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Gender, Language and Second Language Education

- a Study of Swedish EFL Textbooks

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to examine whether gender stereotypical language can be found in textbooks used in the course English 5 in the Swedish upper-secondary school. Several researchers have previously found that women and men tend to use certain aspects of the English language to a different extent and previous research has also shown that material used in EFL (English as a foreign language) textbooks portrays stereotypical notions of gender. In this, study the theory of discourse analysis is used to examine extracts from three different textbooks, and the data is analyzed and presented using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The analysis focuses on the six linguistic features *hedges*, *uncertainty verbs*, *tag questions*, *slang words*, *judgmental adjectives* and *directives*. The findings of this essay show that while there are some indications of gender stereotypical language being used, it is sometimes hard to conclude whether or not the gender of the speaker is the only decisive factor causing the use of certain linguistic units in Swedish EFL textbooks.

Keywords: gender stereotypes, gender-related language, discourse analysis, EFL textbooks, speech act, hedges, uncertainty verbs, tag questions, slang words, judgmental adjectives, directives

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1. Introduction

During the last two decades the Swedish curricula and syllabi have focused on gender equality. Most, if not all, of the policy documents that make up the foundation of the Swedish schools' entire existence state that almost every aspect of the schools' activities should be permeated by gender equality (cf. SFS 2010:800: ch.1 5§; Skolverket 2011: 6, 10-11). While this is not directly raised in the syllabi for English studies, the curriculum clearly states that every aspect of the Swedish school should include the awareness of equality between the genders. This being the case, it is important to continuously study and evaluate the textbooks used in our schools to see if they live up to the expectations and rules of the policy documents governing the Swedish school. This is why this essay aims at investigating whether or not signs of gender stereotypical language can be found in the textbooks used in the course English 5 in the Swedish upper-secondary school.

1.1 Background

In some of the other subjects of both the compulsory school and the Upper Secondary school the role of gender equality might seem more distinct than that of the English classroom, for example in Social Studies (see Skolverket 2011: 143-145). There are, however, many different aspects related to gender equality, and it is not necessarily limited to discussions around gender roles or the importance of equal pay for equal labor. During the last decades, efforts have been made to study and understand the way our language is colored by our gender, more specifically how we are expected to communicate depending on our gender. Many of these studies have come to the conclusion that there is a difference between the language of women and that of men. While it was initially suggested that the source of this difference was to be found in the realm of biology, present-day researchers attribute this difference to social structures and expectations (Wodak 1997: 25f).

In 1991 the Swedish government's control over the Swedish schools' teaching material was removed. Before 1991 the government exercised a great deal of influence over how Swedish textbooks were designed, but after this year the authority of interpreting the Swedish curricula and syllabi is instead in the hands of the textbook authors and publishers (Skolverket 2006: 11, 13f). A study conducted by the Swedish National Agency for education (Skolverket 2006: 10) shows that Swedish English teachers are very dependent on the textbooks they are using.

This means that Swedish English teachers dismiss their professional independence that is given to them through the curriculum and instead leaves the interpretation of the goals and missions of the Swedish school to the authors and publishers of the books they choose to use (Skolverket 2006: 11). This, undeniably, puts the responsibility of converting policy documents to practical teaching on the textbook authors.

For many years, the Swedish curriculum has put a great emphasis on the teachers' interpretations of the Swedish school's goals and guidelines, and one could argue that this is one of the foundations that our entire school system relies on (cf. Skolverket 2006: 13). In subjects where the textbooks seem to play a big part of how the teaching is executed, for example English, the choice of teaching material becomes critical. This means that in order to follow the guidelines set by the curriculum, the textbooks must, in one way or another, deal with many of the different values that the Swedish school is supposed to discuss and teach. One of the values that is pointed out throughout the Swedish Education Act and the curriculum is equality between the sexes (SFS 2010:800 ch. 1 §5; Skolverket 2011: 6, 10-11). The textbooks used in English should focus on gender equality and should, like all aspects of the Swedish school, be permeated by it.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this essay is to investigate whether conversations in texts in English textbooks fall within the borders of stereotypical male and female language or not. This essay focuses on the conversations in textbooks used in the Swedish Upper Secondary school course *English 5*. To specify the aim of the research essay further, the following question will be answered:

- What features of gender stereotypical language are observable in the text books used in English 5?

1.3 Method

The data collected for this study will be presented and analyzed through a mix of quantitative results (overall data from the textbooks) and qualitative observations (i.e. an in-depth analysis of selected texts) with a focus on the speech situation of the text in relation to the quantitative findings. The quantitative part of the analysis focuses on identifying and counting linguistic units that have previously been observed to be used more by men or women. The qualitative content analysis serves to not only consider the number of occurrences of these linguistic

units, but to also consider them in relation to the setting and speech situation of the text (cf. Esaiasson et al 2012: 210ff). The mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches is used for mainly two reasons. Firstly, it is important to recognize that the quantitative results in their entirety might give a fair general picture of language use in one or all of the books, but not of the individual texts. A quantitative analysis of this nature might also give us somewhat misleading results, as it is hard to determine whether gender is what is motivating the use of specific speech acts or if something else is, for example the setting or speech situation of the text. In other words, the qualitative analysis is used to investigate whether or not gender serves as the decisive factor (cf. Esaiasson 2012: 51, 66ff; Chambers 2003: 18-19). Secondly, only using an approach where the analysis is of a qualitative nature does not at all give a general view, which would result in a study that is simply examining different texts without providing any comparable data. Using both these approaches should provide an in-depth understanding as well as a general understanding of the examined material, rather than one or the other. Considering the fact that the texts in the chosen material are quite short, usually between two and six pages, an entirely qualitative approach would be deemed insufficient and an entirely quantitative analysis of texts from too small a corpus will be insignificant (cf. Esaiasson 2012: 383-384). Further clarifications will be presented under the *Findings* section.

Throughout this essay, the theory of discourse analysis has been applied. The idea behind the type of discourse analysis that is used, and will be presented in section 2.1, is that language is not only a tool for conveying information. Instead, the focus lies on what is conveyed other than just entirely informative statements. While discourse analysis will not be the analytical tool in the analysis of this study, it is still important to address it throughout this essay, as it will serve as a starting-point for the discussion of gender-related tendencies in the use of language features under study.

In the coming section 2.3, the six linguistic features that are being examined in this paper will be discussed. The features chosen for this essay are *tag questions*, *hedges*, *uncertainty verbs*, *slang words*, *judgmental adjectives* and *directives*. Narrowing down the focal point is important for mainly two reasons. Firstly, for the quantitative and qualitative analysis that will be presented it is crucial to have concrete linguistic variables which can be examined in statistical terms (cf. Esaiasson 2012: 215f). Secondly, this has also been done to ensure that the qualitative analysis of each text and book is conducted under the same circumstances, thus

ensuring that each analysis follow the same procedure. If it is unclear whether a word or type of word belongs to one of the six categories, it has not been counted. The main reason why these specific features have been chosen is that they are widely used and discussed in previous research on gender and language (see section 2.3). With that said, there, as with much research in this field, is no single answer to which linguistic features should be considered male and/or female. It is therefore the author of this essay's hope that this study will shed some light on these matters.

1.4 Material

In this study, three different textbooks used in the *English 5* course will be examined. Since no centralized statistics of usage or popularity can be found, three books from three large and well-known publishing houses in Sweden have been chosen. The study will focus on three different types of textbooks: one that is aimed for the pupils in the natural sciences' program, one book used in the vocational programs and one book that is used in programs which prepare pupils for higher education within the realm of social sciences. The reason why these books have been chosen is to present and analyze a broad variety of textbooks to be able to cover most kinds of books used in the Swedish school.

The original intension was to examine texts that the authors of the textbooks had written by themselves where the gender of the speakers was distinguishable. However, since the school reform of 2011 the vast majority of the texts presented in these books are authentic texts by renowned authors. The texts written by the textbook authors are often just information (or facts) aimed at the reader, and therefore do not explicitly state the gender of the speaker and contain no dialogue. The original intention was to use texts exclusively written for the textbook by the textbook authors to investigate how the authors portrayed male and female language. However, there is little to gain from studying obsolete books (i.e. the books published before the reform of 2011); the focus will instead be on texts written both by the textbook authors and by external authors that are presented in the textbooks. More specifically the focus of this essay will be on dialogues in the textbooks, as most research concerning male and female language has drawn conclusions about spoken English rather than written.

The books that have been chosen are the following:

- *Pioneer 1 (English 5)* by by Christer Lundfall, Eva Österberg and Jeremy Taylor. Published by Liber in 2012.
- *World Wide English (Naturvetenskapsprogrammet)* by Christer Johansson, Kerstin Tuthill and Ulf Hörmander. Published by Bonnier in 2011.
- *Viewpoints Vocational* by Linda Gustafsson and Uno Wivast. Published by Gleerups in 2011.

A number of texts were chosen from each textbook at random, although making sure that there was a roughly equal representation of texts with both female and male narrators and thereby also an approximately equal proportion of dialogue from men and women. Only texts that contained dialogues were chosen. It should be noted that even though a different number of pages from each book were examined, the amount of material chosen from each book remained roughly equal. Even though the amount of dialogue varies from text to text, the total amount from each book remained roughly the same.

Pioneer 1

Pioneer 1 is written for the theoretical programs aiming to prepare pupils for higher education and is specifically aimed to be used in different social sciences programs. From this textbook, seven texts of varying length between two and six pages were chosen, and a total of 27 pages were examined.

World Wide English

World Wide English is designed for the natural sciences programs, which are programs aimed at preparing its pupils for higher education, mainly within the realm of the natural sciences. Six texts of varying lengths between two and eight pages were chosen, and a total of 34 pages were studied.

Viewpoints Vocational

This textbook is intended to be used in the vocational programs, i.e. non-theoretical programs aimed at preparing pupils for work after graduation, rather than for higher education. A total of eight texts of varying length between three and five pages were chosen, ending at a total of 38 examined pages.

2. Previous Research and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Discourse analysis

In this essay the method and theory of discourse analysis will serve as a starting-point to understand how language can be viewed other than a way of communicating information. James Paul Gee (2005) claims that language is not only a tool for communicating information or ideas between people; it is also used “to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups and institutions” (p. 1). In other words, human language is heavily influenced by the speaker’s¹ culture, which includes gender-related stereotypes. The theory of discourse analysis is used to study how language is used to endorse social identities within a culture (Gee 2005: 1). The aim of this study is, as mentioned above, to investigate gender stereotypes, i.e. social identities, in written conversations in English textbooks. To do this, discourse analysis is an adequate starting-point as the intention of this study is to examine aspects of the English language which portray cultural and social differences between the genders. Gee (2011: 7, 9-11) claims that language in use is always political. With the term political he does not refer to aspects related to the practice of political parties, but states that it also has to do with the distribution of acceptance, power and social status in people’s day-to-day lives. The use of language is thereby, in many cases, a way of distinguishing right from wrong, normal from abnormal, or accepted behavior from non-accepted behavior. This, as will be discussed in section 2.2, is closely related to the realm of gender studies and how women and men are perceived and expected to in social contexts.

Gee (2005) claims that when we use a language, we do not only tailor the language to the context in which it is needed, but the language itself also creates the context. While social structures and institutions surely dictate our way of speaking, our use of language in turn creates social structures. The language, then, is not just a tool for conveying information – it is also a tool for creating and understanding the reality around us. On the one hand, our language is influenced by the reality which is influenced, or even created, by our use of language (alongside other resources which help us in understanding the world, such as philosophies or values) (p. 10-11). This leaves the person using discourse analysis to grasp the

¹ Instead of always referring to the speaker or writer I will use the term speaker to refer to both spoken and written language use.

meaning of a text not only searching for the linguistic meaning of the words, structures and sentences, but also for what is conveyed ‘between the lines’. What reality is the speaker, consciously or subconsciously, creating with his or her language? As mentioned in the introduction, gender stereotypes are present all around us, and the Swedish school has a legally mandated goal to dampen the development of these structures. Social structures are, as will be explained in section 2.2, tools of categorizing and understanding the reality we operate in. Since one aspect of discourse analysis is to investigate how the use of language is reconstructing social structures, in this case gender stereotypes, and also a way of understanding the world, it is vital to keep discourse analysis in mind when conducting and reading this study.

2.2 Gender

According to Judith Butler (2004), gender, even though it is in a way acted out by the individual, is partly acted out without the person’s knowledge and volition. Butler states that gender is not something a person creates on one’s own or for one’s own, but something that is created in relation to others, as well as other social norms of the given society. Gender then becomes an act that is played within the set principles of the screenplay (i.e. the society). Women and men play that role, in part in order to receive recognition – to be recognized and understood as a human being (p. 1-4). Butler writes that “[t]his matter is made more complex by the fact that the viability of our individual personhood is fundamentally dependent on these social norms” and that “[t]he terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and changeable” (p. 2). Gender, then, as opposed to one’s biological sex, is the set of rules, expectations and societal norms that determine and dictate how a woman or a man should be, act and live.

2.3 Gender in Language

In this section different linguistic features that seem to differ between men and women will be discussed. It is, however, sensible to first address three different theories of language and gender that aim at explaining the difference in the language used by men and women. One theory, that is hardly given much thought by contemporary scholars, is the *deficit model*. In this model, the language of men is seen as a norm and women’s language is something deviating from the norm and is therefore insufficient. If the language of men is the norm, then logically any kind of language, including the language of women, which differs from the norm, is considered abnormal (Nordenstam 2003: 15, 19-21). The second theory, the

dominance model, is closely tied to ideas of gender being a social notion. Using this model, the differences in men's and women's language is seen as yet another tool to enhance patriarchal authority. Language is used in a way that consolidates the prevailing power balance between men and women in society (Nordenstam 2003: 15-16, 23ff). The third, the *difference model*, attributes the difference in language use to the idea that women and men have different norms to live up to since they are culturally segregated (Nordenstam 2003: 15-17, 33ff).

Several studies have shown that there are differences in the way women and men talk and write. While these differences, as will be discussed below, might seem trivial, Robin Lakoff (1975) has argued that the difference in language use between the sexes could in fact add and reproduce gender stereotypes as well as gender inequality. In other words, the stereotypical language use of women might assert their societal subordination (p. 73ff). This notion appears closely tied to the *dominance model* as has been discussed above. Lakoff's view is also somewhat related to the *difference model*. The existence of 'two languages' that are separated by cultural ideas of correct behavior (including behaviors in language) fits well together with her ideas of language being a tool of enhancing patriarchal structures. In the context of the Swedish school, the idea of language enhancing social norms and stereotypes is an interesting notion, considering that the Swedish Education Act as well as the different policy documents governing our schools focus on equality between the sexes.

While there are countless ways in which studies have shown that the language of women and men differ, this essay will focus on few of those features, given the time limit. Lakoff has argued that women use more tag questions (i.e. ending a sentence with, for example, *doesn't it?*, *is it?* or *aren't we?*) than men. She argued that the use of tag questions can be used as a tool to express uncertainty, a way to look for someone else's confirmation and even a way of giving the impression that the speaker does not have any opinions of his/her own. The latter, Lakoff argues, is something that is characteristic of women (Lakoff 1975: 53-55). Women have also been found to use tentative language and markers of uncertainty more frequently than men. For example, women tend to use hedges more frequently (i.e. *sort of*, *maybe*, *kind of* and *possibly*) (Mulac 2006). It also seems that women tend to use tentative words such as *about* and *around* (Poynton 1989: 72) as well as *uncertainty verbs* (for example *I wonder if*, *I'm not sure* or *seems to be*) more extensively than men (Mulac 2006). Poynton (1989: 73)

suggests that men are more frequent users of slang words. *Directives* (for example *think of another* and *why don't you put that down?*) and *judgmental adjectives*, (adjectives used for personal evaluation rather than descriptions such as *bothersome* or *nice*) have both been found to be used more by men (Mulac 2006). There are, thus, several linguistic features that in the past have been observed being used more by either men or women. These six features will be in the focus of this study.

2.4 Gender in Textbooks

In this section an overview of the current state of research concerning gender in EFL (English as a foreign language) textbooks in Sweden as well as internationally in addition to earlier research concerning language and gender is presented.

Not many linguistic studies exclusively focusing on gendered language in Swedish textbooks can be found. The ones that do usually focus on nonlinguistic features to a higher extent than on linguistic features (see, for example, Alfredsson 2011) or on words used to describe men and women to see how women and men are portrayed, rather than to analyze how language is stereotypically used by men and women (see, for example, Freiding 2009). In her essay, Lina Freiding (2009) showed that while Swedish textbooks still show signs of language which portray men and women stereotypically, a progress over the last decades has been made which has somewhat dampened this phenomenon.

Over the last decades many studies have been conducted to investigate the state of gender and stereotypes in EFL textbooks, although the number of studies conducted in Sweden is slight. A number of recent studies examining gender in textbooks are focused on quantitative research questions relating to how much space the sexes are allowed, rather than on linguistic aspects (see, for example, Bachelder Malmsjö & Johansson 2009). However, previous studies have shown that there can be found instances of gender stereotypes as well as a disproportionate amount of male characters in language textbooks, even though some studies suggest that over time it has become at least somewhat less common (Jones et. al. 1997). A study conducted in Hong Kong show that gender stereotypes are still present in EFL textbooks of the 21st century. This presence is portrayed in many ways. The study from Hong Kong found that male characters are more prevalent than female and that male and female characters were often described using gender-specific adjectives (i.e. girls are portrayed as

sweet and cute while boys are portrayed as handsome or strong). The Hong Kong study also showed signs of other stereotyping descriptions, such as girls crying more than boys or girls being weak and boys being courageous. Furthermore, in the examined textbooks boys often interacted with other boys, at the same time that girls were more likely to interact with boys, rather than with other girls (Equal Opportunity Commission of Hong Kong 2001).

While some researchers claim that an overrepresentation of male (strong) characters in textbooks, and especially in dialogue exercises, might inhibit girls' chances and abilities of learning, others argue that the gender imbalance does not necessarily hinder girls' education or English language learning (Jones et al. 1997: 469ff; McGrath 2004: 352f). In this essay, however, the focus is on the Swedish schools' legally mandated goal to work against gender stereotypes, and an unbalanced representation in the textbooks of either sex is still problematic, especially since textbooks seem to play an important role of Swedish EFL education (Skolverket 2006: 10).

2.5 Swedish Policy Documents

According to the Swedish curriculum for upper-secondary school, one of the main principles upon which the Swedish school is founded is equality between men and women (Skolverket 2011: 5). It also states that all teachers must make sure that the education is characterized by an 'equality perspective' (Sw. 'jämställdhetsperspektiv') (Skolverket 2011: 11), and it is the responsibility of every member of a school's staff to ensure that notions of gender do not hinder the life choices of pupils (Ibid. 14). The Swedish school should also "actively and consciously promote women's and men's equal rights and opportunities," and "students should be encouraged to develop their interests without prejudices of what is [considered] feminine and masculine (Skolverket 2011: 6 [author's translations]).

Every teacher is bound to follow the Swedish education act (Sw. skollag) as well as the different curricula and syllabi regulating Swedish schools. While the policy documents are the foundation on which the Swedish school operates, they are sometimes not very detailed. Michael Lipsky (2010) coined the notion of street-level bureaucrats, by which he means that teachers and other government employees exist and work on the level in-between the bureaucracy (i.e. the policy documents, the parliament and government) and the people (i.e. the pupils). Since the policy documents governing their profession do not in full detail tell

teachers how to carry out their work, they are forced to interpret the documents and with their professional expertise translate their legally mandated goals into everyday reality (3-15).

While this poses numerous problems as well as great opportunities, which shall not be discussed in this paper, the interesting thing to consider here is that many English teachers in Sweden seem to surrender their task of interpreting the policy documents and instead leave the realization of the policy documents to the textbook authors (Skolverket 2006: 10-11).

3. Findings

When introducing the findings of this essay, a quick overview of the quantitative findings of this study will be given, due to reasons discussed in section 1.3.2, which will also be further discussed below. In the next two subsections the findings of each studied book will be presented separately. A number of texts from each book will be analyzed and presented thoroughly to provide the qualitative findings of this study in section 3.2. The combination of a qualitative and a quantitative approach serves as a failsafe in attempts to determine whether gender actually serves as the decisive factor or if other possible explanations to the use of the linguistic features can be found. This will be discussed more thoroughly further down. At the end of this section, a summative conclusion will be made where all three books are discussed collectively and in comparison to each other. A discussion of the relationship between this essay's qualitative and quantitative findings will also be presented.

3.1 Quantitative Findings

In this section, the data from each book will first be presented separately and then the data from all books will be presented together. It is worth mentioning, though, that since this study dwells in the grayscale between qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis, its corpus is quite small in comparison to the data of full-scale quantitative research. This is why the quantitative data must be read and understood in relation to the qualitative findings. As the interest in this study is the relationship by the usage of certain linguistic features between men and women and not the usage itself, the data will not be presented in instances per thousand words but instead in relation to the two genders. Below the table for each separate book only a small discussion will be given, a more thorough discussion will be given under the table with the data from all books combined.

Pioneer 1

Table 1. Instances of the six linguistic features by Female and Male characters in Pioneer 1.

	Female	Male	Total
Hedges	1	0	1
Uncertainty verbs	1	2	3
Tag questions	3	3	6
Slang words	0	2	2
Judgmental adjectives	0	1	1
Directives	4	11	15

As stated in previous sections, the three first features (hedges, uncertainty verbs and tag questions) are stereotypically used by women, whereas the three latter (slang words, judgmental adjectives and directives) are stereotypically used by men (Mulac 2006; Poynton 1989: 73; Lakoff 1975: 53-55). In *Table 1* we find that the four linguistic features, namely hedges, slang words, judgmental adjectives and directives follow this pattern. The trend concerning uncertainty verbs, however, seems to be reversed, as men have used them slightly more in the studied material and in the case of tag questions both female and male characters use them to the same extent.

World Wide English

Table 2. Instances of the six linguistic features by Female and Male characters in World Wide English.

	Female	Male	Total
Hedges	0	0	0
Uncertainty verbs	0	0	0
Tag questions	6	0	6
Slang words	0	1	1
Judgmental adjectives	3	0	3
Directives	8	10	18

In *Table 2*, we find that the data concerning judgmental adjectives, tag questions and slang words corresponds with findings of previous research (Mulac 2006; Lakoff 1975: 53-55; Poynton 1989:73). There is, however, a reversed relationship in the case of judgmental adjectives, as female characters seem to use them to a greater extent than male characters. In the cases of hedges and uncertainty verbs, there is no data to either support or debunk previous research results. In the case of slang words, the number of occurrences is only one, which could give an unrealistic result and is an insignificant statistical observation (cf. Esaiasson 2012: 50, 382-384).

Viewpoints

Table 3. Instances of the six linguistic features by Female and Male characters in Viewpoints.

	Female	Male	Total
Hedges	1	0	0
Uncertainty verbs	1	1	2
Tag questions	5	7	12
Slang words	6	7	13
Judgmental adjectives	1	1	2
Directives	9	19	28

In *Table 3*, we find that the data concerning hedges, slang words and directives correspond with those of previous research (Mulac 2006; Lakoff 1975: 53-55). In the case of slang words, there is, however, only a slight difference, which might be insignificant. Uncertainty verbs and judgmental adjectives are used by female and male characters to the same extent, and the proportion of tag questions is reversed. In this table, there are, however, mostly small differences between male and female usage, except in the case of directives, which could indicate that the result concerning these linguistic features is solely dependent on coincidence or the setting and speech situation of the texts.

In *Table 4*, the data provided by all of the textbooks are presented.

Table 4. Instances of the six linguistic features by between Female and Male characters in the three textbooks combined. (Percentages of totals are given within parentheses.)

	Female	Male	Total
Hedges	2 (100)	0 (0)	2 (100)
Uncertainty verbs	2 (40)	3 (60)	5 (100)
Tag questions	14 (58)	10 (42)	24 (100)
Slang words	6 (38)	10 (63)	16 (101)
Judgmental adjectives	4 (67)	2 (33)	6 (100)
Directives	21 (34)	40 (66)	61 (100)

In Table 4, we observe a slight tendency for women to use two of the three stereotypical female features, namely hedges and tag questions, more than men. We can also find that men in the examined material tend to use two out of three of the stereotypical male features, slang words and directives, more than women. There are, however, two interesting deviations from the expected results. Uncertainty verbs are used more frequently by male characters, and judgmental adjectives are used by female characters to a greater extent than male characters. It should, however, be noted that with only five and six instances respectively, this result might not be representative. The result could also depend on the speech situation the characters of the story are part of, something that will be discussed in section 3.2.

The most distinctive result is that male characters tend to use directives and slang words almost twice as often as their female counterparts, which supports previous research results (Mulac 2006; Poynton 1989: 73). The result concerning hedges is also quite interesting, although it might be problematic to draw any general conclusions from it as there are only two instances found. These statistics do seem to support the tendencies described in previous research since some gender stereotypical language is found. The opposite result is also found as in the cases of uncertainty verbs and judgmental adjectives, but this does not reject the fact that some features of gender stereotypical language are present in the texts under study.

3.2 Qualitative Findings

In this section two texts from each book will be qualitatively analyzed and presented in relation to their respective quantitative results. For this analysis texts with a significant

amount of instances of the studied linguistic features have been chosen. It should, however, be noted that even though only two texts per book are presented in this essay, the observations that are presented here can be found throughout all of the chosen texts of the textbooks. Even though the analysis is of a qualitative nature in this section, some statistics will be presented as they will be discussed in relation to the qualitative findings. This section discusses what we can actually conclude from the above statistics and why some linguistic features are used or not.

Pioneer 1

Text 1: Across the Universe

This text is a fantasy story about a father, a mother and their daughter who are about to undergo a procedure which will put them to sleep and freeze them for a 300-year journey across space. In the story, we also meet two technicians, who are in charge of the operations. In this text the male characters were found to use directives (for example “stop!”, “say goodbye”) eight times and the female characters once. The male characters were also found to use a tag question (“see?”) and slang (“gonna”) in one instance. At a quantitative level, this might be a good indication that gender stereotypical language is used in the text (and in extension, gender stereotypical language is present the textbook) as even though male characters use a typical feminine feature (tag question) once they also use directives to a much higher extent than their female counterparts and were found to use slang. If we take a closer look at the data, we find that gender might not be the decisive factor in this case. If we consider the amount of space the characters are given, we find that the male characters utter a total of 150 words whereas the female characters only utter 24 words (of a total of 174 words). It may thus not be an example of male versus female language, but rather a question about how much space male versus female characters are given. Worth noting, however, is that while the male characters speak approximately six times more than female characters, they use directives eight times more. This gives us reason to believe that the uneven amount of utterances from male and female characters cannot fully explain the number of times men were found to use directives, or the absence of female directives.

If we continue to look at the statistics in relation to the speech situation, we find even more clues as to why the decisive factor might not be gender, but perhaps the type of text and its setting. The text is a story about a father, mother and their daughter, who are living in a

futuristic environment where they are about to be frozen down to be able to partake in a 300-year journey across space. There are two male lab technicians who are running the operation. The story is mainly about how the technicians instruct the family on how to go through with the procedure. It is, then, in this setting or speech situation natural for the two technicians to give to the three persons who are new to the procedure instructions on what to do in form of directives. In this case, the setting of the text might be what compels the two (male) technicians to use a series of directives and not their gender. While this might compel the reader of this study to believe that gender has got nothing to do with it, theories and practices about gender might very well be the reason why the technicians are males. The aim of this study is however not to draw any conclusions based on cultural or social roles of gender, but rather only linguistic ones. It is therefore, despite the overrepresentation of directives in male speech, hard to tell whether their use of this linguistic feature is because of their gender, or the nature of speech acts in which this feature occurs.

Text 2: Guess What's Coming to Dinner?

This text is a story about a young couple who has invited the girlfriend's parents to dinner. The story almost exclusively consists of dialogue. In the text women were found to use tag questions (for example "aren't we?", "don't, we") two times, as opposed to one time for men. Only men were found to use directives ("bog in!"), judgmental adjectives ("strange") and slang words ("barbie", meaning barbeque) (once respectively), whereas both women and men used uncertainty verbs ("I think", "I suppose") once each. No hedges were found. In terms of the use of these linguistic features, the text appears somewhat stereotypical. The male and female characters make up for approximately equal quotas of the text (282 words spoken by women and 294 by men). This text, however, does not have a setting where the use of some types of words, as with directives in the previous text, are called for. The characters in the story keep a conversation going mainly about the food they are served and the dialogue is mostly small talk. A slight tendency for the characters to use gender stereotypical linguistic features might actually depend on their gender. In every case, except for the uncertainty verbs, the different features that have been categorized as either 'male' or 'female' match up with the findings of previous research and there does not seem to be any other factor that might cause the characters to speak in such a manner.

In comparison with the first text from this textbook, there seem to be, slight as they are, some tendencies of stereotypical language use. While it is hard to draw conclusions from just one text, the overall data from *Pioneer 1* seem to demonstrate at least some occurrences of stereotypical language, and the qualitative analysis suggests that some of them are based on the speakers' gender.

World Wide English

Text 3: A Morning's Mad Dash to School

In this text we get to follow a father of three, two daughters and one son, who is describing his family's morning routine – i.e. getting his children to get out of bed, get them dressed, eat breakfast and get to school in time. The only occurrences of the six linguistic features that were found were eight instances of directives (for example “get out of bed”, “get dressed”), given by a male character. The male characters were given more space than their female counterparts (182 as opposed to 115 words). In this text the amount of space given to women and men respectively does not seem to be able to explain why directives were only used by men. Even though men were given 58% more space, this could not explain the overrepresentation of directives on the male side. Once again, the setting of the text might offer us some insight. The story is, as mentioned, about a man trying to wake up his children and get them ready for school. In this setting, it seems quite natural to use directives to prompt the children to get on with their morning routines. When the setting of the story might not be able to explain the wide difference between the male and female characters' use of directives, namely eight to naught, this gives us a reason to believe that while perhaps not all instances of directives used by men can be contributed to gender some of them could be gender-related since such use of directives corresponds with findings in previous research.

Text 4: Untitled

In this story we are following a young girl who is first dressing up to go to a disco, and then we are taken to the scene of the disco. Most of the story consists of the girl speaking about various things, mostly concerning clothes and boys, with her mother and her friends. Most of the dialogue is by the female characters (517 compared to 81 for male and 26 words for unknown characters). Three instances of tag questions (for example “anyway?”, “right?”) and one instance of judgmental adjectives (“wonderful”, denoting appearance) were found, all uttered by female characters. While there is a great difference between the number of words

spoken by women and men (83% and 13% respectively, including unknown characters in the total count), this does not necessarily explain why female characters tend to use tag questions to a higher extent than male. If we compare this to the total count from all books, only 24 instances of tag questions were found, which means that almost 13% of those were uttered in this text. That, together with the observation that there are no circumstantial factors that would justify a higher use of tag questions, gives us reason to believe that decisive factor in this case might actually be gender. As has been discussed repeatedly in this essay, it is hard to derive any significant conclusion from just one instance, but in this case this instance seem to prove that not all differences in how men and women use different linguistic features can be attributed to the specificity of text and speech situation.

Viewpoints Vocational

While it is not the aim of this study, it should be noted that the vast majority of this book's main characters are male, and the stories are therefore in most cases told from a male perspective. To ensure that there are excerpts from both male and female narrators (i.e. the storyteller of the text), every text with a female narrator has been studied, whereas roughly 40% of the texts where the narrator is male have been chosen. While this could perhaps pose some problems in terms of data reliability, it would be harder to motivate a corpus where only a few of the texts are 'female' and the vast majority are 'male' – especially in an essay studying the significance the speaker's gender has on the use of linguistic features (for specifics on how the different texts have been chosen, consult the *Material* section).

Text 5: Forbidden Love

This text passage is a story about a young couple (male and female) living in a secret relationship, talking about the future and each other, and it ends in a conversation between the girl and her mother and father. The amount of space is quite evenly divided between the men and women (285 and 260 words respectively). One instance of the use of uncertainty verbs (“I think”) by the male characters and two instances of tag questions (“are you?”, “where they?”) by the female characters were found. The female and male characters used slang words (for example “slapper”, “gyal”) (four and five times respectively), judgmental adjectives (“droopy”, “nasty”) (once each) and directives (twice each). Interestingly, tag questions were only used by the female characters (twice) and only the male characters used an uncertainty verb. As for other categories, the occurrences were divided quite evenly between the two

genders. The use of slang words by both genders might be explained by the fact that the young couple at one point starts to playfully act like people from a gang. Thus in the case of slang, the decisive factor might be the specificity of text and speech situation, rather than gender. The (female) use of tag questions points in the same direction as previous research but the male use of uncertainty verbs, the even distribution of the use of directives and judgmental adjectives differs from the tendencies found in previous research. Other than the apparent topic-specific reason to the use of slang words, there seem to be no other factors contributing to the use of these linguistic features. In this text the prevalence of gender stereotypical language is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, the female characters used tag questions to a higher extent (two to naught) and uncertainty verbs were only used by male characters. On the other hand, directives, slang and judgmental adjectives were used to a similar extent between the two genders.

Text 6: Boy Kills Man

In this text we are following a story of two twelve year old boys and one of the boys' uncle. All characters in this story are males. One of the boys is an assassin, working for drug cartels and the scene takes place when he is threatening the other boy's uncle because the uncle had, by the looks of it (it is only suggested and not explicitly told in the story), sexually abused his nephew some days prior to the scene. The text contained four instances of tag questions (for example "wasn't I", "you hear?"), two slang words ("whack", meaning to kill and "to cap", meaning to shoot) and nine directives (for example "chew on it", "open this door"). Slang words and directives are, according to previous research, more commonly used by men whereas tag questions are more common among women. The use of slang words could be attributed to the fact that the two boys are small-time criminals, most likely belonging to some kind of gang where slang is common. There were nine instances of directives used in the text that can probably not all be attributed to the topic of the text. While the setting and topic, a boy threatening another person with a handgun, might give us reason to believe that some directives are story-specific, the vast number of them must have another reason – in all probability gender. The use of directives seems to point to gender stereotypical language, since this has been observed in previous studies as well. When it comes to the use of tag questions, the relationship is however reversed. Tag questions have earlier been attributed to women, and there seems to be no evidence of the topic of the story somehow interfering and justifying the use of many tag questions.

3.3 Conclusion

The tendency that has been discussed above is something that is found throughout all the texts in the books. In some of the texts, there appears to be another primary reason why some linguistic features are used more or less, thereby making gender a secondary factor. In other words, even if there seems to be a gender-related representation of language features that agrees with the findings of previous research, it is sometimes hard to tell whether the reason for this is actually gender. In some texts, however, there is no story-specific need which could influence the different characters to use specific words or type of words. This is also the main reason why this study presents two types of findings – quantitative and qualitative. While a simple quantitative study of how many times per thousand words boys and girls use hedges, for example, might give us an indication whether the female characters use them more or not, this is, however, insufficient to tell us whether or not gender is actually the cause of such trends. While it could be argued that gender stereotypes could put men and women in contexts where one or the other type of word is used more often, this is not the aim of this study and should instead be left to researchers of sociolinguistics or sociology.

At the same time, the quantitative findings of this study showed some interesting results, namely that the use of hedges, tag questions, slang and directives agrees with previous research results (i.e. they were used in a stereotypical manner), whereas the occurrence of uncertainty verbs and judgmental adjectives showed an opposite correlation. A quick glance at these results tells us two things. Firstly, there are some signs of gender stereotypical language being used in the studied textbooks. Secondly, there is some indication that the characters do not use gender stereotypical language; even the opposite tendency is manifest, as some typically female features were used more by men and vice versa. While one might be satisfied with this result, since it provides an answer for this essay's research question (i.e. the use of directives, slang, hedges and tag questions were found to be gender stereotypical), it is crucial to take one step further and consider the qualitative analysis of the texts. This shows us that while there might be signs of gender stereotypical language, gender might not be the reason behind these patterns in all cases. The qualitative analysis showed that there are, in fact, some cases when the setting and speech situation seems to play a bigger part, which explains why, for example, directives or slang words are used. It also showed that in some cases no other reason than the speaker's gender could be found. This tells us two things about the quantitative findings. First of all, the quantitative findings must be read critically.

Secondly, the trends seen in the statistics do, at least to some degree, depend on the speakers' gender in the studied material. Thus, this study tells us that there are signs of gender stereotypical language in the texts from the textbooks used in Swedish schools, but this study does not tell us how widespread this phenomenon is. An essay of this size cannot process the vast amount of data (both qualitative and quantitative) that would be needed to give us a fair and general picture of how common gender stereotypical language is in the textbooks which we use to educate our pupils. However, this does not mean that this study has come up with zero results. This study has, as mentioned, showed that gender stereotypical language is present in the material, but does leave questions for other researchers to answer, namely questions about how widespread this phenomenon is.

There is not much to be said on the comparison between the three books. Even though the three sets of data are not strictly identical, they show similar trends in the use of the six linguistic features. There is no clear overrepresentation of any of the linguistic features in any of the books except for tag questions in the female language in *World Wide English* and directives in the male language in *Pioneer 1* and *Viewpoints*. The differences between the genders are slight in most other cases, and while the differences in the use of the features vary between the books, this may be due to the small sample size. All of the books show similar results in the qualitative analysis. That is, some texts have clear contextual reasons, some texts have somewhat unclear contextual reasons and some texts have no contextual reasons as to why some types of words or phrases are used slightly more or less. One interesting difference between *Viewpoints* and the two other books is that very few of the texts in *Viewpoints* are told from a female perspective with a female narrator, whereas this difference is not quite as apparent in the other books. This, however, does not answer the research question of this study and therefore will not be discussed in any greater detail.

While discourse analysis as an analytical tool has not been used throughout the analysis, the theory of discourse analysis has been essential as its theoretical framework. What this study has shown is that language can be, and is being used, not only to convey information between speakers, but also to portray social and cultural stereotypes. Keeping the theory of discourse analysis in mind throughout the reading and conducting of this essay is vital, as the area of interest has been on what can be found underneath the purely informative use of language.

4. Closing remarks

While the research question of this study has been answered, there are still many aspects that require further research. First of all, concerning how widespread this phenomenon is and how much of it we can attribute to gender; also, many other aspects of gender in textbooks are not related to the aim of this study, but rather research in sociolinguistics or sociology. There are still many gender stereotypical notions in the textbooks with regards to what female versus male characters do and what kind of stories they partake in. While there are examples where men are given stereotypical feminine traits and vice versa, there is also, for example, a story about a young boy trying to coerce his girlfriend into having sex with him and several other stories where girls' only concern is their physical appearance and so on. These types of instances of gender stereotypical notions have not been the purpose of this study and have therefore not been brought up or studied. The main concerns with gender stereotypical language in school material might not lie within a purely linguistic realm, but might instead have to do with types of roles which men and women are expected to act out or with contexts which they are expected to find themselves in. To provide an overall picture of what kind of stereotypes our textbooks portray, we must also study these aspects, but that is left to researchers in other disciplines than linguistics. As mentioned earlier in this paper, some researchers suggest that the existence of gender stereotypical notions in textbooks might have diminished over the last few decades; studies such as this or the one conducted in Hong Kong suggest that gender stereotypes are still present well into the 21st century. In a school system that stresses the importance of gender equality such as the Swedish one, this should concern not only the policy makers, but also teachers and textbook publishers. This is why it is my belief that further studies must be conducted in this area as a joint mission between different disciplines (linguistics as well as social sciences) as well as between different institutions (schools, policy makers, universities and publishers).

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