*, pp. 91-4), most of the characters are male, but the gender imbalance is made quite explicit in the

text, which draws attention to how male superheroes' roles are more varied for example in movies and on TV than those of female superheroes. The quantitative part of the analysis does not take account of factors like this, which is why a qualitative analysis is needed to give further insight into the texts. In this study, many sections of the analysis include both quantitative and qualitative elements, and the quantitative ones often (but not always) act as a basis for some further qualitative comments.

4.2. Categorising the texts by text type

Due to the variety of different texts in the textbooks I decided that in order to employ meaningful criteria of analysis to the texts I needed to consider the different text types and analyse the texts accordingly. For example, different things are noteworthy when analysing a dialogue than when analysing a 1st person narrative, and trying to analyse them by the same criteria can easily lead to oversimplifying the findings in order to fit them into the same categories, which in turn can lead to artificial conclusions. Therefore, the next stage of my analysis was to divide the texts into categories that are presented further on in section 5.6. It is important to note that there are many possible ways of classifying texts, and the one used in this thesis is based on the research questions and aims of the study. Also, many of the texts include elements of different text types, and the categories chosen for this study may overlap. The purpose of the categories is not to have an exhaustive listing of all the text types found, but to aid the analysing of gender according to criteria that take account of the differences between the texts in order to get more reliable results. Also, not all the categories were extensively analysed, but classifying all the texts into different categories was necessary to form an idea of the texts and to choose suitable ones for further analysis.

While some chapters were chosen for further qualitative analysis as individual texts based on their specific content, more extensive and systematic analyses were carried out with regard to two major text categories, authentic texts with credited sources, and dialogues. All the chapters classified into these two categories were analysed according to criteria that were deemed suitable for analysing authentic texts and dialogues, respectively. Section 4.3. below outlines how these analyses were carried out, starting with authentic texts and moving on to dialogues.

4.3. Authentic texts and dialogues

When categorising all the chapters by text type, the chapters that were identified as authentic texts were ones with credited sources, e.g. a novel extract, newspaper article, blog extract or poem, and had an authentic text as the main body of the chapter. Very short extracts that appeared as a quotation or just a minor part of a chapter were mostly ignored when categorising the chapters, and excluded from the analysis of authentic texts. For example Tomlinson defines an authentic text that is used in language teaching as one that has not been written for teaching purposes, but it may have been "simplified to facilitate communication" (2012, p. 162). In this analysis the authentic texts were further categorised as fictional stories, non-fictional stories, and poems. The reason why they were classified into these three categories is that for example a passage from a fictional novel and a factual text about technological developments are notably different in nature, and therefore analysing these separately can give more reliable information about gender and authorship. After categorising the texts, the numbers of male and female authors on the one hand and male and female characters on the other were analysed quantitatively, taking account of whether the numbers of male and female characters somehow correlated with the genders of the authors.

In the dialogue analysis, only texts that consist *mainly* of dialogue were included. For example novel passages with some dialogue among the narratives were excluded, because the narratives give additional insight into the characters, which makes looking at the dialogue passages alone, as well as comparing them to the actual dialogues, less reliable. Interviews are obviously different in nature from e.g. a conversation between friends, but even interviews were included if their structure was fairly loose and they were fairly conversational, or if there were several interviewees who could be compared with one another in terms of who appears most often and whose turns take the longest. The framework used for the quantitative part of this dialogue analysis was adapted from Jones, Kitetu and Sunderland's (1997) framework for analysing dialogues, and this framework is further described in section 5.6.2 in connection with the results. Besides analysing the dialogues quantitatively, I made some qualitative remarks about the dialogues where they were particularly relevant.

4.4. Analysing gender in the texts and their visuals

Altogether 90 chapters were included in the analysis of texts and their visuals. Even if a chapter included different kinds of sections, it was counted as one text, unless it had clearly separated, titled sub-sections. For example, there are two chapters that both consist of two different poems, and five chapters that include two or three separately titled sub-sections each. These entities were counted as two or three chapters instead of just one. Three texts were altogether excluded because there are no references to gender in either the text parts or the visuals. Of the 90 included chapters, three have no gendered characters or references to gender in the text parts, but there are gendered characters in the visuals. Vice versa, there are 19 chapters with no gendered characters in the visuals, but some references to gender in the texts. However, all the chapters with some references to gender in either the visuals or the text parts were included in the analyses of both the visuals and the texts. Looking into all the somehow gendered chapters in both parts of the analysis allows one to consider the relationship between texts and their visuals, for example when gendered references in the texts are represented in the visuals, and when they are not. Furthermore, 1st person narrators were counted as "male" or "female" based on their voices, if their genders did not become apparent from anything else.

4.4.1. Gendered characters and other references to gender in the texts

After limiting my data to the main chapters in each textbook, I read all these chapters and counted the number of male and female characters. My purpose was to classify each character as a main or a supportive character (according to Michel, 1989), but this turned out not to be an ideal approach for categorising the characters in *On Track*, because the texts are so varied in terms of their text types, and these categories are not applicable to many of the texts. Therefore the characters were only categorised according to gender, and some characters were further analysed in other parts of the analysis. After this initial count, I went through the texts and their characters once more to check that I had applied the same criteria to all the different texts when counting the characters. Furthermore, another criterion I considered important for the analysis was whether the characters that appear in the texts are fictional or non-fictional, because it shows whether real, existing people, for example celebrities, are represented equally in terms of gender. However, finding out whether the characters are fictional or not turned

out to be complicated, because in some texts they certainly seem to be representing real, existing people, yet the source is not mentioned and I could not find any information on them when searching online. I sent Sanoma Pro a query about the sources of the chapters, and they told me that for the lack of time they could not send me a list of real and fictional characters, but they did provide me with the information that characters are either real existing people, fictional characters with references to real places, studies etc., or real people with pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of the people. Also, a text can be fictional, but based on the experiences of real people, who do not appear in the text. As far as it is possible to determine which one of these categories the characters belong to, the categories are made use of in the further analysis of some chapters, and specifically in the analysis of authentic texts. It would not be meaningful to attempt at classifying all the characters into these categories, because often there is no sure way to know the characters' origins. Since this is a study of representation, the characters' origins are not very relevant to many aspects of the analysis. However, upper secondary school textbooks also aim to acquaint students with real phenomena and real people. Therefore, knowing whether some characters are for example fictional or not can give some insight into whether the representation of (often well-known) people in various fields is balanced in terms of gender or not.

When reading the texts, I took notes on other ways gender is represented in the content of the texts besides gendered characters. I then categorised these findings under three main categories: personal pronouns (3rd person singular), e.g. instances of the so-called "generic he", gendered nouns and idioms, e.g. using "girl" vs. "woman" when referring to an adult, and explicit comments on gender or differences between genders. When it comes to the 3rd person singular form, it would not have been meaningful to attempt to list and analyse all of these pronouns, because throughout the series "he" is used to refer to a male character and "she" to a female character. Therefore, I only further analysed those instances of the 3rd person singular form where the gender of a given character is not known.

4.4.2. Counting male and female characters in the visuals

Analysing the visuals turned out to be complicated, because in several instances it was hard to decide which characters could be counted as either male or female; they could be for example too far in the background, blurred out, or behind other characters in big groups. Also, determining whether a character is male or female based on their looks

alone is problematic, but in this kind of visual analysis there is not much else to go by. Furthermore, what really matters is the idea an image evokes; it is reasonable to assume that when seeing an apparently female character, an average reader will register the character as female without thinking about it further. Also inanimate objects were counted as male or female if they were clearly gendered, for example some photos of statues or mannequins. Even though these are not real, living people, when seeing for example a clearly "female" mannequin one associates it with "femaleness", women, women's physique or women's clothing.

A further issue with images of large groups is that they can distort the results. For example, one text about Finnish baseball included two images of baseball teams: one men's team and one women's team (*On Track 2* pp. 54-5). I counted the players, and found there were about 19 surely recognisable players in the photo of a men's team, and 14 in the photo of a women's team. So, there are five more male than female players, but in the context of the text this hardly seems significant. That both male and female teams are represented is much more telling than the fact that there happen to be five more players in the men's photo, especially since the women's photo is an action photo, which makes it hard to see all the players. Therefore, groups such as sports teams were counted as one character, as they represent an entity that all the individuals are part of.

Due to these challenges, the analysis of visuals might be less reliable as a quantitative analysis than quantitative analysis of the texts. In the end, whether a character can credibly be identified as a male or a female character is often a judgement call, which makes the analysis rather subjective. Therefore, the quantitative analysis of visuals can be thought of as indicative, which is why a deeper, qualitative analysis of some images in the context of their texts is called for.

4.5. Relationships between characters and LGBTQ+ visibility

To gain more information about gender representation in *On Track,* it is crucial to look at relationships between the characters. As stated in chapter 1 and section 2.2.4., gender and sexuality are inherently linked, and therefore analysing romantic relationships in the texts gives insight into both gender and sexuality in the series. Looking into romantic/sexual relationships and interest is especially relevant for studying LGBTQ+ representation and visibility. Besides romantic relationships, I wanted to look into

friendships in order to gain a better understanding of the nature of the relationships between the characters, and to see whether these friendships differ depending on their gender composition. For example parent–child and employer–employee relationships were excluded from this part of the analysis, as they are not up to one's choice in the same way romantic relationships and friendships are, but some aspects of these relationships may be relevant for other parts of the analysis. Furthermore, another aspect of character relationships that was taken into account was that of transitivity, i.e. "who does what to whom" in a given text (Mills, 2008, p. 69). Two especially suitable chapters were chosen for this quantitative part of the analysis.

In addition to counting concrete relationships, I also counted more abstract references to romantic/sexual relationships that were somehow gendered, for example references to sexual minorities in general. Gendered references to friendships were all concrete friendships, since abstract references to just "friends" are not marked in terms of gender, and there were no generic references for example to "girl friends" or "guy friends" (in a platonic sense). I analysed friendships and romantic/sexual relationships or references to them quantitatively by counting them in all the *On Track* texts included in the analysis, and by discussing the nature of these relationships using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Some of the relationships or references were also chosen for further qualitative inspection.

4.6. Further qualitative considerations

After carrying out the other parts of the analysis, I wanted to pay closer attention to two specific chapters that stood out in terms of their content. While many aspects of the analysis included both quantitative and qualitative elements, these two texts needed to be analysed separately in order to fully account for their take on gender. Both of these two chapters are about some well-known professional women, more specifically, female athletes (*On Track 2*, "Women in sport", pp. 66-8) and female inventors (*On Track 5*, "Mothers of invention", pp. 99-104), and these are the only chapters that are *explicitly dedicated* to either men, women or some other gender. Both chapters were qualitatively analysed in terms of their content as such and in the context of the other chapters in *On Track 2* and *On Track 5*, respectively. Attention was paid to issues like the tone of the texts (e.g. a critical/uncritical tone), explicit comments on gender roles or gender representation, the messages of the chapters and whether they are also conveyed in

other parts of the textbooks, and what other ideologies the chapters' views on gender could potentially be linked to.

5. Analysis

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative results of the study, starting with the numbers of male and female characters in the texts and visuals of the main chapters in *On Track 1–7*. After presenting these results, I move on to gendered expressions in the language and content of the chapters, and continue with friendships and romantic/sexual relationships between the characters. After this, I move on to gender minorities and gender in different types of texts, more specifically dialogues and authentic texts. Finally, I consider gender from a transitivity point of view in two selected chapters, and end with a qualitative analysis on two chapters that are about women and women's roles in specific fields.

5.1. Number of male and female characters in the texts

Altogether in the first seven *On Track* books there are 328 male and 178 female characters in the text parts of the main chapters – this is a highly significant difference in numbers, since there are almost twice as many male as female characters in the texts. There is only one character (as far as the reader knows) who is not a cisgender male or female, Chelsea Manning, and even she only appears as a brief mention. It would be unfair to claim that the textbook authors have a binary view of gender, since this idea is not suggested in the content of the texts. Rather, one could say that there is a lack of visibility – whatever the textbook authors think about gender, they did not take it upon themselves to address the diversity of gender, which may or may not have been a conscious decision.

5.1.1. Number of characters textbook by textbook

Besides the overall numbers of male and female characters (328 male and 178 female) in the texts, it is important to consider gender balance textbook by textbook. The textbooks are based on the course themes as defined by the National Core Curriculum (Opetushallitus, 2015, pp. 110-1), so it is interesting to see whether the ratio of male and female characters varies from one textbook to another, or whether it is roughly the

same. The numbers of characters by textbook are presented in Table 1 below. Note that only the texts are included in this table, not the number of characters in the visuals.

Table 1 Male and female characters in the main texts

	OT1	OT2	OT3	OT4	OT5	OT6	OT7	Total
Male	55	54	68	46	52	34	19	328
Female	48	18	44	24	21	11	12	178
Total	103	72	112	70	72	45	31	506

In all the seven textbooks, there is a greater number of male than female characters, but in some of the books the difference is more significant than in others. For example, course 5 (ENA5), is about science, and in *On Track 5* there are 51 male and only 21 female characters, partly because the majority of scientists from different fields that are mentioned in the Key texts and Read on texts are male. Also, for instance in *On Track 2*, there are many texts about sports, and most of the athletes mentioned are male. Interestingly, in both *On Track 5* and *On Track 2* there is one chapter that is dedicated to women in science and women in sports, respectively (in *On Track 5*, Key text, "Mothers of invention", and in *On Track 2*, Key text, "Women in sport"). So, attention is paid to bringing out women in these fields, but their role is left marginal, as it is somewhat limited to texts that are specifically about women. In quantitative terms, these results indicate women to be considerably underrepresented as compared to men, which may be harmful for upper secondary school education's goals for promoting gender equality.

5.2. Male and female characters in the visuals

In the visuals there are roughly 145 male and 125 female characters. The number of characters in each book is presented in Table 2 below. It is not surprising that since there are more men in the texts, there are also more men in the visuals, because often (but not always) the characters in the visuals represent the characters in the stories. However, the difference in numbers between male and female characters is much smaller in the visuals than in the texts, where there are altogether 328 male and 178 female characters. The numbers of both male and female characters in the visuals are the highest in *On Track 1* that focuses on different aspects of young people's lives, cross-cultural encounters and English as a global language. As the series progresses and

the students move on to higher levels, the texts become more factual, and they deal with subjects like natural phenomena and scientific inventions, and the visuals often portray for example animals or inanimate things, which usually makes them unmarked where gender is concerned.

Table 2 Male and female characters in the text visuals

	OT1	OT2	OT3	OT4	OT5	OT6	OT7	**Total**
Males	38	15	21	27	12	19	8	**140**
Females	36	17	30	16	15	7	4	**125**

What is worth noting is that the visuals of a single text can cause a significant increase in the number of either male or female characters in one book. For example, in *On Track 3* there are 21 male and 30 female characters in the text visuals, but 10 of these 30 female characters appear in the photos of a single text, or more specifically, a single sub-section of a text, about a fashion-designer called Alexander McQueen. Based on the photos of female mannequins and runway models, it appears McQueen perhaps only designs women's clothes. When the visuals of a text about some particular subject are heavily gendered, students may associate the subject as being mostly "male" or mostly "female". However, the fact that the designer is male (there is no photo of him) perhaps counter-effects the visuals, although someone might associate top designing as being male, or male and female, and modelling as being predominantly female.

5.3. Gender in the content of the texts

Besides analysing characters, it is important to study the contents and topics of the texts; some texts may seem to target one gender more than another, and in some texts explicit comments about gender and differences between genders are made. These can be presented for example as personal opinions, research results, or historical facts. No conceptions about whether there are other genders besides "male" and "female" are mentioned in any of the main chapters, and when talking about gender differences only "men" and "women" are brought up. As with the quantitative analysis of characters in the texts and visuals (see section 5.1. and 5.2.), this is most of all a matter of (in)visibility.

5.3.1. Personal pronouns

In the *On Track* texts in general, the singular pronouns "he" and "she" are used to refer to male and female individuals, respectively. In many texts there are plural forms such as "students" that are referred to with "they", and many of the texts address the reader with "you" or feature "you" as the so-called "generic" you. There are a few instances of the pronoun "he" that are more or less representative of the generic "he". One appears in a text about the graffiti artist Banksy whose identity is unknown, which is stated in the text, but Banksy is nevertheless referred to with "he" throughout the text (*On Track 3*, p. 55-7). Another instance appears in a Key text in *On Track 3* called "Laughter: a serious business" (pp. 65-8) about the South African stand-up comedian Trevor Noah. The following passage is an introduction to the main body of the text:

> A stand-up comedian? One of the hardest jobs in the entertainment business. Speaking directly to a live audience, armed with little more than a few anecdotes, jokes and one-liners, the stand-up is expected to have his listeners in stitches, night after night. It's a tough call. (p. 65)

The stand-up comedian that is referred to in this introductory passage is a generic one, and should therefore represent stand-up comedians of all genders or regardless of gender, but the pronoun "he" seems to suggest the occupation to be a male one. Since the following text is about Trevor Noah, a male stand-up comedian, it is possible that Noah's being the main character of the text affected the writers' decision to use a generic "he", as it is a male comedian who is at the centre of this particular story.

In *On Track 2* there is also an instance of "a racing driver" being referred to with "he", but in this passage the male dominance of this sports is made clear, so the pronoun here is not a generic "he" in quite the same sense as in the text about Trevor Noah. The text says:

> A racing driver (and they are almost exclusively male) competes individually, but he cannot race without the support of a team of specialists that look after his car at all times. It does not matter how good the driver is, if his team is slow at changing his tyres during a pit stop, for example, or if his car is simply slower than a rival's, he will not win the race. (p. 59)

Since it is explicitly stated that racing drivers are "almost exclusively male", one can understand the authors' decision to use the pronoun "he". However, this decision is not unproblematic, because using "he" after stating that racing drivers are generally male can be seen as erasing those female racing drivers who do exist.

Other noteworthy instances of generic pronouns are ones where these pronouns are used to refer to inanimate things or non-human things that have no biological sex. For example, in a text about the history of robots (*On Track 5*, pp. 26-30), a robot called Elektro is referred to with "he" (p. 26), but unlike in the case of Banksy, in Elektro's case it was not the writers' decision to *make* Elektro male regardless of Elektro's profile in reality, as Elektro is also referred to with "he" in various other contexts. Therefore, calling Elektro "he" is in accordance with other texts about Elektro in the sense that Elektro is a kind of *fictional male* character, albeit the robot as a physical being does exist. While two of the gendered robots presented in this text were previously assigned *male* in other contexts (Elektro, and a historical robot named "Stanley", p. 28), the term "tin men" (p. 26) is used in the chapter introduction, and is therefore the writers' choice. Furthermore, it is the writers' choice to only include gendered robots that are "male". There is also a factual text about well-known trees (*On Track 7*, pp. 116-22), where a tree known as "grandfather" is referred to with "it" (pp. 118-9), but a tree known as "the African Queen" is referred to with "she" and "her" (p. 120). I could not find many sources of information on either of these trees when searching online, but I only saw instances of "it" in the case of both trees. Not knowing the book authors' sources, it is hard to know whether their decision to call the "female" tree "she" and the "male" tree "it" is simply their decision or whether it somehow reflects the way these particular trees are referred to in some other contexts.

5.3.2. Nouns and idioms

In addition to pronouns, another major category of gendered language use is the way specific nouns or idioms are used in a way that is not neutral in terms of gender or gender roles. In the texts there are many gendered idioms or established expressions, such as "know from Adam" (*On Track 1*, p. 96), "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" (*On Track 2*, p. 23), "material girl" (*On Track 5*, p. 100), "Lady Luck" (*On Track 6*, p. 118) or "man up" (*On Track 7*, p. 34). In addition to these there are nouns like "manhole" (*On Track 1*, p. 106), "sportsmanship" (*On Track 2*, p. 80), "bogeymen" (*On Track 3*, p. 103), "a madman" (*On Track 5*, p. 46), "businessmen" (*On Track 6*, p. 92), "those guys", "we guys" (*On Track 1*, pp. 56-7, online material only), "good guys", "bad guys", "some of those guys" (*On Track 4*, p. 163). Unlike *On Track*'s idioms that include both feminine and masculine words, these expressions where a part of a gendered noun refers to "human" are exclusively male.

In some instances a generic masculine has been avoided, for example "humankind" (*On Track 5*, p. 13) instead of "mankind", but male generics are also used. Many of these appear in authentic texts, which means that the series creators did not make the choice of words in these cases, although they made the choice of which texts to include. Male generics do not necessarily teach students to *use* male generics, even though regular exposure to them may make them seem neutral. Furthermore, in one chapter there is a photo of the legs of a man sitting widely on a bench between two women, with the caption "Dude, stop the spread, please. It's a space issue" that clearly takes a stance against "manspreading", i.e. men dominating the physical space around them (*On Track 4*, p. 148).

Finally, there are some texts where the choice of nouns, "girl" vs. "woman", or "girl" vs. "boy" stands out as not being neutral. In a presumably fictional text called "Travel advice" (*On Track 2*, pp. 85-8), a hotel employee is called "the woman at the reception desk" by one customer (p. 86) and "the girl in reception" (p. 87) by another. Similarly, in a non-fictional text called "At what age can you be a hero?" (*On Track 4*, pp. 11-5) a female shop employee is called "the shop assistant" by the narrator and "a girl behind the counter" by the man being interviewed (p. 14). "Travel advice" was most likely written by the series creators, meaning that they chose to include two ways of referring to the employee at the reception. In "At what age can you be a hero?" the near-accidents presented are ones that happened in real life, so the choice of "the shop assistant" was the chapter writers' choice, while "a girl behind the counter" was a quotation from a real person (an older male, see e.g. Disley, 2015; Taylor, 2015). One could say that in this text at least "the shop assistant" is presented as an "appropriate" expression, since it is used by the most neutral voice in the chapter, the narrator's voice. These instances of "girl" are representative of a much-criticized tendency to diminutively call grown-up women "girls", but "girl" appearing in one text alongside "woman" or an occupational term can potentially draw a reader's attention to this issue and help raise discussion. Furthermore, one could claim that simply showcasing a phenomenon that actually exists does not mean embracing it, since many older students are very capable of noting and reflecting on this kind of differences. However, one could also argue that referring to an adult female character with "girl" alongside "woman" suggests that "girl" is an acceptable alternative to "woman".

While there are no examples of "man" vs. "boy" being used in a similar way as in the above cases, there is a literary extract where the nouns "girl" and "boy" are used in a way that unnecessarily differentiates between genders. In an extract from *Hard*

Times by Charles Dickens (*On Track 6*, pp. 47-9) a male school teacher asks "girl number twenty" to define the word "horse", and even after learning her name, the teacher still refers to her as "girl number twenty". After Sissy fails to define "horse", the teacher remarks that they should hear "some boy's definition of a horse", and unlike when addressing Sissy, the teacher calls the boy he chooses by his name, Bitzer (that he knows without asking). It seems completely unnecessary of the teacher to differentiate between Sissy and Bitzer as a girl and a boy, rather than two individual students. His way of acting seems so flagrantly old-fashioned that one might expect the following exercises to be designed to evoke some discussion around gender roles at the time, but only the following questions are presented: "Why do you think Sissy is unable to answer Mr Gradgrind's question?", "What is the overall message of the text?", and "Describe Mr Gradgrind, Sissy Jupe and Bitzer in a couple of sentences" (p. 50). When answering these questions, students might also make comments on gender, but the questions do not pay attention to gender in particular.

5.3.3. Comments on gender

In the seven *On Track* books there are some explicit comments on gender and gender roles. In *On Track 2* there is a text that summarises the results of a survey (real, with credited sources) about how young people in Britain spend their free time (pp. 11-3). According to the results, women tend to read more fiction while men tend to read more nonfiction, and women tend to go shopping more often than men (p. 12). In *On Track 4* in a text about cultural differences (pp. 135-8) a young woman called Grace remarks: "In my opinion, the difference in communication has more to do with gender. Women tend to describe things in much more detail than men" (p. 137). This particular text is presented as an extract from a doctoral dissertation, but I could not find this dissertation or this PhD student when searching online and there is no credited source, so most likely this chapter was written by *On Track* creators. Bringing up differences between men and women in these ways can be a way to raise discussion, depending once again on how the teacher chooses to deal with these chapters or whether students themselves pick up on the gendered remarks or not.

In *On Track 3* there is a text about different types of superheroes (pp. 91-4), where the only "female type" ("the warrior woman") is described in the following way: "Being a woman, she is often underestimated by the men around her, much to their cost" (p. 91). Another "type" of superhero is named "the lover" (e.g. James Bond), who

is "usually male...a risk-taker with a taste for adventure. Admires beautiful women, but is unable to commit to one person...his pursuit of women means he can be lured into danger by a femme fatale (another popular archetype)" (p. 92). Also, a type called "the mentor" is characterised in the following way: "Usually an older man with grey or white hair to signal his sagacity" (p. 93). In this text, the reader is deliberately made aware of gendered stereotypes in superhero stories. Furthermore, in a following discussion exercise there is a question, "Is there a lack of interesting roles for women in movies?" (p. 97). It is reasonable to claim that it is not explicit comments like the ones presented above that contribute to harmfully gendered attitudes where upper secondary school students are concerned, since they are most likely capable of discerning critical tones in the texts and distinguishing individual view points (such as Grace's comment above) from "facts". What is more harmful are gendered attitudes that are implicitly conveyed by texts, because it can be harder for students to pick up on those (see for example section 5.5.1. about female friendship in *On Track*).

In *On Track 3*, there is also a chapter about the history of body-sculpting clothes (pp. 158-60) where comments on gender can be seen as more problematic than the ones presented above. In a sub-section called "Women and the waist" it says:

> For women, body-sculpting clothes are old news. "Structured" leggings that "tame your tummy" anyone? The words, or the required shape, might be new, but the idea is the same: we wear certain clothes to give our bodies whatever shape is fashionable at the time. Of all the figure-shaping clothes through the ages, the hoop skirt remains one of the strangest...Women strapped those cage-like contraptions around their waists, draped metres of cloth over them, and, incredible as it may seem to us today, were keen to wear them on a daily basis. (p. 159)

What is noteworthy about this passage is that while the pressure women have faced through centuries to look a certain way is acknowledged, it is hardly problematized. It is simply stated that "*we* wear certain clothes to give *our* bodies" a fashionable shape. "We" seems to refer to women, but a reader might have a counter-reaction to this statement, as not all women strive to fill the "requirements" different media convey for the female body, and many women consciously oppose rigid beauty standards and the objectification of their bodies. Furthermore, to state that Victorian women "were keen" to wear hoop skirts on a daily basis simplifies the reasons these skirts were worn and puts the hoop skirt down as a woman's choice, rather than a larger societal issue.

5.4. Friendships and romantic relationships between characters

Besides looking into the romantic relationships/romantic interest in the textbooks I wanted to pay attention to friendships between the characters in order to get a more complete picture of the nature of relationships between different genders. The quantitative results of this part of the analysis are presented in Table 3 below. The reason I use the term "references" in the table is that not all of the instances of romantic interest are concrete relationships, but there can be for example a reference to "same-sex couples", (*On Track 1*, p. 130), or "the LGBT community" (*On Track 3*, p. 128).

Table 3 Heterosexual and homosexual romantic/sexual relationships and same-sex and mixed-sex friendships

References to heterosexual relationships	References to homosexual relationships (in general, e.g. "same-sex couples")	References to homosexual relationships (male-male)	References to homosexual relationships (female-female)	Male-female friendships (at least two people)	Male-male friendships (at least two people)	Female-female friendships (at least two people)
31	3	2	0	5	5	1

As Table 3 shows, the vast majority of references to romantic/sexual relationships are references to heterosexual relationships, and there are no references to homosexual relationships specifically between women. Also, there are more mixed-sex and male-male friendships than female-female friendships. Besides analysing these relationships quantitatively, a qualitative analysis is needed to give further insight into the nature of these relationships. I start by discussing friendships in section 5.4.1., and move on to heterosexual relationships in section 5.4.2. I then address references to sexual minorities in section 5.4.3.

5.4.1. Friendships

In the case of romantic relationships, both concrete relationships and more abstract references to relationships were counted, but in the case of friendships, only concrete, actual friendships between the characters were included in the analysis. This is because while there are abstract references to romantic relationships that are specifically to either hetero- or homosexual relationships, abstract references to "friends" are not

gendered at all. Similarly, non-gendered abstract references to romantic relationships were not included in the analysis, only the gendered ones.

What stands out in the results is the high visibility of romantic relationships as compared to friendships; as Table 3 above indicates, there are altogether 36 references to either hetero- or homosexual romantic relationships, and only 11 clearly identifiable friendships of some kind. Regarding the gendered patterns of the friendships, the low presence of female-female friendships stands out, since there is only one friendship between two or more females only. Mixed-sex and male-male friendships are better represented, as there are 5 friendships of the former type and 5 of the latter. Looking at both the romantic references and the friendships together, male characters and male relationships appear to be better represented than female ones. There are 2 references to male homosexual relationships or interest, while there are 0 such references to homosexual women in particular, and 5 of the 6 same-sex friendships are male.

Besides looking at the numbers, it is important to consider the quality of some of these friendships. The only female-female friendship is between two teenage girls, Emmi and Nina (*On Track 2*, pp. 134-6). Emmi describes the English language course they travelled to Brighton for, but the story mainly revolves around the boys they had crushes on during their time in Brighton. Even though the chapter ends with Emmi saying: "Anyway, high school had started, and I had a lot of other things on my mind", and Emmi remarking that she was not interested in keeping touch with her "holiday fling" (p. 136), these brief comments do not change the fact that the main body of the chapter is all about the boys they had met. One could claim that there is nothing wrong with this, because it is hardly inaccurate; many teenagers do talk about dating and relationships. Therefore, the problem is not that this kind of chapter is included in the series. The issue is more that this chapter is the *only* example of a female-female friendship, which gives undue emphasis to talk that revolves almost exclusively around males. Due to the lack of other kind of examples, one could say this seems to be "the face" of a female-female friendship.

In contrast, none of the male-male friendships revolve around romantic interest towards females (or males). The 5 male-male friendships occur in the contexts of business, getting to know another country through an online friend, "sports chatter between two men on a day out", and environmental activism. In addition, there are three male friends who are the group Emmi and Nina get to know in Brighton, and the reader only knows them from Emmi's perspective – the other 5 stories are told from the males' perspectives.

Regarding the five mixed-gender friendships, four of them are friendships between one male and one female. The fifth one is between Emmi, Nina and Francesco, the one of the three boys neither of them shows romantic interest in. Of these friendships, there are two more significant ones; the three others are only brief mentions or clearly in the background. For example Emmi and Nina's friendship with Francesco comes with their romantic and/or sexual interest in members of Francesco's group of friends. The two that are worth a closer look are between the fictional characters Mercer and May (*On Track 4*, "The Circle", pp. 178-181) and between the real Matt Groening and Lynda Barry (*On Track 1*, "People who change our lives", pp. 150-4).

Mercer and May are characters in a novel written by Dave Eggers (2013). They used to date, but remained friends after their separation. They argue about the role of social media in people's lives and the way people can be watched and controlled through online applications, for example by their employees. Mercer thinks that this control and the level of social media presence in people's lives has gone too far, while May thinks that Mercer is lagging behind and choosing to act against his own interests by not keeping up-to-date with the newest developments. They seem to be equal in their friendship, and equally engaged in the issue at hand, although their opinions differ.

The other significant mixed-gender friendship is between *The Simpsons* cartoonist Matt Groening, who was inspired in his career by his friend and fellow art student Lynda Barry. She could make a living by selling comic strips to newspapers, which inspired Groening to try the same, and this was "a decision that transformed his life" (*On Track 1*, p. 152). There are different ways to look at this kind of dynamics in a friendship. From a gender equality point of view, one could see it as somehow negative that the female role is to inspire the male, who then goes on to achieve a roaring success in his career. Alternatively, one could see the female role in a positive light, as she was the one who inspired the male to become what he is, and thus was in a position of power. Besides, Barry herself is an awarded artist, so this is not the case of a female friend who was left in the background. One could also say it is not about gender at all, but about one friend and colleague inspiring another. Looking at this friendship as an individual case, disregarding gender seems like a reasonable approach to take, but when looking at *representation,* Barry and Groening's relationship needs to be viewed in its context, which is a chapter about different celebrities and the people who inspired them in their careers (*On Track 1*, pp. 150-3). The gender division of these relationships is addressed briefly in section 5.7. about transitivity in the series.

5.4.2. Heterosexual relationships

Most of the heterosexual references are concrete couples, either fictional characters (e.g. Nina and Philippe in *On Track 4*, pp. 134-6) or real, existing people (e.g. Kanye West and Kim Kardashian in *On Track 1*, p. 84). However, there are also a few non-specific references, for example the phrase, "if a young man wanted to kiss his sweetheart", "sweetheart" being a woman in this context (*On Track 3*, p. 159), is not a reference to any specific couple, but Victorian couples in general. Also, in one chapter there is a short text about family diversity, where "two parents with children", in its context, obviously refers to heterosexual parents (see section 5.4.3. for a closer examination of this passage).

What is noteworthy about the male-female couples is that a heterosexual relationship does not necessarily indicate a heterosexual orientation. For example, one or both in an apparently heterosexual relationship may be bisexual. Also, some of the heterosexual marriages in the stories are arranged marriages (see e.g. *On Track 1*, pp. 139-41), and it is the "good match" (heterosexual, among other qualities) that weighs more than actual romantic and/or sexual interest. Due to the prevailing heteronormativity in our society, this may also be the case with marriages that are not arranged. However, to readers heterosexual relationships naturally appear to represent heterosexuality, or at least heteronormativity, which is why they are all relevant to this aspect of the analysis.

5.4.3. Sexual minorities

In order to understand the significance of the references to homosexuality, it is not enough to present them in numbers, but one needs to consider the nature of these references. While three out of 31 heterosexual references are more abstract, and 28 are references to specific couples or specific people, only two out of five homosexual references are specific rather than abstract, and both these two are references to gay men; there are no references to lesbian women specifically (neither abstract references nor concrete couples). Furthermore, neither of these two references is casual, but rather presents homosexuality as something that is taboo.

The two references to specific people are literary passages, one from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (*On Track 3*, pp. 47-50) from 1890, and the other from John Boyne's *The Absolutist* (*On Track 4*, pp. 84-7) that was published in 2011,

but set in the time of the First World War. When reading the passage from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, even without knowing more about the story, one could think Basil has feelings for Dorian, and in a spoken exercise following the text, the students are asked what they think Basil and Dorian's relationship is like (*On Track 3*, p. 51). In the passage from *The Absolutist,* the 1st person narrator, whose father threw him out for kissing another boy, returns home only to be rejected again (*On Track 4*, pp. 84-6). In a following discussion exercise, students are asked to think about whether the son would receive a different treatment from his father today than at the time the story takes place (p. 88). In both these passages homosexuality is either something that is not talked about, or something that is shameful and can even get one shunned by their own family. The above-mentioned discussion exercises do evoke some discussion about homosexuality and homophobia, which can allow students to express their points of view, but even so, homosexuality still comes across as something out of the ordinary. It is not naturalised for example by casually including homosexual couples whose sexuality is just a part of the stories, not something that they are hiding or a source of problems in their lives. On the other hand, one could argue that it would be both false and counterproductive for sexual equality to pretend homosexual couples do not face prejudice and discrimination heterosexual couples do not.

If we consider these two extracts from this point of view, a problem that remains is that these extracts do not effectively address the inequalities of today (although links between the past and the present day can be drawn), as their events take place more than a hundred years ago. As for the authors of these texts, both Oscar Wilde and John Boyne were/are homosexual, and while the fact Wilde went to prison for being homosexual comes up in a listening exercise preceding the chapter (*On Track 3*, p. 46), Boyne's sexuality is not mentioned in any way. Apart from the Wilde listening exercise, homosexuality is not dealt with explicitly, but it is important to note that a lot depends on how the teacher chooses to deal with these texts – it is in the teacher's power to evoke more discussion if they wish to do so.

Furthermore, the other, more abstract references to homosexuality seem to express support for sexual minorities. For example, in a text about online shaming (*On Track 4*, pp. 148-153), a blogger called Jen (supposedly fictional) remarks, "Racists, chauvinists, homophobes and other bigots. They deserve all they get" (p. 150), and in another chapter ("Visions of the future", *On Track 3*, pp. 126-9) one of the characters says, "Think about the shift in attitudes to the LGBT community, for example. It's happening because of young people" (p. 128). Calling homophobes bigots and

presenting shifts in attitude to LGBT people as an accomplishment is a clear indication of support for the LGBT community. The words are put in the mouths of fictional characters, but as for example homophobic comments are absent (perhaps with the exception of the considerably older literary extracts discussed above), supportive arguments are ones the book creators seem to have wanted to come through to readers.

In addition, there is a chapter about different kinds of families in different countries (mentioned in section 5.4.2.) that deserves closer attention. The introductory passage to this chapter addresses shifts in attitudes towards what a "normal" or regular family consists of (*On Track 1*, p. 130). It says:

> While many families are made up of two parents with children, there are countless other types of families as well. Single-parent families, same-sex couples, a bewildering range of stepfamilies, foster families and jigsaw families [...]. While conservatives complain about the loss of the 'traditional family', many others celebrate the wonderful possibilities that the new normal family offers.

Based on this passage it seems clear that the series creators want to express support for different kinds of families, and to distance themselves from "conservatives" who root for the "traditional family". One can claim that expressing this kind of stance should, for its part, promote gender and sexual equality in the school world.

However, this passage is not entirely without issues when it comes to sexual equality. In this particular context one can assume "two parents" to refer to a heterosexual, cis-gender couple, because that is presumably how most of us would understand the "traditional nuclear family" this part of the passage is getting at. Nevertheless, "two parents with children" is being opposed to "same-sex couples", as if a same-sex couple could not be "two parents with children". Furthermore, since all the other family types listed end in "families", "same-sex *couples*" (italics added) stands out, at least in close reading. Potentially some readers could experience this as a dissociation of gay couples from families with children. Also, one could say the textbook creators comply with the "rules" of heteronormativity by using the phrase "two parents" to automatically mean heterosexual cis-parents, but one could also claim that the context makes it clear what "two parents" here means, and therefore the phrase does not need further explication. However we interpret these aspects of the passage, it does clearly express support for different families, and works against LGBT invisibility in textbooks.

A further issue with this text chapter is the lack of gender and sexual minorities in the three example families presented after the above-discussed introductory passage. The first one tells about the family of Dean, a young Australian who is adopted, and whose (apparently heterosexual) cis-parents both have children from previous marriages. The second story is that of a Japanese teen-girl Akiko, whose mother and father have separated and she lives with her mother. In the third story we learn about Rahul, a young Indian man who lives with his extended family. These three examples do present families that are not "traditional nuclear families", and also include some cultural comparison; for example Rahul points out many "Westerners" prejudice against arranged marriages (*On Track 1*, p. 139). However, none of these examples does anything to increase the visibility of LGBT families, since all the relationships and all the characters are apparently heterosexual. Same-sex couples are mentioned in the introductory passage, but are excluded from any concrete examples that follow, which weakens the point the introductory passage aims to make. Without interviewing the series creators, one can only speculate why this is the case. The reason may be commercial considerations (see section 2.4.1.), or other practical reasons, such as what kind of families the writers personally happen to know, in case they have chosen to derive the stories from those of real families (see section 4.4.1. about where the texts come from). Even the creators' decision to prioritize something else, for example cultural diversity, may be influential.

5.5. Gender minorities

Almost all the characters who appear in the texts are either male of female, and there are also some characters whose genders are not mentioned. As mentioned in section 2.2.3., an apparently male or female character is not necessarily either binary or cisgender, but for the representation and *visibility* of gender minorities there need to be characters who are in some way indicated to be e.g. transgender or non-binary. There is one non-fictional transgender character, Chelsea Manning, who is briefly mentioned in the Key text "Journalists: watchdogs of democracy" (*On Track 4*, p. 161-5). Her being transgender is not mentioned in any way, but it is likely that many or at least some upper secondary school students would know who she is in real life. Manning is only mentioned by name, and no pronouns or gendered nouns are used to refer to her: "The courage of these journalists, and of whistleblowers like Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange, was a source of encouragement and pride to everybody

out there." (p. 163). In a passage like this, it would seem highly irrelevant to mention that Manning is transgender, because this would give the impression that her gender identity was relevant to her choices regarding the disclosing of documents. This passage can be seen as an example of visibility not being a straightforward issue; in some instances, not mentioning a character's gender identity can be a hindrance for gender equality, as it can contribute to LGBTQ+ invisibility, while in some instances actively making sure a character's gender identity is known to the readers can also be counterproductive. Thus, when including LGBTQ+ characters in the texts, it is useful for authors to consider when making these characters' gender identities known to readers serves the increasing of LGBTQ+ visibility in a positive way, and when it puts undue emphasis on gender (or sexual) identity where it is not relevant to the topic at hand.

In the *On Track* series, gender minorities are hardly visible in terms of the actual characters, fictional or non-fictional, but in this particular instance just mentioning Manning by name, just like Snowden and Assange, serves to further gender equality rather than hinder it, because her gender identity is not treated as being any more relevant to her being a whistleblower than those of Snowden and Assange to them being whistleblowers. As for general references to gender minorities, there is the above-mentioned reference to "the LGBT community" (see section 5.4.3.), which refers to transgender identities besides lesbian, gay and bisexual identities, but other gender minorities such as non-binary identities are not included.

5.6. Gender in different types of texts

The types of texts found are presented in Table 4, and described further below. Note that the number of texts in the table is larger than the combined number of all the texts; this is because for example a Key text can consist of two clearly different parts, for instance one being an essay and one being an interview. In a case like this, the two significantly different parts of the text would be put into two different categories.

Table 4 The number of texts in each text type category

Authentic texts	Stories	Essays	Dialogues/interviews	Other	Total
26	22	28	8 (+1 in Authentic texts)	12	96

Authentic texts are either fictional or nonfictional texts or extracts, often from classic novels, short stories or bestsellers, newspaper articles, poems, or even blogs. Most if not all of these would also be in the category of "Stories", but I wanted to separate authentic, pre-existing texts from ones created for the textbooks, because this allowed me to pay attention to gender in terms of authorship besides content; that is, which pieces of authentic text from (often famous) writers the textbook creators have chosen to introduce to the students.

The two categories that seem to overlap with each other the most are essays and stories. To distinguish between these two I defined an essay as a piece of writing about a specific topic, and a story as a piece of writing or account about people or events (real or fictional). The category of "Stories" also includes texts that are presented as newspaper stories, but are most likely written for the textbooks by the *On Track* authors, because there are no credited sources. Pre-existing, authentic newspaper articles or extracts were classified into the category of "Authentic texts". The essays are more factual and less personal, while the stories generally also describe someone's thoughts, feelings and actions in a 1st or 3rd person narrative. Many of the texts are a mix of these two, and some have two clearly different parts that fall into these two categories.

I included interviews and discussions in the same category of "Dialogues/interviews" because of their significant overlap; for example in some interviews there are several interviewees, and the role of the interviewer is minimal in guiding the discussion. The "Other" category is for texts like summaries and quizzes, or types that only appear once: a timeline about the history of robots, a "fact file" about Ellis Island, and a cartoon about climate change. There are also three speeches or talks (as they are called in the chapter introductions). All three are most likely written by the textbook authors; at least no sources are mentioned. Another possibility is that they are anonymous on purpose. In the following sections I will analyse the texts included in the categories of "Authentic texts" and "Dialogues/interviews", because analyses on the texts in these categories gives valuable insight into authorship and gender (besides gendered characters), and gender roles in conversations between characters of different genders. The other categories are not further analysed, because they are less relevant for the purposes of this study. As stated in section 4.2., some individual texts in these other categories are analysed in other parts of the study.

5.6.1. Gender in authentic texts and extracts

In the seven *On Track* books analysed for this thesis, 26 of the major chapters are complete authentic texts or extracts from authentic texts, 7 of these being non-fictional and 13 being fictional texts, and 6 being poems. Poems were categorised separately, because they cannot be as clearly identified as being fictional or non-fictional as the other texts. Of all the 26 literary extracts, 8 are from female writers and 17 from male writers; one text is an Egyptian folktale, and the author is unknown. These quantitative results are further categorised in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Authentic non-fictional and fictional texts and poems by male and female writers

	Non-fictional	Fictional	Poems	All
Male	4	9	3	16
Female	3	3	3	9
All	7	12	6	25 (+1 fictional text with an unknown writer)

Besides authorship, it is important to consider the numbers of male and female characters in these texts.[5] Characters in the one fictional story with an unknown source are excluded from this analysis, because these characters cannot be analysed in relation to authorship. Altogether, there are 51 male and 19 female characters in the 25 stories with known authors, excluding authors who appear in autobiographical texts. I will start by discussing gender in the 12 fictional extracts and the six poems in terms of their authorship and content, and then turn to the seven nonfictional texts. The purpose of this quantitative analysis is to form an idea of how literature by male and female writers is represented in the textbooks, i.e. how many extracts there are from male and female authors, and to see whether the overall dominance of male characters also applies to the literary extracts.

There are 12 fictional stories that are extracts from novels or short stories, 9 from male and 3 from female writers. In these fictional texts, there are 36 male and 16 female characters, so the fictional literature chosen for the series appears to be dominantly male in terms of both authorship and the stories themselves. Of the 36 male characters, 29 appear in the male writers' texts, and 7 in the female writers' texts, but

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[5] Note that in this section the word "character" does not refer to the authors, while elsewhere in this study "character" is also used for real, existing people.

where the 16 female characters are concerned, 8 appear in male and 8 in female writers' texts. Table 6 below presents the average numbers of male and female characters in fictional texts by male and female authors with one decimal precision.

Table 6 The average numbers of male and female characters in the fictional texts by male and female writers

Male characters in male authors' texts	Male characters in female authors' texts	Female characters in male authors' texts	Female characters in female authors texts.
3,2	2,3	0,9	2,7

As the table shows, in the fictional texts by both male and female writers, there are (on average) more characters of the writers' own gender than characters of the so-called "opposite" gender, but in the female writers' texts the difference between the numbers of male and female characters is considerably smaller than it is in the male writers' texts, as in the male writers' texts there are considerably more males than females. As for the poems, there are three poems from both male and female writers, but in the poems there are 6 male and 0 female characters. Out of these 6 male characters, 2 appear in poems by male and 4 in poems by female poets, making the average number of males in male writers' poems 0,7 and males in female writers' poems 1,3.

This quantitative analysis of characters in the fictional texts and poems is by no means exhaustive, as it does not reveal anything about the importance of the characters and the relationships between them. However, the numbers are still indicative of male dominance, because the more male characters there are, the more likely it is that they take up "more space" in the stories than female characters. Besides, the students are familiarized with many more male authors than female authors, which suggests that men's writing is considered in some ways primary. Of course the texts have presumably also been chosen to address specific issues that go with the course themes, but it would not be reasonable to claim that women's writing on similar or equally suitable topics simply did not exist.

As for the 7 non-fictional texts, 4 of them are from male and 3 from female writers, and in these texts there are 9 male and 3 female characters. Of the 9 male characters, 2 appear in texts by male and 7 in texts by female writers, and of the 3 female characters, 1 appears in a text by a male writer and 2 in a text by a female writer. That most of the male characters appear in female writers' texts is largely due to one particular text ("Driverless cars are like elevators" by Adrienne Lafrance, *On Track 5*, pp. 164-6) containing 5 males. Nonetheless, it is worth looking at the average numbers

of male and female characters in non-fictional texts by male and female writers, as long as one bears in mind that when the overall number of non-fictional texts is as small as 7, just one or two texts can very much affect the results. These numbers are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7 The average numbers of male and female characters in the non-fictional texts by male and female writers

Male characters in male authors' texts	Male characters in female authors' texts	Female characters in male authors' texts	Female characters in female authors texts.
0,5	2,3	0,25	0,7

As stated above, the average number of male characters in female writers' non-fictional texts being as high as 2,3 is largely due to one particular text. What is otherwise noteworthy about these numbers is that the average number of female characters in male writers' texts is considerably low, as is the case with fictional texts.

All in all, in terms of both authorship and gendered characters the authentic texts are dominantly male, as there are 16 texts from male and 9 from female writers, and in these texts there are 51 male and 19 female characters. In terms of both the fictional and the non-fictional texts, the average number of female characters in male writers' texts is notably low, and in terms of poems it is non-existent in both male and female writers' poems. In Tables 6 and 7 above the average numbers are considered category by category, but it is also interesting to consider the average numbers when all the 25 authentic texts are analysed together. These numbers are presented in the Table 8 below.

Table 8 The average numbers of male and female characters in all the authentic texts by male and female writers

Male characters in male authors' texts	Male characters in female authors' texts	Female characters in male authors' texts	Female characters in female authors texts.
2,1	2	0,5	1,1

When all the authentic texts are looked at together, it seems that for example in female authors' texts there are almost twice as many male characters as female characters, and that in male authors' texts there are almost four times as many male as female characters. However, when we consider the categories separately, as is done above in Tables 7 and 8, we get more precise information about the relationships between authorship and gendered characters. An important difference between fictional and non-

fictional texts is that where fictional texts are concerned it is entirely up to writers to choose what characters they want to create, while in the case of non-fictional texts the numbers of gendered characters are sometimes dictated by facts in real life. For example, regarding the fictional texts in *On Track*, there are on average a little more female than male characters in texts by female authors, unlike Table 8 alone would suggest.

5.6.2. Gender in dialogues

The framework used for this dialogue analysis was adapted from Jones, Kitetu and Sunderland's (1997, pp. 476-9) framework for analysing dialogues quantitatively. They use the term "type" to refer to the different characters in the dialogues, and "token" to refer to the number of times these characters appear. For example, in the first one of the nine *On Track* dialogues that were analysed (*On Track 1*, p. 28-32) there is one female type, Kay, and two male types, Jake and Chris. Kay appears seven times, and her being the only female type, this means there are seven female tokens in the dialogue. Jake appears six times and Chris five times, which means there are 11 male tokens. I counted all the male and female types, tokens and number of words spoken in all the dialogues together, and then I counted the mean male and female type appearance, mean number of words per male and female type and mean number of words per male and female token. The results are summarised in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9 Male and female types, tokens, and mean type appearance in dialogues

	Number of characters (types)	Number of character appearances (tokens)	Mean type appearance
Male	11	83	7,5
Female	9	59	6,6

Table 10 Dialogue words spoken by male and female types, mean number of words per type and per token

	Number of dialogue words spoken	Mean number of words per type	Mean number of words per token
Male	2801	254,6	33,7
Female	2286	254	38,7

As the tables show, on average male and female characters have fairly equal roles in dialogues. There are a few more male than female types, so it is not surprising that there are also more male tokens and male words. However, even though the male types appear on average a little more often than female types, male and female types have almost equal mean numbers of words per type, and on average female turns of speaking seem to be longer than male ones.

Nonetheless, a mere quantitative analysis of this kind does not reveal gendered attitudes in the *contents* of the dialogues, which is why it is important to pay attention to the remarks made by the characters, for example in terms of who they address. In a dialogue between a doctor and two prospective parents (*On Track 5*, pp. 87-90) the doctor seems to only directly address the future father, not the mother, even though the introduction to the dialogue states that they are both present. Their names are not mentioned, but the context makes it clear that the couple consists of two people who are (biologically) a man and a woman. The doctor's gender does not become apparent from the text alone, but I counted her as a female character, because in the text audio she has a female voice. The audio also makes it clear that the only one who talks besides the doctor is the future father. When talking to the couple about altering the genetic makeup of their future baby, the doctor says, "No offense, but you and your wife are a bit chubby" (p. 88), "You and your wife have some big honkers", and "--we can avoid your and your wives obvious imperfections" (p. 89).

It is important to note that the text satirizes genetic engineering and an obsession with looks and perfection, and that the doctor's comments are part of this satire, which is why they should not be understood literally. However, the wife's invisibility does not actually contribute to this satirising, which is why it is noteworthy despite the text's satiric nature. It seems that the female doctor possibly regards the husband as a main decision-maker, since she only addresses *him* in the first person. The textbook indicates a person called Tom Purcell as the writer of the dialogue, so it was not the textbook creators who wrote it, but nevertheless they are responsible for the contents they choose to present. Furthermore, since the way that is used to signal the beginning of a turn is just the symbol "–", not a noun (e.g. "doctor", "husband") or the name of the character, the textbook authors could have chosen to give the wife some of the turns in the text audio.

5.7. Gender and transitivity

In the *On Track* series, there are two chapters that are especially relevant from the point of view of transitivity. In this study, the concept of transitivity quite simply refers to "who does what to whom" in a given text (Mills, 2008, p. 69), and the method of analysis is data-driven and serves to analyse the actions of the characters.[6] The Key text "People who change our lives" (*On Track 1*, p. 150-4) presents seven cases of celebrities who have been inspired in their careers by (in most cases) people they know, for example family members, friends, colleagues or even pet animals. The Key text "At what age can you be a hero?" (*On Track 4*, p. 11-5) presents five cases of "heroes" who saved lives by preventing accidents or acts of violence. In both these texts all the cases and the people they involve are non-fictional. Regarding transitivity, these two texts are particularly suitable for closer inspection because they include many cases where some individuals act and others are acted upon, and due to the number of cases one is able to look at these texts from a representation point of view, i.e. whether male and female characters appear equally in the different roles.

Regarding "People who change our lives", I looked at "celebrity – inspirer" roles, and regarding "At what age can you be a hero?", I looked mainly at "hero – perpetrator" roles. These relations are summarized in Table 11 below in the order in which the cases are presented. In three of the five cases in the text about heroes, there is an armed perpetrator who is stopped by one or more people, but two of the five cases are accidents where there is no perpetrator. In one of these cases a girl saves another child (gender not mentioned) from the water after spotting a shark, and in the other a teenage girl rushes to take the wheel on a bus after the driver (male) has a heart attack. In these cases, the "rescuees'" gender is not so relevant for the analysis, since in the first case the reader does not know it, and in the second case it is not only the male bus driver who is being rescued, but also everyone else on the bus. Also in the other three cases, it is the perpetrator's gender that is made known to the reader rather than the gender of the people being rescued.

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[6] I do not employ any specific framework for transitivity analysis, such as Halliday's functional grammar framework (see e.g. Halliday, 1967-1968).

Table 11 Transitivity in two Key texts

"People who change our lives"	Celebrity	Inspirer	"At what age can you be a hero?"	Hero	Perpetrator
Case 1	Female	Male	Case 1	Female	-
Case 2	Female	Female	Case 2	Female	-
Case 3	Male	Male (animals)	Case 3	Male (x4)	Male
Case 4	Male	Female	Case 4	Female	Male
Case 5	Male (x2)	Male	Case 5	Male (x2)	Male
Case 6	Male	Female			
Case 7	Female	Female			

As the table shows, there are 3 female and 5 male celebrities, and 4 females who inspired celebrities. As for males who inspired celebrities, there are two males who are people (in cases 1 and 5), but in case 3, "male" actually refers to the author George R.R. Martin's childhood pet turtles who he used to pretend were "knights and kings and lords" (*On Track 1*, p. 152). There are a little more male than female celebrities, and a little more females than males who inspired celebrities. As stated in the previous section, a female's role as an inspirer can be seen as negative or positive, depending on whether one sees it as a position of power and influence, or as a background role in supporting someone else's, specifically a man's, success. Nevertheless, the stories chosen for the text include varied relations regarding gender, because in terms of celebrity-inspirer relationships there are male-male, male-female, female-male, and female-female pairs or groups. Two of the three female celebrities were inspired in their careers by close relatives (one male and one female), and one by her dance teacher (female). Of the five male celebrities, none were inspired by relatives, but three were inspired by friends or fellow-students (one male and one female), one by his pet turtles (male), and one by his drama teacher (female).

Regarding heroes and perpetrators, there is a more significant difference between male and female roles. There are three female heroes in three different stories, and six male heroes in two different stories. While there are three male perpetrators, two of whom attempted killing people and one of whom attempted robbery, there are no female perpetrators. All the male heroes are ones who stopped or hindered the action of armed perpetrators by taking physical action – the only female hero who stopped a perpetrator did it by talking to him and showing empathy. The two other female heroes saved others from possibly deadly accidents by taking physical action, but there are no

male heroes in cases without perpetrators. So, one could say the text presents male heroism as a little more physical and daring, in a sense, since the male heroes go against armed perpetrators, and female heroism as a little more of the mental kind, involving empathy and quick thinking (although both mental and physical elements are present in all cases). Male and female roles also differ in that the human causes of threat are exclusively male.

However, the last case involving two older men who stopped a robber by holding the shop door closed from the outside, preventing the robber from leaving with the money he had taken, seems somewhat problematic as an example of heroism. The passage ends with the following sentences:

> The two men were praised for their courage and quick thinking by the local police, who eventually apprehended the robber. Ron said: "I looked in and saw this lad brandishing a big knife at a girl behind the counter, so I thought, well he's not getting out while I'm here. (p. 14)

Luckily in this case the robber gave up, but it could have been extremely dangerous for the salesperson behind the counter to be locked in the store with an armed robber. It seems Ron was more concerned about the money the robber was trying to take than the safety of the woman inside, and him calling her a "girl" only enhances this impression, because presumably it was not a child working in the store, and calling a woman "a girl" can be belittling. What is even more problematic is that the priorities of these "heroes" are endorsed by the local authorities. This act of "heroism" is problematized in the extra material that is only in the e-book, not in the printed book. Therefore, whether the book creators also seem to consider Ron and Robert's actions heroic depends on whether the students are using the printed book or the e-book (or both), and whether the teacher decides to discuss the issue further.

5.8. "Women in sport" and "Mothers of invention"

Finally, this section presents the results of a qualitative analysis of a couple of texts that address gender equality or gender roles specifically. In *On Track 2* there are many texts about sports, and these texts are dominated by male characters, but there is a separate chapter called "Women in sport" about female athletes and the way they are often treated in the media. Similarly, in *On Track 5* there are several texts about scientific developments and discoveries, and one of these is called "Mothers of invention" that presents some female inventors' accomplishments. As the quantitative analysis of

characters reveals, there are 54 male and 18 female characters in *On Track 2*, and 52 male and 21 female characters in *On Track 5*, so the chapters in both two textbooks are clearly male-dominated, at least where the numbers of characters are concerned. I will start by discussing "Women in sport", and then move on to "Mothers of invention".

The text "Women in sport" (*On Track 2*, p. 66-8) addresses the inequalities between male and female athletes by taking up issues like the lack of visibility of women's games on TV, the lack of sponsorship for female athletes, or the media's focus on physical appearance where female athletes are concerned. While paying attention to these issues is important for making students aware of gender (in)equality in sports, it seems a little contradictory that *On Track 2* itself does what it criticises in this chapter, for all the other sports chapters are extremely male-dominated. Furthermore, there is another problematic aspect to this chapter that comes up in its take on the double standard that the media often seems to be interested in female athletes' looks rather than skills. The narrator remarks:

> The physically attractive tennis star Maria Sharapova is the highest earning female tennis player in the world despite winning far fewer tournaments than her contemporary Serena Williams, (*On Track 2*, p. 67)

This passage seems to state it as an objective fact that Sharapova is more attractive than Williams, which seems to endorse a very "white" view of beauty. One might claim that the reader is expected to understand that this passage is getting at inequalities among female athletes of different ethnic backgrounds that are caused by white privilege. However, the phrasing of this passage does not convey that Sharapova is, in our society, *considered* more attractive by some – it conveys that Sharapova *is* more attractive than Williams, or rather that Sharapova is attractive and Williams is not.

I will now turn to address "Mothers of invention" in *On Track 5* (pp. 99-103). This chapter introduces women who invented items or materials many of us have use of in our everyday lives, such as the coffee filter, the lightweight fibre called Kevlar, the windshield wiper, and the dishwasher. The chapter consists of short texts that are presented as readers' entries for an online magazine (but are most likely written for this chapter), and there are also a few comments from "readers", for example the following: "Let's celebrate women like Marie Curie and Rosalind Franklin, who discovered something useful, instead" (p. 102, e-book only) that brings up two more female inventors. This chapter differs from "Women in sport" in that it simply presents some inventions made by women, without discussing the *representation* of female inventors versus male inventors, as "Women in sport" does with male and female athletes. While

some effort is clearly made to include female inventors in *On Track 5* by including "Mothers of invention", similar effort is hardly made elsewhere in the book. Furthermore, most of the women in "Mothers of invention" are, in a sense, inventors, but not scientists. For example Marie Curie or Rosalind Franklin, who appear in this chapter like in a footnote, could have indeed been presented in some other texts. There is a neurology-themed text called "Young and reckless: exploring the adolescent brain" (*On Track 5*, pp. 71-4) where a female scientist, clinical psychologist Dr Jennifer Brown, is in the leading role. However, since the source of her "speech" is in no way credited, and I was unable to find a Dr Jennifer Brown that would match her description, her character was most likely made up by the textbook creators. It is possible (but unlikely, since a speech at a conference would be public anyway) that she is based on a real person who for example wishes to stay anonymous. Nonetheless, if this is not the case, it seems counter-effective from a gender equality point of view that *On Track 5* presents many real, existing male scientists, but instead of including real female scientists as more than footnotes, a female scientist is made up.

To summarize, it seems that *On Track* creators seem to have thought about the visibility of women when covering themes like sports and science, but these efforts fall short in that they are limited to specific texts that are about women in particular. Addressing women separately can be fully justified, because in many cases pretending that men and women are equal instead of addressing inequalities does not actually further gender equality. However, merely dedicating a couple of texts to women but marginalizing them in other texts can be othering in a way that is harmful. Besides including texts that are specifically dedicated to female athletes and female inventors, it would be important to increase the number of women in other texts, too, in order to avoid doing the very thing that is criticized in the chapters that are specifically about women.

6. Discussion

In this chapter I answer the research questions by reviewing the quantitative and qualitative results of the study, and discuss the implications of these results. The purpose of the first research question was to find out how many male and female characters appeared in the main chapters of *On Track 1–7*, and whether any other genders were represented. Altogether, there are 328 male and 178 female characters in the texts and 140 male and 125 female characters in the visuals. These results suggest that in quantitative terms the *On Track* series is dominated by male characters. Regarding especially the text parts of the chapters the difference in numbers is striking, since there are almost twice as many male as female characters.

As for other genders, there are two references to transgender individuals ("the LGBT community", Chelsea Manning), and no references to non-binary identities. The remark concerning "the LGBT community" is a supportive one, but one can argue that a single mention of LGBT people in general does not significantly increase the visibility of transgender people in particular. In the case of the chapter that features Chelsea Manning, it is reasonable to claim that not addressing her gender identity in this particular context is more beneficial for gender equality than addressing it would have been. Thus, it can be argued that in order to promote gender equality and increase the visibility of transgender individuals we need both explicit comments on genders, and characters representing different gender identities appearing naturally in the main chapters of a textbook.

In this study gender was also analysed with regard to specific text types, especially authentic texts and dialogues. The results indicate that in the 9 dialogues that were analysed male and female characters have relatively equal roles in quantitative terms, although in both quantitative and qualitative terms there is one dialogue in which the wife is clearly in a secondary role as compared to her husband. Regarding authentic texts, altogether 25 texts were analysed, 7 of them being non-fictional, 12 being fictional, and 6 being poems. This part of the analysis was mainly quantitative, and the results indicate the authentic texts to be male-dominated in terms of both authorship and the numbers of male and female characters.

The aim of the second research question was to determine how gender and gender roles are explicitly commented on in the main chapters. In some chapters gender roles or differences between genders (male and female) are explicitly commented on or

questioned. For example, a chapter about different types of superheroes in superhero stories makes it very clear that these archetypes are often heavily gendered, and in a following discussion exercise there is a question about whether there is a lack of interesting roles for women in movies. These kinds of chapters and exercises can be very valuable for encouraging students to discuss and question traditional gender norms and inequalities in different fields. However, some chapters include gender stereotypes that are hardly criticised or questioned, for example a chapter about the history of men and women's clothing. Also, there are two chapters that aim to address specifically the role of women as inventors and as athletes, respectively. While chapters that focus on women are valuable for discussing and increasing women's visibility in these fields, the efforts fall short because the textbooks in which these chapters appear are otherwise dominated by male characters.

The purpose of the third research question was to analyse gendered language in the main chapters in terms of grammar and vocabulary. As for personal pronouns, there are a few instances of the so-called "generic he". While its use can to some degree be explained or justified by the specific contexts in which it appears, one can argue that its use is still somewhat problematic in these cases. For example, in a chapter about sports it is stated that racing drivers are almost exclusively male, which makes the use of a generic "he" a somewhat understandable choice. Nonetheless, only using "he" to refer to a racing driver seems to erase those female racing drivers who do exist. In terms of gendered nouns, while there are both "male" and "female" idioms and expressions (e.g. "Lady Luck", "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"), there are only male generics that refer to humans in general (e.g. "man" in "manhole"). Furthermore, there are a couple of instances of the word "girl" being used instead of "woman" or an occupational term like "receptionist" or "shop employee", and a literary extract where a school teacher makes an unnecessary distinction between male and female students with his use of the words "boy" and "girl".

Finally, the aim of the fourth research question was to analyse relationships between characters of the same sex and characters of different sexes. This part of the analysis included both quantitative and qualitative elements, and focused on friendships and romantic/sexual relationships. The quantitative part of the analysis indicates that relationships between women are less visible than relationships between men in terms of both romantic/sexual relationships and friendships. Regarding friendships, there is only one female-female friendship, while there are five male-male and five mixed-sex friendships. Furthermore, the story of the female-female friendship that is a friendship

between two teenage girls mainly revolves around the boys these two girls like, and the chapters that include male-male friendships are varied in theme.

Regarding romantic/sexual relationships, there are no references to female homosexuality in particular, and there are two references to male homosexual relationships or interest. However, both these two references appear in older literary extracts, and homosexuality appears as something that is taboo or a source of problems in the characters' lives. In addition to these instances there are a few generic references to "same-sex couples" or "the LGBT community" that express support for sexual minorities and (in the case of the latter) also transgender individuals. Nonetheless, all actual couples in the chapters are heterosexual. While it is valuable that sexual minorities are not invisible in *On Track*, the series still falls short in promoting sexual equality, since the scarce positive references to sexual minorities are abstract and generic, and concrete gay and lesbian couples do not appear alongside heterosexual couples.

An additional aspect of relationships between characters that was included in the study was an analysis with a transitivity point of view, i.e. who does what to whom in two selected chapters. One of these two chapters was about celebrities and people who inspired them in their careers, and the other one about real near-accidents or attacks that were prevented by "heroes" who happened to be present. Regarding the former chapter, male and female characters appear fairly equally in both roles, although there are a little more male than female celebrities and a little more female than male "inspirers". The difference between male and female roles is more notable in the latter chapter where all three "perpetrators" are male, and all the "heroes" who stop the perpetrators by taking physical action are also male. The one female hero who stops an armed perpetrator does it by talking to him and showing empathy, and in the cases of the other two female heroes there are near-accidents, but no perpetrators. All in all, female heroism seems to be about mental qualities such as empathy and quick thinking a little more than physical daring that in these stories seems to be more central to male heroism.

When looking at the quantitative results of the study, it is clear that the main chapters of the *On Track* series as a whole are rather male-dominated. The series can also be characterised as somewhat heteronormative in quantitative terms, although in the contents of some of the chapters attention has been paid to expressing support for sexual minorities and transgender individuals. These findings suggest that there has been some progress from the times of many older textbooks where LGBTQ+ people are hardly visible at all (see Gray, 2013), but especially non-binary gender identities remain

invisible. Changes that could further gender and sexual equality in future editions of *On Track* or similar textbook series could be a greater number of women in general, a greater number of LGBTQ+ characters, and a more diverse LGBTQ+ representation that expresses support and naturally includes LGBTQ+ characters in the stories without ignoring inequalities that affect many LGBTQ+ individuals today.

What could help actualize an equal representation of genders (on the one hand, women, and on the other hand, gender minorities) and different sexual orientations in textbooks are clearer, more compelling national guidelines for textbook publishers and schools alike. In the Finnish National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools gender equality is mentioned in the general guidelines for foreign language teaching (Opetushallitus, 2015, p. 107), but there are no requirements concerning the content of textbooks in particular and the content of textbooks is not checked on any official level (see section 2.3.2). Kähkönen (2017) writes that according to Riia Palmqvist (counsellor for education), one cannot easily talk about the content of textbooks in general, because in theory anyone can make textbooks. Also, according to Myllykoski (2013), Kristina Kaihari (counsellor for education) states that the Finnish National Agency for Education has not checked the content of textbooks in over 20 years, and that publishing textbooks is unregulated business activity. Publishers alone are responsible for the content of their textbooks, and schools are free to choose which learning materials to use.

Regarding recommendations for teachers based on this thesis, it is important for teachers to note that "teacher-talk" around text in the teaching process can undermine or maintain stereotypical ways of thinking (Sunderland et al., 2000, p. 282). In order to promote gender and sexual equality it is important for teachers to read textbooks and other materials critically and to reflect on their implied messages concerning gender and sexuality. Being aware of the textbooks' subtle messages in this respect, the teacher is able to influence the way the students are *potentially* affected by the textbooks' contents (even though different students respond in different ways), as well as to encourage the students to critically evaluate what they read. For example, when studying a chapter that consists of an older literary extract, the teacher could have students look for expressions that are less used these days or are sometimes seen as problematic, and come up with alternatives for them. This way some potentially negative effects of old-fashioned, gendered expressions could be undermined or even used to learn about language change and development with regard to gender. Furthermore, what additional materials teachers

choose to incorporate in their teaching can partly make up for imbalances and inequalities in the textbooks, even if the textbooks' role is central.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to study gender representation and gender relations in *On Track*, a series in English for the Finnish upper secondary school. The main chapters of the first seven *On Track* books were included in the analysis, and one goal was to find out how many male and female characters appeared in these chapters, and whether any other genders were represented. Altogether, there are 328 male and 178 female characters in the texts and 140 male and 125 female characters in the visuals. These quantitative results suggest that the *On Track* series is, at least to some extent, dominated by male characters, although the difference in numbers is much more considerable in the texts than in the visuals. As for gender minorities, there are two references to transgender individuals ("the LGBT community", Chelsea Manning), and no references to non-binary identities. Thus, one could say that transgender people are hardly visible in the series, and non-binary identities are invisible. Furthermore, gender was analysed with regards to specific text types, especially authentic texts and dialogues. The results indicate that in dialogues male and female characters have fairly equal roles, while authentic texts are male-dominated in terms of both authorship and the numbers of male and female characters.

Another goal was to analyse the way gender and gender roles are explicitly commented on in the chapters. In some chapters effort is made to draw attention to gender roles, gendered patterns of behaviour and gender stereotypes, and to encourage students to critically consider these roles. However, in some chapters there are gender stereotypes that are hardly criticised or questioned in these chapters. Also, there are two chapters that aim to address specifically the role of women in science and sports, which is valuable for discussing and increasing women's visibility in these fields, but the efforts fall short since the textbooks in which these chapters appear are otherwise male-dominated. Further, a third goal was to analyse gendered language in the chapters in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Regarding personal pronouns, there are a few instances of the so-called "generic he", although in a couple of cases its use can to some extent be explained by the specific contexts in which it appears. In terms of nouns, while there both "male" and "female" idioms and expressions (e.g. "Lady Luck"), there are only male generics that refer to humans in general (e.g. "man" in "manhole").

Finally, a fourth central goal was to find out what relationships there are between characters of the same sex and characters of different sexes. This aspect of the analysis focused on friendships and romantic/sexual relationships, and the results indicate that relationships between women are less visible than relationships between men in terms of both romantic relationships and friendships. There are zero references to lesbian couples, and only one female-female friendship, while there are five male-male and five mixed-sex friendships, and two references to homosexual interest between men or boys. However, both two references appear in older literary extracts, and homosexuality appears as something that is taboo. In addition to these instances there are a few generic references to "same-sex couples" or "the LGBT community" that express support for sexual minorities and transgender individuals. Nevertheless, all the actual couples in the chapters are heterosexual. In conclusion, friendships and romantic relationships in *On Track* are, to some degree, both heteronormative and male-dominated.

I will now turn to consider the reliability of the study. Since only the main text chapters were included in the analysis, and other sections were mostly excluded due to space limitations, the analysis is necessarily selective. Nonetheless, it does provide insight into a very central component of the textbooks, that is to say the main text chapters. Another limitation of the study is that it does not analyse the *On Track* textbooks in use, but as stated in section 2.4.3., it is worth looking into the framework textbooks provide for many teachers. Further, a worthwhile suggestion for future research would be to analyse the use of this framework, the *On Track* series, in the classroom. In order to further gender and sexual equality in teaching materials, it would also be important for future research to follow up on the development of new textbooks. By including sexual and gender minorities in some ways and raising issues that have to do with gender equality *On Track* seems to have taken steps towards more equal representation of gender and sexuality than what has often been seen in older textbooks. However, there is room for improvement regarding women, sexual minorities, and perhaps especially gender minorities that are, with the exception of scarce references to transgender individuals, completely invisible.

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