Gender in English Language and EFL-Textbooks

By Anita Mustedanagic

Halmstad University, 2010

School of Teacher Education

English for Student in Teacher Training

Term Paper, 15 credits

Supervisor: Stuart Foster
Abstract

A textbook is a key component in the arsenal of a teacher of English. For this reason, it is of importance that textbooks used in Swedish schools are compliant with the fundamental values of equality, provided in the LPO 94. I will attempt to discover the extent to which English textbooks present males and females in non-stereotyped ways and as equal. I want to provide an overview to show how they deal with gender issues. In addition, I aim at establish whether there are any connection between learning and gender, and whether it hinders the pupil’s language learning.

My analysis will draw on previous research and theories presented by prominent figures in the field, such as, Butler (1990), Mills (1995), Renner (1997), Ravitch (2004) and Jones, Kitetu & Jane Sunderland (1997)among others. Thereafter, these theories, and my own research will be compared, to and contrasted with the guidelines from the Swedish National Agency of Education.

This dissertation comprises a qualitative critical discourse analysis of two randomly selected textbooks that have been, or are being used, in Swedish secondary schools. For my study, I have chosen Team 8 (1984) and Wings 8 (2000).

In my analyses, a number of different aspects will be taken into consideration, such as the gender distribution of narrators, main characters and sub characters, as well as the description of gender/gender roles, and the representation of gender in illustrations. Further, I will study what kind of language is used: the extent to which it is gendered or de-gendered language. These aspects will be collected quantitatively.

The findings from the analysis show that the language in Wings 8 gives a broad and non-stereotypic view of gender roles, which is in accordance with the fundamental values of LPO 94. However, the illustrations tend to portray males and females in what can be considered as quite stereotypical.

Team 8, on the other hand, contains gendered language and male dominance; women were placed in the background or left out completely. Therefore, Team 8 would not be deemed to be compliant with the requirements set by the Swedish National Agency of Education today.

Key words: Education, teaching material, Wings, Team 8, gender, critical discourse analysis.
Table of contents

1.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Aim ............................................................................................................................................ 3
  1.2 Research question ...................................................................................................................... 4
  1.3 Structure .................................................................................................................................... 4
  1.4 Literature presentation ............................................................................................................... 5

2.0 Background .................................................................................................................................. 7
  2.1 Gender Theory .......................................................................................................................... 8
  2.2 Judith Butler – Gender Troubles ............................................................................................... 8
  2.3 Language and Gender ............................................................................................................... 9
  2.4 Gender related reading and writing ........................................................................................... 13
  2.5 Gender and EFL textbooks ....................................................................................................... 14
  2.6 Textbook dialogues ................................................................................................................... 15
  2.7 Against the Theory of “Sexist Language” ................................................................................... 18
  2.8 Political correctness .................................................................................................................. 20
  2.9 Inclusive language: Is it Necessary? .......................................................................................... 20

3.0 Material and Method ................................................................................................................... 22
  3.1 Material ..................................................................................................................................... 22
    3.1.1 Wings 8 ............................................................................................................................... 23
    3.1.2 Team 8 ................................................................................................................................ 23
  3.2 Method ...................................................................................................................................... 23
  3.3 Procedure .................................................................................................................................. 25

4.0 Result and analysis ........................................................................................................................ 26
  4.1 Characters ................................................................................................................................. 26
  4.2 Occupations ............................................................................................................................... 28
    4.3 Use of gendered and de-gendered language ............................................................................. 31
  4.4 Illustrations ............................................................................................................................... 33
    4.4.1 Wings 8 ............................................................................................................................... 33
    4.4.2 Team 8 ................................................................................................................................ 35
    4.4.3 Illustration summary ........................................................................................................... 36

5.0 Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 37
  5.1 Discussion ................................................................................................................................... 40

6.0 Method Reflection and Future Studies ....................................................................................... 42
7.0 References.................................................................................................................. 44
8.0 Appendix...................................................................................................................... 47
  8.1 Changed words............................................................................................................. 47
Acknowledgments

I would like to this opportunity to thank Christer Bermheden, one of several authors of Team 8. He has supplied me with valuable information over telephone and kindly sent me the material which I needed in order to be able to conduct my research. In addition, I would also like to thank my supervisor and student colleagues, for your great assistance in enriching my essay.

With many thanks!

Halmstad, May 2010
1.0 Introduction

“The growth of multilingualism in Europe represents the unraveling of a key component of modern identity” (Graddol, 2006:19-19)

English originated in Britain and is, today, widely spoken on six continents, being the primary language of several countries and the second language (L2) of a number of others. This means English has come to be seen as a global language, and it is estimated that a third of the world’s population can speak English. Numerically speaking, this would amount to somewhere around two billion people (Britannica, 1-2).

Today, English is the first choice of foreign language education in most countries of the world. In Sweden, English education differs from other school subjects. English is categorized as a “core subject”, meaning that every pupil must be educated in English and must demonstrate a certain standard to be able to get a mark and degree, in order to be qualified for higher education (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2008). This situation makes the learning of English an essential part of Swedish educational system. The English name for the body known in Sweden as “Skolverket” is The Swedish National Agency for Education. The organization is a central administrative authority for the Swedish public school system for children, young people and adults, as well as for preschool activities and child care for school children. The Agency has the responsibility for setting goals and guidelines for preschool and school through the Education Act, and for curricula etc. In addition, the Agency supports, follows-up and evaluates, the work of all schools with the purpose of improving quality and ensuring that all pupils have access to equal education (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2005).

However, language teaching does not simply involve the study of language; it also contributes to cultural studies, learned through the use of various types of text material. However as teachers, it is important for us to ask ourselves what these texts convey to the pupils. Whenever a text is read, an interpretation is made by the reader and meaning is constructed. Teachers can never be sure of how the material to which the pupils are
exposed to will affect them. For this reason, it is important for teachers to look at the material and try to predict what students are likely to find in the texts. In doing so, we get an opportunity to address whatever issues might arise.

If we, for a moment, compare teaching language with building a house, the text represents our material. It can be dangerous to use bad materials for building, because there is always the chance that the house might collapse. The same thing can be applied to English textbooks.

It is in the school sphere that pupils learn values, but learning values is not a single subject in our timetable, instead it should permeate through all teaching. Therefore, it is crucial that the textbooks are compatible with the fundamental values upon which the Swedish school is based.

This essay seeks to examine today’s conditions concerning language and gender; to discuss how the issue of gender has developed in EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL (English as a second language) material. The term “EFL” is used to refer to all regions where English is spoken as a foreign language (EFL); for example, Austria, Germany, Norway, Iceland, the Netherlands, and Sweden etc. The term “ESL”, on the other hand refers to countries where English is spoken as a second language (L2) and such countries include, for instance, many regions of Africa, Asia and the West Indies. Often, these regions and countries are former colonies of the British Empire (Graddol, 1997:10). I will try to ascertain how these books deal with the representation of gender. My goal is to establish whether there is a tendency towards any kind of overrepresentation or discrimination.

According to the curriculum (LPO 94), teachers do not only have the responsibility to teach their subject, but also to be a part of “developing the pupils into responsible members of society” (LPO, 1994: p. 8-8) What the LPO 94 represents is a government directive, which specifies the ethos and values that should be implemented in the education system. Further, LPO 94 refers to fundamental values and human rights. The document stipulates that “everyone working in the school should encourage respect for the intrinsic value of all people” (LPO, 1994:3-4)
LPO 94 additionally states that:

The school should promote an understanding for others and the ability to empathize. Activities should be characterized by care of the individual’s well-being and development. No-one should be subject to discrimination at school based on gender, ethnic belonging, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or disability, or subjected to other degrading treatment.”

According to the ethos, LPO 94 textbooks and other teaching material should not contribute to enhancing or strengthening stereotypes and gender roles. Textbooks are often a major part of learning English as a foreign language and they are supposed to motivate and support the learners’ learning. I find it interesting and instructive to investigate gender representation in textbooks because they tend to influence the learners’ way of thinking about society and gender through the means of language learning.

Today, in western societies, we have a “conception of equality”. This idea is built upon the notion that every human should have equal opportunities and should be treated and recognized as a human rather than simply a member of their respective sex. However, Renner points out that, if we look at statistics, it becomes clear that whether we are born male or female profoundly affects and, in some cases, limits, us in our choices of occupation etc (Renner, 1997: 8-8). I will show, in this essay, that there is a belief in the educational establishment and academia that language teaching both creates and reproduces constructions of gender roles. I will also show that there is an argument that, rather than being constructions, they simply reflect reality.

1.1 Aim

A large number of studies have been done about gender in language, although none of the studies involved Swedish EFL textbooks. Textbooks are often a major part of the English language classroom and are supposed to aid the learners’ learning. This dissertation investigates the representation of gender and gender roles in English textbooks used in Swedish schools. The aim is to study gender stereotypes in language and observe how

---

1 The original document is in Swedish; therefore, I have translated all quotations and information into English.
women and men are described in EFL textbooks. I will attempt to discover the extent to which English textbooks present males and females in non-stereotyped ways and as equal. This is particularly interesting to investigate, as they may influence the learners’ way of thinking about gender.

For my study, I have chosen Team 8 and Wings 8 further descriptions concerning each textbooks will be presented in chapter 3. I want to provide an overview to show how they deal with gender issues. In addition, I aim at observing; if there is any connection between learning and gender, and whether it hinders the pupil’s language learning. This type of investigation is of importance, because teachers need to consider what their choice of teaching materials might entail, and the issues this might bring about.

1.2 Research question

How is the representation of gender in language conveyed through EFL (English as a foreign language) textbooks, in Sweden? How does this affect the attitude towards gender roles in the classroom?

1.3 Structure

The first chapter functions as an introduction to my essay; further in this chapter, I will also state my aim, research question along with my literature presentation. Chapter 2 contains a brief historical background of women; various theories involving gender and teaching material are also included. This chapter outlines various views, perceptions and theories relevant to my subject. Chapter 3 is devoted to presenting information in relation to my material and methodology. My result and analysis are presented in chapter 4. The following chapters (5) and (6) offer a conclusion and discussion. My method reflection, and suggestions for future research, are to be found in the last chapter (7).
1.4 Literature presentation

Several scholars have made research studies which involve gender and language. One work mentioned in this context is *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) written by Sara Mills. Mills examines sexism in language and “gendering texts”. The book provides a feminist theoretical framework and critique.

The connection between language and gender is furthermore described in Christopher E, Renner’s review of sexism in ESL (English as a second language) textbooks in a paper called *Women are busy, tall and beautiful – Looking at sexism in EFL material* (1997). He examines the role language plays in constructing and maintaining stereotypical principles. For Renner, it is important to eliminate sexism in the language classroom in order to provide an environment where every pupil can learn on equal terms.

Martha Jones, Catherine Kitetu and Jane Sunderland study in “*Discourse Roles, Gender and Language Textbook Dialogues: who learns what from John and Sally?*” (1997) aims to analyze gender bias in dialogues presented in popular textbooks designed for ESL textbooks. In their research, the three authors’ main concern is to scrutinize the effects a textbook may have on a pupil’s language proficiency.

In addition, is it is of importance to mention Judith Butler’s work *Gender Troubles* (1990). Butler contributes with her widely known queer theory, according to which, “gender” is open to interpretation by each individual. In *Gender Troubles*, she expresses a concern over how gender is not necessarily decided by the biological sex of a person.

Theresa Mickey McCormick is the author of *Creating the Non-sexist Classroom – A Multicultural Approach* (1994). This book is intended for teacher educators and offers theoretical and practical guidelines for implementing a nonsexist classroom environment. The book starts with a history of the women’s movement as a context for understanding current gender issues; the discussion moves on to establishing how further attempts can be made to create a non-sexist classroom environment.
Diane Ravitch is the writer of *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* (2004). This book illustrates the regime of censorship from politically motivated pressure groups and the effect this may have on education.

Furthermore, I used a publication by Christina Hoff Sommers titled *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* (1994). The text opposes the idea of comparing social gender and gender in language. Further, she offers an explanation of the historical meaning of ambiguous words like “man” and how they are used today. Sommers´ advice is the focus should be on the meaning of ambiguous words in the context in which they occur.

In this essay, I have also used the works from linguists, such as George Yule, and his work *The Study of Language* (1996), and also *An Introduction to Language* (2007), written by Victoria Rodman Robert & Hyams Nina. The books provide readers with a basic synopsis of the linguistic field.

In order to present different views on the subject, I used two articles, one of which was written by John E, Joseph with the title *Language and Politics* (2007). The other article was written by Kenneth D, Whitehead, and is titled *Inclusive Language: Is It Necessary?* (1997). The articles argue that a de – gendered language is not necessary and that such a notion only takes away the individual’s freedom of consciously expressing their individuality and gender identity.

For this essay I also used an article titled *Natural Conversations as a Model for Textbook Dialogue*, written by Carol Myers Scotton and Janice, Bernsten, published in 1998. The article expresses the view that dialogues in textbooks should have a close relationship with natural conversations, and be as representative as possible, in order to support pupils´ learning.

I have also included documents and criteria set by the Swedish National Agency of Education, where, I dealt with the structure of the Swedish school system. The curriculum and other documents can be found as PDF documents in the appendix or as links in my reference list. The documents present the fundamental values upon which the Swedish school is based.

In addition, I sought advice and guidance from books dealing with methodology. The books I used were; Norman Fairclough´s *Analysing Discourse* (2003), Barbara Johnstone´s
Qualitative Methods in Sociolinguistics (2000), Martyn, Denscombe’s Good Research Guide for Small-scale Social Research and Projects (2007) and Michael Bloor’s and Fiona Woods’s Keywords in Qualitative Methods: A Vocabulary of Research Concepts (2006). Several books were used in order to increase the reliability and the validity of this survey.

2.0 Background

As early as 1866, the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) worked to secure Equal Rights to all American citizens, especially the right of suffrage, irrespective of race, color, or sex. There were, however, similar alignments in Britain as well. During the late 19th century, new waves of influences emerged where women started to fight for emancipation and equality. Issues commonly associated with notions of women’s rights include (though are not limited to) the right to bodily integrity; to vote; to hold public office; to work; to fair wages; to own property and to have educational rights. Nowadays, modern societies have often institutionalized these liberties, conferring upon women the same rights as men (McCormick, 1995: 1-44).

While educational and other opportunities have opened up for women since the 1960s, McCormick explicates that still the top leadership positions are held predominantly by white males. Often these notions and stereotypes are expressed in school materials, creating what McCormick (1995: 1-44) refers to as “false impressions”, based on exaggerated, inaccurate, and rigid generalizations, having little correspondence with reality.

Due to the historical situation presented by McCormick, I was inspired to scrutinize more current as well as older Swedish EFL textbooks and the implications they might have on teaching situations. In addition, previous research concerning gender issues and textbooks is also integrated into the essay to give a clearer picture of my investigation.
2.1 Gender Theory

The expression “gender” has more than one valid definition, where the meaning of the word can be related to the context. However, all definitions have one common thread, “gender” refers to a wide set of characteristics that are seen to distinguish between male and female entities, extending from one’s biological sex to, one’s social role (Britannica, 1-1).

Bowie formulates a distinction between “sex” and “gender”. “Gender” refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors and attributes considered appropriate for men and women in a given society. The reference to “sex” is the biological category (Bowie, 2006:81-101). When using the terms sex and gender in this paper this is what I will refer to.

2.2 Judith Butler – Gender Troubles

Butler initiates her book Gender Troubles by attacking the idea of an existing universal identity for “women”. The categories “women and men” are seen by Butler as fraught categories complicated by class, ethnicity and sexuality. She names the construction of gender as “political gender”, which refers to an idea of a universal basis for feminism. She criticizes this assumption, for the reason that such a claim attempts to colonize and appropriate Non-Western cultures to support Western views. Another discussion brought up by Butler is the often debated question as to whether there are commonalities among women (Butler, 1990:1-5).

She continues her first chapter and mentions feminist and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, who stated that, “One is not born a woman, one becomes one”. Beauvoir stipulates that a young girl must pass puberty in order to become a woman; this life-stage is not an instinctive one, rather learned through different social contexts (Butler, 1990:6-13).

Butler, however, disputes the claim that “sex” is a biological category and “gender” a cultural construction. She questions if such a claim is even possible. Therefore, she questions De Beauvoir and is of the opinion that gender identification is a personal choice that each individual is free to make. Hence, becoming a woman does not necessarily mean you have to be a female (Butler, 1990:6-13). Butler comprehends gender as a role practice and refers to
it as “performative”. Her main concern in the book is to discuss the fact that people are often conditioned to think that sex will automatically determine one’s gender. She and many of her followers believe that gender is taught; one learns while very young, and through interaction with society, how to behave and act properly for his or her “gender”, as chosen by society. Modern societies strive to identify and categorize everything, even human beings, in order to cope with the world. Further, she expresses the view that this situation is a result of a phallocentric language (Butler, 1990:1-16). Phallocentrism is a critical theory referring to the privileging of the masculine in the construction of meaning (Mills, 1995:62-65). Furthermore, Butler is of the view that Western societies are built upon male dominance, and women are excluded from both economy and politics. For Butler, language also plays a crucial role in the formation of gender and sexuality. She supports her thesis with the claim that our knowledge is structured through the use of language, where gender roles are formatted. According to Butler, there are as many gender roles in the world as living human beings. Therefore it is impossible to categorize ones “gender” depending on “sex” (Butler, 1990:1-16).

2.3 Language and Gender

Gender can be identified from a linguistic perspective as well. In this context gender refers primarily to the classification of nouns into a gender class which, in most languages, consist of three gender categories; masculine, feminine and neuter. It is typical for articles and adjectives to take different forms in order to “agree” with the gender of the noun (Britannica, 1-15). For example, the agreement between boy and his is based on the relationship involving the male entities. It can be said that languages such as English, Spanish, German, French etc. have grammatical gender. In these languages, gender is essential for constructing sentences and communication (Yule, 1996: 90-91). Nowadays, gender in language tends to be rather obvious and, therefore, many people do not even notice it. Linguistic stereotypes can be found in different ways. Renner points out two common ways, in morphology and semantics (Renner, 1997:3-5).
Semantics in linguistics is the study of interpretation of signs or symbols as used by agents within particular circumstances and contexts (Yule, 1996:114-114). If one looks closely at adjectives, one becomes aware of the fact that different adjectives are more commonly used to describe different sexes. The sentence “He is a pretty man”, would be considered semantically abhorrent because the adjective “pretty” is not a usual choice when describing a male adult. According to our perceptions, a man is supposed to be described as handsome and not pretty, therefore, the sentence above would strike the readers as being odd, although it may be grammatically correct. The word “pretty” is used to portray women, children or animals, but not male adults (Renner, 1997:3-5). Gender can also be studied in morphology, the creation of words, which I will discuss later on in this chapter.

Mills interrogates texts from a feminist perspective. She raises awareness that when we talk about gender and literature, the notion of phallocentrism operates (Mills, 1995:62-65). She closely examines generic sexism usage in language at the level of words, phrases and sentences, in part II of her books. She considers the effects that this use of language may have on readers. She starts with two contrasted theories and questions: does language put a name to existing things? Or does it affect the way we understand the world? Edward Saphir and Benjamin Whorf constructed the idea about language determinism, a theory suggesting that different language structures determine how one views the world. The language of a culture shapes the way speakers perceive the world. Mills contrasts Whorf’s assumptions to the idea that language does not construct the way we think; instead, it responds to the need to express our cultural perspectives. In other words language only represents culturally constructed norms (Mills, 1995:83-87).

Mills continues her book by highlighting different customs where examples of gender stereotypes in linguistics can be found (Mills 1995:83-87). It can be seen in:

**Generic Pronouns:** If we study the use of the generic pronoun he in the sentence “When an author has completed his manuscript, he can send it to the publishers.” The principle of this sentence is to refer to a generic person rather than being sex-specific. However, Mills points out that, in reality, the sentence is not registered as generic; the pronoun he carries a sex
specific meaning, denoting that the person in question is male. As a consequence, a “cold clime” setting is created, where females feel excluded (Mills, 1995:87-88).

**Affixes:** contribute to distinguishing words between genders. One example is the suffix –ess, as in “waitress” or “hostess”, the suffix stresses that the referents it is a female rather than a male person. The suffix –man functions in the same way, creating masculine words like “policeman”, “fireman” etc. (Mills, 1995:89-95). Renner also examines linguistic stereotypes and mentions that affixes are mostly found in correlation with occupational names, where the trend has been to differentiate occupations intended for males and females. For instance, a nurse is considered to be a female person skilled in caring for sick people (Renner, 1997:3-5). According to, the prototype theory, a female person is the clearest example of the occupation nurse. The prototype theory is a model of graded categorizations, where some members of a category are more central than others. A prototype helps to explain the meaning of a word by resembling to the clearest exemplar. For instance, when we are asked to give an example of a bird, not all bird types are considered to be equal good examples, e.g. a robin is more prototypical of a bird than, say a parrot. Prototypes are not printed down nor learned consciously; they are constructed in the human mind, through language learning and interaction with society (Yule, 1996: 120-120). Another characteristic example is the word “fireman”, indicating that only men work in fire-stations. A male person is also the most archetypal example of the occupation. We can also observe the norm in cohesion with political titles and jobs e.g. Chairman (Renner, 1997: 3-5). It can be said that these words help to convey gender issues, through the medium of language. Renner remarks that females are more limited occupationally. This may be a situation that restricts language learning opportunities as well (Renner, 1997:8-8).

Renner comments, that more recently, feminist groups, have voiced a view that there is a need to change the structure that supports sexism within language. “The use of generic masculine words is more than just a symbolic declaration of women’s lesser (deviant, invisible) status. Some would argue that the use of English generic masculine is more damaging to women’s interest: that it impedes communication and encourages discrimination.” (Renner, 1997: 4-4)
This feminine approach in the last three decades has led to a shift in language, a shift leading up to the formation of new words replacing old ones. Today, there is a perceived need as well as a demand to create new linguistic terms that place both sexes on equal terms (Renner, 1997: 4-4). This process of equality in language is called “de-gendering”, and can be carried out in a number of ways (ibid).

Generally, the replacements for what Renner views as more suitable expressions (words without gender preferences) are becoming common. Gendered words are being replaced by de-gendered words, such as “firefighter” and “police officer”, rather than “fireman” and “policeman”. (Renner, 1997: 4-4).

Mills emphasizes the long term effects sexist language can have on people’s self-image and confidence. According to her, a gender-free language contributes to the acceptance of each human being, without dominance from one group. Therefore she provides guidelines for what she considers to be gender-free language (Mills, 1995:95-98).

- Use plural nouns e.g. “When authors have completed their manuscript, they can send it to the publishers.”
- Use she/he “When the author has completed his/hers manuscript, he/she can send it to the publishers”
- Passivize: Speak without gender “ When manuscripts are completed, they can be sent to the publishers”
- Gender – Free words e.g. police officer, firefighter, chairperson etc.
- Generic nouns should be used properly so the term people should be followed by “they” or by another generic reference. (Mills, 1995:95-98)

---

2 In the appendix a list over changed words can be found.
2.4 Gender related reading and writing

To be able to comprehend a text you need to know how to read, that is the ability to put morphemes into words, and words into sentences which denote a meaning. Mills (1995:25-43) devote a chapter to gender and reading in her book *Feministic Stylistics*, in which she presents two distinct models of language. Firstly, she presents the *code model of language* consisting of four steps.

- Speaker has an idea $\rightarrow$ Encodes into words $\rightarrow$ Speak Words $\rightarrow$ Conveys a message
- Hearer understands idea $\rightarrow$ Decodes the message $\rightarrow$ Hear words $\rightarrow$ Receives the message. (Mills, 1995:27-27)

According to Mills (1995:25-43) this is an idealized picture over how communication works. Words are seen as having monolithic meaning, with no chance of any thinkable variations. Therefore the meaning will be understood by hearer as the speaker intended. This model can be applied also when reading texts. Author becomes the speaker and reader hearer.

- Author has an idea $\rightarrow$ Encodes into words $\rightarrow$ Writes Words $\rightarrow$ Conveys a message
- Reader understands idea $\rightarrow$ Decodes the message $\rightarrow$ Reads the words $\rightarrow$ Receives the message. (Mills, 1995:27-28)

This idea is central in how educators read language textbooks as well. Mills point out that language is not just a transporter of words; therefore other factors must be considered as well, for example, readers’ and writers’ sociohistorical backgrounds, economical- and political factors. Mostly, it is essential to look outside the text to the time when it was produced (Mills, 1995:25-36).

Conversely reading can be seen as a relationship consisting of two main participants, the reader and writer. Mills comes to the conclusion that different people interpret texts differently based on primarily two things, the reader’s framework and prior knowledge. The texts itself is not completely blank; in addition it influences the readers interpretation. Mills brings to surface Judith Fetterly’s consideration that women are trained to position
themselves as males in order to make sense of a text, especially once reading text from the literary cannon. In summation it is said in the chapter that gender is an important element in the construction of the readers’ position. However, gender cannot be considered as the unitary element (Mills, 1995: 66-79).

2.5 Gender and EFL textbooks

Texts that are read in school are often connected to some kind of textbook. It can be said that textbooks used in EFL and ESL setting are not just tools by which the English language is taught to a student; they also provide knowledge about cultural context. Renner expresses that many textbooks articulate stereotypical thinking in questions of gender. He defines sexism as stereotyping males and females on the basis of their gender. Further, he calls attention to research by David Carroll and Johanna Kowitz (1994), aimed at showing how sexism is present in ESL textbooks (Renner, 1997: 1-3). This research states that:

- Male pronouns are more common than female pronouns.
- *Husband* is less common than *wife*
- Possessive form *husband’s* is more common than *wife’s* (Renner, 1997: 1-3)

Renner tries to raise awareness of how language is used to convey stereotypes and contributes to the perception of gender. Different kinds of words are used in a sentence, depending on the person’s gender. In his study, he shows that, statistically the most used adjectives to describe men in textbooks were the words *rich, poor, brave, short handsome, lazy, famous, afraid*. The words *strong, tall, young, old, fat, beautiful, pretty* were frequently used in cohesion with women. However Renner does not only stop at this point, he goes a step further and considers the possible effects this may have on the pupils. He concludes that women are generically represented in textbooks as tall and beautiful and men as strong and tall. According to his opinion, this can be regarded as blatant sexism. There is nothing that is true about the statement, because not all women share the same qualities. What is to say a woman cannot be described as strong and handsome? He continues, and comments on the danger of exposing pupils to images like these. In doing so, the impression is conveyed
that this is the natural order and the generic view of how women and men should look. Sexism is something that affects people’s everyday life from domestic affairs to choice of career and should therefore be taken into consideration once presenting textbooks to the pupils (Renner, 1997:1-3).

Renner (1997:7-8), furthermore stresses the importance teachers play in the transmission of gender roles throughout language learning. Teachers must evaluate how gender and gender roles are presented in ESL material and raise awareness of gender issues in textbooks. He suggests three points that pupils should be encouraged to do:

- Analyze attitudes towards gender and gender roles in material.
- Learn to use language that is not considered “gender appropriate”
- Contest existing assumptions about gender roles in communication. (Renner, 1997:8-8)

2.6 Textbook dialogues

At present, the use of textbooks is a key resource among language educators. However, pedagogues can never predict how the pupils will interpret a text. Regardless what the author has in mind, interpretations are individual and subjective (Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997:1-2). Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland (1997:1-2) indicate that the learners may unconsciously absorb what can be considered as gender stereotypes through media and society as well as textbooks in school. Further, they point out a tendency in older textbooks to portrait women as homemakers and men as businessmen. They bring to the surface the concern that this may adversely affect women’s learning as well as conception in how they view themselves (Ibid).

“The images and language which are used in teaching and the extent to which learners can identify with them have an important effect on how well people learn. If women are under-represented in teaching or represented in demeaning ways, the women who are taught with these materials may learn less well. “(Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997:2-2)
However this is just a hypothesis from their part and the key word being “may”. There appears to be a disagreement among linguists and pedagogues as to whether or not this is the case.

Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland (1997: 1-4) believe that textbook dialogues are often used in various language teaching situations. Dialogues can consist of taped or written conversations between two people, and can be used three various ways when it comes to learning language.

- Firstly, as role-play, the dialogues help to develop knowledge of the language by contributing to the broadening of students’ vocabulary, their ability to use expressive and figurative speech and syntactic competence.
- Secondly, dialogues tend to also provide social knowledge through the context as well as practice of a new language.
- It also facilitates practice which develops fluency. (Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997:1-4)

Mostly students are asked to imitate the original and are likely to make assumptions that the dialogue represents proper usage of the language and may emulate it in class, in this case to the disadvantage of girls (Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997:9-9).

From a pedagogical point of view, dialogues are valuable opportunities to provide language practice as well as proficiency. There can be listed a number of advantages of using dialogue in teaching; even the quietest pupils tend to participate, instead of only the most successful speakers in class. However, dialogues that lack gender balance can be turned into an obstacle that hinders girls’ language learning (Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 199:4-9).

The authors examine two types of ESL textbooks and concludes that in mixed-sex dialogues women were described as the ones asking for information and men where the ones providing it. Further, they stated that, on average, men initiated the conversations and uttered more words than women. In comparison female characters spoke 2142 words and male 2482. As a result, Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland (1999:4-15) point out that female learners’ learning will be limited and inhibited, for the reason that dialogues are often
offered to be played by the same sex, leading up to a situation where females are restricted linguistically as well as occupationally. Due to those circumstances, the authors issue the importance of teachers asking themselves the questions; how does this affect my classroom? What pedagogical implications are there for female and male learners? The conclusion made by the authors is that a possible gender imbalance may affect behavior in the classroom (Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1999: 4-15).

Another important field study by Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland (1999: 19-22), is the examination of how textbook dialogues tend to not only function as language learning practice, they also convey a social pattern by categorizing people, and distributing occupational and social roles. The authors present how women and men are described in various dialogues. They concluded a pattern that women mostly appeared in roles of a sister, a girlfriend, a mother, and worker etc, whereas men appeared as brothers, policemen, officers etc. This research showed that occupational roles in textbooks often portray contemporary or old-fashioned values in society. It can be summarized as a conclusion that a textbook simply is a representation of society in general (Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997:15-22).

“It could of course be argued that physics textbooks are just showing the world as it is, and if there are fewer girls taking physics and fewer women in physics-related jobs, then this is exactly the way physics textbooks should be illustrated. “ (Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997:23-23)

Scotton and Bernsten (1998:372-385) argue in their article “Natural conversations” that dialogues in textbooks should have a close relationship with natural conversations and be as representative as possible. As a result, McCormick (1995:60-61, 128-129), makes an effort to separate the official curriculum and the “hidden” curriculum: a concept referring to the unwritten assumptions, values and norms that drive social relations in school (see figure 1). As previously mentioned, textbooks and classroom activities contribute to more aspects than simply transmitting knowledge, as it is laid down in the official curricula. In this context, the hidden curriculum is said to reinforce the transmission of norms, values, and beliefs conveyed through social interactions within school.
2.7 Against the Theory of “Sexist Language”

“I, for one, want to be free to refer to "the brotherhood of man" without being corrected by the language police. I want to decide for myself whether I should be called a chairman, a chairwoman, or a chairperson (I am not a chair). I want to see My Fair Lady and laugh when Professor Higgins sings, "Why can't a woman be more like a man?" As a writer, I want to know that I am free to use the words and images of my choosing.” (Ravitch, 2004:169-169)

This quotation is taken from The Language Police, written by Ravitch. The above quotation encapsulates the feelings of some researchers with regards to the notions surrounding what feminists would regard as “sexist language”. In 1994, Sommers published, Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women. The article describes how the impression of a “sexist language” that exists today is actually a misinterpretation of our language use. It
has become common to view the usage of the suffix *man* or pronoun *he*, that originally refers to all of humanity, as being “sexist language”. The feminist argument reflects upon this usage as being patriarchal and sexist, creating a hierarchy in which the masculine is more fundamental than the feminine. Sommer (1994), however, deems it ridiculous and she compares it to the statement that prime numbers are less numerical than numbers.

“Number” is the general category and “prime numbers” are just markers with a property, other numbers lack; nevertheless prime numbers are certainly no less numbers than any other numbers. Sommers’ analogy with the numbers can be applied to the noun “man”, as the word can be used in two, distinct ways. Firstly, “man” can be used in the more generic sense and as synonymous with “human”, i.e. to denote people of both sexes, as in expressing such as “all men born equal”. Conversely, it can be used in a more specific sense to mean adult male people only in expressions such as “men must wear ties” (ibid).

Sommers (1994) opposes the idea of comparing social gender issues and gender in language, and is of the opinion that gender in language is completely irrelevant to the sexual openness of society. She supports her belief by arguing that language is not static. Ironically, she portrays Iran as an example; Old Persian had the genders of masculine, feminine, and neuter, just like Greek and Latin. Modern Persian, on the other hand, is a language that lacks gender, all gender; has disappeared from the Persian language, and this was not the result of Persian feminist criticism, it just happened, as most languages change over time. “If someone wants non-sexist language, move to Iran. But that probably would not be quite what they have in mind.” (Sommers, 1994) With this example, she demonstrates the fact that language is not something that can be planned, it grows and changes spontaneously.

Sommers (1994) also advises feminist groups to focus on the meaning of ambiguous words like “man” in the context in which they occur, rather than attacking language grammar. In order to discourage gendered language, the focus should be on what is said, and not on how it is said. Many of the world’s languages are built upon grammatical gender, so getting gender to “disappear” in, for example, German or Spanish (etc.), would just be a hopeless project, since it would involve altering the entire structure of the language. To make such a reform, a set up of a political authority would be necessary and this would inhibit the
freedom of individuals to express themselves through language in the way they choose. “In fact, grammar is usually just grammar and nothing else. It is used to express meaning – it does not determine meaning.” (Sommers, 1994)

2.8 Political correctness

The notion of “political correctness” is more generally known as “linguistic prescriptivism” by linguists. In linguistics it refers to the set of rules prevailing with regards to how a language should be used. These rules often cover linguistic themes such as spelling, grammar and syntax, further they also seek a demand of social and political correctness along with the usage of “proper” language. These rules originate from the idea that language can influence thought; so by removing gendered language, we create a less sexist society, a thought that is closely associated with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams 2007:25-28).

Joseph published an article, Language and Politics, in which he articulated; “language is constitutively and hence indissociably political.” Furthermore he states, language is “a political-linguistic- rhetorical construction” (Joseph, 2007).

2.9 Inclusive language: Is it Necessary?

Inclusive language, aims at the purpose to not make assumptions regarding gender. This may include a change concerning gendered vocabulary such as “chairman” and “stewardess”, into more gender free terms such as “chairperson” and “flight attendant”. However, it is not regarded as necessary by all people, there are those who are opposed to “political correctness” and believe such a notion takes away the individuals freedom of consciously expressing ones individuality and gender identity (Whitehead, 1997:1-8). Whitehead argues the situation had gone to the extent that some men are reticent about calling themselves men, to avoid being unjust to women. The author continues his article by pointing out the problems such a political correct language will result in (Ibid).
From Whitehead’s point of view, “inclusive language” is unnatural in English, hence, it also deprives language and restricts communication through lack of flexibility and expressions; some situations demand the use of specific pronouns and honorific titles, such as him/her, Mr/Mrs/Miss etc. As a result, he views the promotion of inclusive language as representing an ideological manipulation by “political correctness”, in the same way the Russian Revolution dictated the use of language in terms to make it impossible to express views outside their hegemonic perspectives (Whitehead, 1997:1-10).

An aspect that emerged from the principles of removing racist and sexist language in order to be “politically correct” is discussed by Ravitch, where she attacks the American education department’s obsession to control what the pupils learn, by banning certain language, and disallowing certain themes in textbooks. This is a crusade to remove everything that can be offensive to any group or individual, going to extreme measures where, for example, an illustrator was required to eliminate birthday parties in his/her text, because Jehovah’s Witnesses do not celebrate birthdays and might find the text offensive. The purpose was to create a school environment promoting a gender free language but, in order to succeed, several classics like Jane Austen’s Emma, Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre and William Shakespeare’s Macbeth, among others, were seen as inappropriate and, as a result, withdrawn. Banned themes included those which contained violence or civil strife; therefore, stories of women’s liberation were not favored and neither was sex education (Ravitch, 2004:1-108).

Ravitch is of the view that such censorship scarifies literary quality and historical accuracy, therefore, also conceives pupils and obstructs pupils learning. Usage of such textbooks discourages pupil’s free thinking, discussing and analyzing. Instead, they tend to concentrate on memorizing elementary facts. After scrutinizing some of the texts banned by the government, Ravitch concluded that there were no examples of “racial or gender bias”, as most people would define these terms. These were not texts were people where portrayed in a demeaning way. Instead, the “language police” recommended dull stories without any colorful examples to motivate pupils. Her main problem is that such censorship, in fact reduces children’s interest in their schoolwork due to the fact that the books were not
accurate and were barely realistic. As an alternative pupils were presented with an idealized version of history. One study showed that these pupils developed a poorer vocabulary and did not possess the skills to question different social contexts. Ravitch points out there is something terribly wrong with this picture; the school should strive to promote access to great literature, knowledge about history and build a strong vocabulary in their pupils (Ravitch, 2004:112-158).

“The silent censorship’s goal is not just stop us from using objectionable words, but to stop us from having objectionable thoughts. The language police believe that reality follows language usage. An abhorrent thought to those who believe in freedom of speech” (Ravitch, 2004:158)

3.0 Material and Method

3.1 Material

For this essay, I randomly selected two of the more popular textbook series used in Swedish schools. The textbooks are intended to be used in such a way that they should function as a resource and support the learning of English, by reading the texts and doing the activities. Even if the books are written by different authors, and have different publishers as well as being published in different times, they have a similar base structure and purpose. Both of the textbooks consist of chapters, containing various theme based texts. At the end of both books, pupils can find glossaries for each chapter. In addition, Team 8, contains of theme based glossaries; e.g. sport, kitchen, animals, music, car and geography, where words and pictures are listed. Both textbooks end with a grammar overview. The number after the title indicates that the book is a part of a series, and the number stands for the grade it is aims at. So in this case, the number “8” stands for 8th grade at secondary school.

As stated, I will try to ascertain how these two textbooks deal with gender. My research question is; do the textbooks depict gender roles and sexuality in a balanced manner? Or is there a tendency towards any kind of overrepresentation or unfair depictions?
The authors of *Wings 8* and *Team 8* have not written all the texts themselves. In fact, much of the material are extracts from prominent novels and short stories. However, since the authors are responsible for selecting the content of the book, they must be considered “responsible” for what the texts represent as a whole.

### 3.1.1 Wings 8

Although the book was written in 2000, it is still commonly used in Swedish schools today. *Wings 8* is written by Mary Glover, Richard Glover, Bo Hedberg, Per Malmberg, Anna-Lena Andersson and Ylva Winther, and published by Natur & Kultur. There is a mixture of contemporary texts (mainly consisting of poems and song lyrics), and old classics.

### 3.1.2 Team 8

*Team 8* was written in 1985 by Christer Bermheden, Matts Winblad, Peter Watcyn-Jones and Stefan Wahlgren, and published by Almqvist & Wiksell publishing. Today, *Team 8* is not commonly used. However, up until the 1990s it was well-liked at several Swedish schools and was relatively popular among English educators (Bermheden, verbal, 2010-01-20). *Team 8* involves mostly historical texts or fiction.

### 3.2 Method

This dissertation comprises a qualitative critical discourse analysis of two textbooks that have been, or are being used, in Swedish secondary schools. In order to investigate the development of English textbooks over the last decades, *Team 8*, a textbook from the 1980s will be examined, as well as *Wings 8*, published in 2000.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), is a general term for a number of approaches to analyzing written, spoken or signed language (Yule, 1996: 139-145). It views language as a form of

---

3 The information was received via a telephone conversation with Christer Bermheden. He informed me about the structure of the textbook, and how and when it was used in Swedish schools. He was also kind to send the book to me, since it is not available for sale nowadays.
social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced by text and talk. A common theme for how theory of critical discourse analysis relates to research is via the notion that mankind utilizes language to create pictures of an assumed reality (Fairclough, 2003:124-124). Therefore, if we study and analyze language, we can get closer to the perception of a true reality. Further, Fairclough explains that discourse is “the domain of statements” and goes on to say that he sees it as “ways of representing aspects of the world” (Fairclough, 2003:124-124). Bloor & Wood (2006:53-54) point out that critical discourse analysis can be applied in a number of data collection settings, primarily to examine naturally occurring talk. It might be applied to examine number of subjects, such as gender inequalities.

In my analyses, a number of different aspects will be taken into consideration, such as the gender distribution of narrators, main characters and sub characters, as well as the description of gender/gender roles, and the representation of gender in illustrations. Further, I will also try to study what kind of language is used; a gendered or de-gendered language. These aspects will be collected quantitatively. It is not unusual to combine a qualitative and a quantitative approach. There are several ways to analyze a discourse; one way is a qualitative approach, which will be used in this essay. Quantitative research refers to the methods which produce information only on the particular field studied which, in this case, is restricted to Wings 8 and Team 8 (Denscombe, 2007: 253-284). A more general conclusion about EFL textbooks has to be studied further.

Fairclough (2003:129-129) mentions that one obvious feature to study is the vocabulary, and how words are being used. So, when studying a text, one should analyze what words are being used, and how the words are structured, due to the fact that the choice of a particular word in favor of another, or the structure in which that word is placed, are both aspects that can give indications of the author’s intention.

When conducting research, the researcher must ask himself/herself if the data is “reliable”, and data is deemed reliable if it produces the same result each time it is employed. The research is “valid” if the results it reports are correct and true (Johnston, 2000:61-61).
ensure reliability and validity, Denscombe (2007: 140-140) has set up some ground rules important to consider once collecting data.

- Collect and process data in a fair and lawful manner
- Use data only for the purpose originally needed
- Take care to ensure the data are accurate

3.3 Procedure

This dissertation includes four different sections: character analysis, occupational distribution, language overview and an illustration outline. The first aspect studied in Wings 8 and Team 8 is whether there is a balance between male and female main and sub characters. Or, is there a tendency towards any gender dominance? The study is restricted to 24 texts in each book. I have only scrutinized texts which contain one or several active persons for this part of the analysis. Other text contained themes that described a country or city, and have been studied further in other field studies, which will be presented further on in the essay. I define a main character as the chief actor, the central or primary figure. A sub-character is a person, operating in a text, but is not in center of attention. The sub-character function is to help to develop the plot, by interacting with the main character.

The next step was to scrutinize what kinds of occupations are mentioned in the textbooks and which gender they are represented by. I simply noted down every time an occupation was mentioned and placed it in the chart which I divided into three categories; males, females and gender not specific.

Further, I studied what kind of language was used; and also counted words that could be seen as gendered or de-gendered. I added the two categories in order to get a total sum of the counted words. Once the data was collected, I simply divided the number of words in one category with the total number of counted words. Thereafter, the results were calculated into percentage.

The last step and section was to analyze illustrations and here I conducted several tests. Firstly, I counted all illustrations that involved a person; this was in order to be able to
evaluate how many of the pictures depicted males and how many illustrated females. This was done to establish if there was an equal distribution of males and females. Further on, I observed and noted down how males and females appeared in pictures, concerning appearance and activities. The last step was to compare the illustrations with the text and ascertain whether they matched. Overall, I focused on observing how the textbook dealt with the representation of gender and gender roles.

4.0 Result and analysis

This chapter of the essay will cover a presentation, along with an analysis of the two textbooks, involving gender issues described in the previous chapters.

4.1 Characters

Below, the distribution over male and female characters will be presented over the 24 texts in each book which I have scrutinized.

Figure 2a. Characters in 24 texts in each textbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Character in <em>Team 8.</em></th>
<th>Male: 16</th>
<th>Female: 6</th>
<th>Gender unknown: 2</th>
<th>Both male &amp; female: 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub Character in <em>Team 8.</em></td>
<td>Male: 11</td>
<td>Female: 7</td>
<td>Gender unknown: 2</td>
<td>Missing Sub Character: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male: 5</td>
<td>Female: 4</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Both Male &amp; female: 0</td>
<td>Both male &amp; female: 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in *Wings 8*

Sub Character in *Wings 8*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male: 9</th>
<th>Female: 4</th>
<th>unknown: 5</th>
<th>female: 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>unknown: 4</td>
<td>Both male &amp; female: 2</td>
<td>Both male &amp; female: 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To illustrate this clearer, I have also constructed a pie-chart diagrams which illustrate the distribution and shows them in percentage terms (see figure 2a-d).

**Figure 2b. Main-Character in Team 8**

**Figure 2c. Sub-Characters in Team 8**

**Figure 2c. Main – Characters Wings 8**

**Figure 2d. Sub- Characters Wings 8**
In summary, it can be said that the statistics showed that *Team 8* contained more male dominated texts: 68% of the texts (involving an active person) were males, in contrast to 26% which involved a female character (*Team 8, 1984:6-82*). *Wings 8* showed a fairly equal distribution over female and male characters, where 22% contained male main characters and 17% female. A total of 39% of the scenarios included main characters represented by both a male and a female. An example of this can be seen in *Wings 8*, in which Tina and Mike are two reporters that appear in a morning radio program called, “Morning Mix”. The two of them conducted several programs throughout the book. Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland (1999: 4-15) argue that a lack of female role models tends to limit and inhibit female pupils’ language learning and, in addition, promote the transmission of gender roles. As a result, Mills (1995: 66-79) finds this situation as an explanation as to why females often are trained from childhood to position themselves as males in order to make sense of a text, leaving them with a feeling of being less equal to men.

### 4.2 Occupations

Below, I will show a chart over what kind of occupations female and males occupied in both of the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Team 8</th>
<th>Wings 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Musician, fisherman, assistant, boy, father, husband, inspector, teacher, businessman, magician, biologist, boxer, football player, runner, mountain climber, explorer, captain, pilot, immigrant, doctor.</td>
<td>Reporter, schoolboy, lifeguard, student, base ballplayer, agent, inspector, father, brother, uncle, police, pilot, inspector, sailor, steward, waiter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This scrutiny showed that there are a considerably larger number of occupations held by men than by women in Team 8. In fact, not are there only fewer women mentioned in the textbook: for most of them were portrayed in a stereotypical manner, as being mothers, wives or occupations, which from a historical point of view, are associated with women. Not one text in Team 8 holds a woman in a position as perhaps a doctor, pilot, scientist, etc. The arguably most prestige occupations held by women in Team 8 were as teacher for immigrants and “chief accountant” at a travel agency. Meanwhile, men often appeared holding what can be viewed as higher status jobs, such as police officer, biologist, captain etc., in addition with sports related occupations, for instance, baseball player, boxer, and so forth (see figure 3) (Team, 1984:5-82).

Wings 8 contained a more balanced and less stereotypical portrayal of males and females. The textbooks focus was more on different situations which the pupils might encounter in life, where they are forced to speak English. Several texts involved the practice of ordering a meal in English, asking for directions, buying a ticket and traveling to an English speaking country etc.

---

This is the word used in the textbook for a person that works in a travel agency arranging travel affairs at the counter.
Women and men are portrayed in a more realistic manner for today; women also engaged jobs as reporters, teachers, and doctors. Most occupational words did not give away the gender of the person, for example “hairdresser”, which can be viewed as an occupation associated with females. Women were also not restricted from higher status jobs, like doctor or chemist, since the authors choose to leave out gender (Wings, 2000: 8-131). More than a few of the texts were gender-neutral consisting of dialogues with no indication of gender, such as this extract below:

**Figure 4. Dialogue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shop assistant</th>
<th>Customer</th>
<th>Shop assistant</th>
<th>Customer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you like this one?</td>
<td>Yes, I do. Can I try it on, please?</td>
<td>Of course.</td>
<td>Can you help me please? I do not know what size I take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like me to measure you?</td>
<td>Yes, certainly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Wings, 2000: 52-52)

In this dialogue, it is hard to figure out the gender of the shop assistant and the customer. *Wings 8* included several of these types of dialogues where the characters were not presented specifically as members of either sex and thus could have been perceived by readers as male or female. The book did not stereotype males and female by portraying only women as shop assistants, or hairdressers and only men as doctors. Sex and gender was more an issue in family relationships and not pertaining to occupations in general (see figure 3). Gender-free language in dialogues such as this one contributes according to Mills, to an acceptance of each human being and, therefore, also equalizes females and males, sending out a signal to female pupils that they can choose their occupation according to their wishes, without being restricted because of gender membership (Mills, 1996:95-98). From Butler’s point of view, an awareness and aspiration for a gender free language also discourages the
formation of sexist gender roles, since gender roles are socially constructed (Butler, 1990:6-13).

4.3 Use of gendered and de-gendered language

Upon examining the language in Team 8, it is evident that there is a tendency to separate words depending on the persons’ sex; this separation can be spotted in words such as waiter and waitress, steward and stewardess, where a distinction is made whether you are a female or male, as a result a “gender” is constructed. Team 8 contained a frequent usage of the affix – man in words such as policeman, baseman, craftsman, fisherman etc. (Team 8, 1984:126-159). One could also notice a recurrent tendency to name sports-related occupations and positions with the help of the affix – man, for example in baseman, linesman and batman (Team 8, 1984:54-55, 90-91). Additionally, previously male dominated occupations, such as, police officer, pilot, doctor, scientist etc. were commonly portrayed as men, and often followed by the affix –man e.g. policeman (Team 8, 1984:5-157).

Considering that, the language in Team 8 was quite gendered and excluding for females. In this sense, language is used to convey and alternate stereotypes from Renner (1997:1-3) point of view, and as a consequence a state that Mills refers to as a “cold climate” is created, where girls feel to a large extent excluded (Mills, 1997: 87-88). So, by teaching pupils that a police officer is called a “policeman” can, from this perspective, be seen as contributing to the creation of gender roles which separate males and females and restrict them occupationally (Renner, 1997:3-5).
In comparison, *Wings 8* had a much more de-gendered use of language, and the affix – *man* was not used to a large extent, instead frequent usage of de-gendered word such as; *student, coach, agent, inspector, police officer, teacher, doctor* etc. occurred (*Wings, 2000: 5-155*). However, the word “policeman” occurred once in a text, referring to a male police officer. I looked the word up in the glossary, and it is translated as “polis” in Swedish, which means “police force”, and is not gender specific (*Wings, 2000:33-33, 151-151*). On the other hand, the opposite statement can be said about the word “sailor”. In English, the word was used to denote a person that sails for a living, but it was translated to “sjöman” in Swedish, a gendered word that acknowledge the person in question as being male (*Wings, 2000:153-153*).

The language was, as mentioned before, particularly gender-free; texts consisted of plural forms or de-gendered language. One example, which illustrate this is a chapter called “eating out”, on page 90. Here, the pupils can follow a conversation between a customer...
and the staff, in a fast food restaurant. The gender of the character is never revealed in the text, nor by the illustrations (Wings 8, 2000:90-91).

**Figure 5b.** Extract from “Eating out”

Customer: Can I have a cheeseburger and a Diet Pepsi, please?
Staff: Anything else?
Customer: No, thanks. That’s all.

*Wings 8* consist of several more text examples similar to this one. Yet, examining the illustrations linked to each text the outcome could appear as quite different. Additionally, this will be presented more closely in chapter 4.1.

### 4.4 Illustrations

Both of the textbooks contained a large number of photos, cartoons and other types of illustrations. Illustrations are used to make the book more colorful and inspiring for pupils. They are also useful as a basis for discussions in teaching situations. Consequently, it is not only the texts in a textbook that are expected to reflect the ethos of gender equality, but also the illustrations would have to present males and females in a non–stereotypical manner. Therefore, the illustrations in both textbooks were analyzed in order to see the distribution of males and females, how they are depicted and how that is reflected on a gender-equality basis. One should bear in mind that the illustrations are in most cases are not produced by the authors who composed the text, although, they were clearly approved by the publishers.

#### 4.4.1 Wings 8

In *Wings 8* there is an even distribution between males and females in the illustrations. A majority of the illustrations did not show men or women engaged in stereotypical actions, such as women doing housework, and men garden work etc. Sports, on the other
Anita Mustedanagic  
Halmstad Högskola 2010

hand, were illustrated as a male dominated field and quite stereotypical in both textbooks. Men were the ones illustrated and chosen to represent different sport activities, especially concerning ball play such as baseball, rugby, football and so on. Women mostly appeared linked with horse riding, swimming and ice skating (Team 8, 1985:6-91) & (Wings 8, 2000: 5-131).

Another interesting point in Wings 8 is the fact that the language was quite de-gendered: however, the pictures and illustrations showed a different tendency. Even though the text, on some occasions, did not actually express the gender of the character with the use of language, some pictures did. For example, all of the illustrated police officers, agents and detective in the book were illustrated as males (Wings 8, 2000: 34, 28-31 & 74). It could be said that male characters in Wings 8 were portrayed in a more stereotypical manner, in contrast to women. Every agent, cricket player, police officer, lifeguard, inspector, sailor etc. was illustrated as being male, even though the text actually never exposes the characters gender. However, there is barely a stereotypical illustration involving females and occupations. In spite of the fact, that the language was rather de-gendered, gender roles and issues could be learned and absorbed by the pupils by looking at the pictures (Wings, 2000:5-131). Nevertheless, it should be said that several high positions were characterized in a non- gender specific way, for example, images of doctors did not only depict males, nor did images of a nurse only depict females. Instead of having a female or male waiter, the authors choose the word “staff” and “customer” (ibid).

Below, I will present a chart exemplifying how often males and females occurred in illustrations. Wings 8 contained a great number of pictures and illustrations: over 150 pictures. I collected only those which had a human character in the study below, the rest of the pictures contained maps, flags, and pictures of animals, cities, clothes etc. The study showed that 43 % of the illustrations with a human character were male, 24% portrayed females and 33% involved illustrations with both genders present.
4.4.2 Team 8

Looking at the illustrations in Team 8, it was clear that almost all male characters were portrayed as rather masculine and female as feminine. Firstly, the majority of the texts were quite male dominated (see figure 2), an issue which also reflects upon the choice of illustrations. As the chart shows, there is an overrepresentation of men in illustrations, 52% portrayed men, while the equivalent for women is only evident in 12% of the pictures. Both sexes appear approximately in 36% of all the illustrations and, even then, women were mostly held in the background or as sub-characters.
The illustrations in Team 8 differ considerably from the illustrations in Wing 8. Almost all women are depicted as wives or daughters, or holding other stereotypical positions within society. Team 8 contains a whole section dedicated to sports and learning of sports names and titles. Almost all of the pictures contained male representatives of sports, whereas women were portrayed on only three occasions. This was the case with swimming, horse riding and ice skating (Team, 1984:90-91).

In summary, it can be said that the illustrations are male dominated and portraying females and males in a historical and stereotypical manner. Women were often placed in the background, not being in the center of pictures, and mostly illustrated as mothers, schoolgirls, dancers or singers. Males, on the other hand, were fore-grounded on many occasions and appeared mostly as sport-players or businessmen (Team 8, 1984: 5-92).

**4.4.3 Illustration summary**

Studying the clothing on the characters in both textbooks, there were often portrayed in what some might consider as stereotypical. Most of the women were dressed in skirts, dresses and wearing makeup. In the mean time, males wore trousers, shirts and occasionally even ties (Wings 8, 2000:5-131) & (Team 8, 1984: 91). Wings 8 also contained numerous illustrations that were more neutral in terms of gender, where females also wore trousers or shorts. Generally speaking, females and males were presented quite stereotypical concerning clothing (Wings 8, 2000: 5-131). However, another depiction would seem unnatural and unrepresentative from Scotton and Bernstens (1998:372-375) view, since textbooks should have a close relationship to reality and be representative. The balance between stereotyping and presenting reality can sometimes be rather thin.

A selection of illustrations from the two textbooks (Team, 8 and Wings 8) were divided into the following groups:

**Team 8 & Wings 8**

Pictures that reflect stereotypical appearances
- Women wearing mostly skirts, dresses, high-heeled shoes and make up. (Wings 8 and Team 8)
- Men appear mostly in uniforms and suits (Wings 8 and Team 8)
- Males only wearing blue and dark colors (Wings 8 and Team 8)
- Females only wearing pink and bright colors (Wings 8 and Team 8)

Pictures that challenge stereotypical appearances
- Girls as punk rockers wearing all black (Team 8)
- Boys shopping (Wings 8)

Pictures that reflect stereotypical activities
- Males held higher positions as doctors, pilots, scientists etc. (Team 8)
- Only male police officers (Wings 8) A police parade with only males (Team 8)
- Men playing sports (e.g. baseball, football, rugby, boxing, etc.) (Wings 8 and Team 8)
- Women engaged in sports like swimming and horse riding. (Team 8)
- Women portrayed as mothers, and men portrayed as fathers. (Wings 8 and Team 8)
- Women as housewives, Men as businessmen (Team 8)
- Group of women preparing food (Wing 8)

Pictures that challenge stereotypical activities
- A woman in a long dress playing golf (Team 8)

5.0 Conclusion

I am of the opinion that Wings 8 is a modern textbook, which I find adequate for teaching English as a foreign language in Swedish secondary schools. The pedagogical and didactical approaches are constructed with great thought, and there is a large selection of activities along with instructive exercises, which aim at preparing the Swedish pupils for tourist situations, so they feel comfortable with using the English language. However, my aim was not to scrutinize the pedagogical and didactical approaches, instead my focus was directed at how gender roles are presented in both textbooks and the implications this might have on pupils learning.
In *Wings 8*, I noticed a clear tendency to construct tasks and texts in a neutral manner. This indicates that the authors’ seem to have made an effort to avoid the occurrence of too many stereotypes, especially ones representing females. Meanwhile, *Team 8* introduced almost only males and used what Renner refers to as “gendered language”. The textbook is more historical, with quite old-fashioned texts and, as a consequence, the language also comes across as gendered and to some extent, even sexist. This is highlighted by the repeated usage of masculine words and affixes such as –*man* and –*or*, Renner names this “stereotyping in linguistics”. If my results are representative, and textbooks contemporary with *Team 8* looked the same, then females have been presented stereotypically, in the worst cases, even been left out. *Wings 8* tries to steer away from that, by de-gendering the language and by making males and females act together in their texts. This is exemplified in the example with the radio reporters, Tina and Mike. This careful trend in *Wings 8* has gone so far that women are depicted more in a non-stereotypical way than men. The situation can perhaps be explained by looking at the current political climate and its ideas of political correctness when it comes to gender. However, the ethos of LPO 94 states that equality and a fair representation should apply to both genders and males should not be subjected to sexism either. My conclusion is that there must be several factors involved other than striving for “political correctness”. I believe the feminist approach has led to the situation that it can seem to be acceptable to stereotype a male person, rather than a female, due to the historical situation. It is almost as if the authors are trying to make up for the past. My result did not concur with Whitehead’s theory that men today do not dare to be men, as they are afraid of being perceived as being sexist. This was not shown in *Wings 8*, where men appeared as rather masculine and stereotypical.

It struck me that the number of famous men mentioned is larger than the number of famous women. Perhaps that could be a result of there being more famous men than women, historically speaking, but one could also argue there were famous women of the time as well, and none of them were selected. As I mentioned before, even though the authors have not written all the texts themselves they are responsible for the selection of texts, and what signal the book as a whole sends out to the pupils. As a teacher, I would prefer teaching material that portrays women in a more realistic sense, and discuss this with my pupils,
rather than leaving them out completely, which is the trend in Team 8. On this note, I would like to mention, an article in Sydsvenska Dagbladet “Skolverket kritiserar”, from 2006 about a recent report conducted by The Swedish National Agency for education. The report analyses twenty-four textbooks and the conclusion was that some textbooks are to a certain extent stereotypical and could be perceived as discriminating for females. For instance, in one textbook which presents the history of music, many famous male musicians are mentioned, but not a single female and this is from 2006; the same tendency was shown in Team 8, where only prominent male musicians and athletes were depicted and not a single female was. I see a risk here that pupils might absorb this behavior when they use English outside of the classroom. If learners are exposed to, for instance, a large number of famous men, and only to a few women, they might conclude that either there are few famous women, or that they are not worth mentioning. As I mentioned earlier in the essay, this is exactly what Renner has concluded in his research: “Female characters are numerically fewer in course books and have more limited occupational and discourse roles than males. Thus, it can be concluded that an impact of this reality also reflects classroom practice and restricts female students.”(Renner, 1997:8-8)

I find Wings 8 as a valuable textbook from many aspects; it offers various methodologies, which I find useful in many teaching situations. However, gender challenging themes and illustrations are missing, which can be a problem in the classroom. Today, there are countless females playing sports, so to portray a female-football team would not be unrealistic. Still, mostly males appear in sporting contexts, particularly concerning ball sports. It can be said that our “reality” has changed and, with it, our perceptions regarding gender. Ball sports are not just limited to males, in the same way that not only females perform domestic household work. A modern trend is to cooperate with daily chores.

Therefore, textbooks must challenge and also contribute to discussions, which is something I am missing in both textbooks. I believe this situation has its roots in the beliefs of the prototype theory, which I will discuss further on.
5.1 Discussion

The development in *Wings 8*, compared with *Team 8*, is noteworthy. The authors are more cautious with depicting women in a stereotypical manner. Women have also been granted access to a broad field of occupations, previously male-dominated, such as police officers, doctors, scientists, etc. In addition, I can see a development regarding a more de-gendered language use. This is visible by the lack of the affix –man in occupational names. As previously stated, the authors appear keen on creating gender free-dialogues, where gender is not of importance; the importance is to support pupils’ English learning, through practice. According to Mills (1997: 88-96), it was necessary to change the previous situation involving the use of a gendered language, in order to equalize opportunities for males and females.

The previous attitude is apparent in *Team 8*; in earlier times, the trend was to choose historical texts for textbooks which were male dominated. Meanwhile, in *Wings 8*, written in 2000, there is an improvement from the perspective of conforming to the ethos of LPO 94 over the last few years. Furthermore, it will probably be even more gender balanced in the future, due to feminist organizations stepping up and demanding a change in our values over gender issues, starting with our language.

Even if this is the case, Sommer (1994) points out that language and social norms pertaining to gender do not necessarily have to go hand in hand. Even though the language is de-gendered in *Wings 8*, the illustrations are still quite stereotypical. I believe the situation has its roots in, and can be explained by, the prototype theory. Although, the situation for women has improved remarkably the last three decades, some occupations are still manda-dominated, although women are employed as well. Even so, we still have our perceptions of the “prototype” of the genre. For instance, this becomes clear when using a lorry driver or a nurse as an example: the clearest example, or “prototype”, would even today be a male for lorry driver and female for nurse. This is the perception installed within us through interaction with society. Women can, of course, be employed as lorry drivers; the question is not about that, but majority are male and they represent the “prototype”.

From this perspective, *Wings 8* is not completely gender neutral, but far from gender stereotypical. The book is in a sense, realistic and mirrors society. Thus, it can be argued that
the goals and directives from the Swedish National Agency for Education do not state that school should be “realistic”. Instead, the ethos of LPO 94 dictates the immense importance to work towards equality between genders. This process begins in the classroom environment and involves the choice of teaching materials.

One could discuss whether textbook authors should attempt to make the occupational roles of men and women in textbooks mirror those of society, or create positive role models in the textbooks, by describing women who are employed in a wider range and at higher level of professions than they really are, and perhaps even assuring that there are the same number of men and women in the professions described, for instance the same number of lorry drivers and the same number of nurses. Nevertheless, would this be a correct picture and would it be believable for the pupils. Or might it distance them from the text and get in the way of learning. Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, articulate that it is possible to achieve gender balance, but that the risk is that textbooks may lack in credibility when they do not describe society as it really is. One can see a tension between the ethos of LPO 94, where presenting “reality” is not good enough, and making education realistic by depicting reality as it is. “The hidden curriculum” plays an immensely important role here, and the reproduction of social norms. The LPO 94 states that teachers and all school personnel, as well as educational material, should promote gender equality. Arguably, a balance must be reached and a sphere of equality, where pupils do not feel restricted due to gender membership. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, this is every teacher’s job, to support pupils and promote them in such a way that they feel at liberty to choose their future career according to their own desire and ambitions. Here, gender should not be an obstacle. I would argue that it is possible to work against sexism and stereotyping, and at the same time present reality. An open climate and free discussion are of significance as well in order to achieve the goals of LPO 94.

The assumption I have investigated is that gender roles, used in English language textbooks used in Swedish schools, were reproduced and would reflect the development of society towards equality between men and women. It is not surprising that the textbooks from the 1980s contain very stereotypical views on gender roles; the problem is that some of these
books are still in use in some schools. However, the study of occupations held by women and men in the texts, and the distribution of males and females in the illustrations show that there is a tendency to promote males and to diminish females. The results of my analyses confirmed my hypothesis that textbooks mirror the reality of modern society; while, the policy document, LPO 94 is very clear on the importance of promoting equality between men and women. Team 8 did not live up to the requirements set by the government today. Wings 8, did so, in my opinion in some perspectives and failed in others. The importance of a good learning environment for all pupils cannot be stressed enough. With that said, I hope this dissertation will inspire others to pursue the questions of representation of gender roles.

6.0 Method Reflection and Future Studies

A qualitative approach turned out to be appropriate in order to achieve my goal. To analyze the language seemed as the obvious choice. However, a fair picture would not have been obtained if I had not expanded the survey to include illustrations as well, since the language and the illustrations could diverge. I believe my results have high reliability and validity since I repeated my study at two occasions, and got the same result. The study is also easy to replicate. However, in order to increase the validity of the study even further, a more extensive amount of material would have to be collected from a wider range of sources and analyzed. I am of the view that my method was suitable for my purpose, and that I reached my goal. I got a clear picture of how the particular textbooks dealt with gender issues.

To develop this study further, a more extensive amount of material could be collected, more textbooks could be scrutinized and compared, this in order to make the study more reliable. There are numerous of aspects regarding gender roles in textbooks and in educational situations that can be investigated further. Due to time limitation my research had to be narrowed down. Further work could contain a broader aspect and scrutinize over a wider series of textbooks. Other currently popular EFL textbooks are Good Stuff, Toolbox, Blueprint
and *All in one*. The result could also be tested in different schools to gather data on the implications different textbooks have had on pupils’ language learning. One could also investigate, and have a discussion with the editor over, the choice of texts. Why did the representation of selected text look in a curtain way? It would also be of interest to investigate different directives from the Swedish National Agency of Education and compare LPO 94 to LPO of 1962, 1969 or 1980 and establish the extent to which they have an impact teaching material, such as textbooks. Gender, language and education are all broad subjects and there are immense possibilities for researchers to examine.
7.0 References

Primary sources

Bermheden, Christer et al, (1985), Team 8. Almqvist & Wiksell AB.


Secondary sources


**Articles:**


**Encyclopedia Britannica**


Documents

Skolverket, (1994), Curriculum for the compulsory school system, the pre-school class and the leisure-time centre LPO 94.

Skolverket (2008), Retrieved from
http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/1248/a/5284#paragraphAnchor5

Skolverket, (2005) Retrieved from
http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/353

Personal

Telephone conversation with Christer Bermheden, 2010-01-20
8.0 Appendix

8.1 Changed words

Actress – Actor

Airman – aviator

Businessman / businesswoman – business person

Boatman – boat operator

Cameraman – camera operator

Cattleman – cattle rancher

Chairman/chairwoman chair person

Caveman – dweller

Councilman – council member

Cowboy/cowwoman – cowhand

Foreman – manager

Freshman- first year student

Fellow worker – co worker

Handyman – maintenance worker

Headman – leader

Housewife – homemaker

Kinsman – relative

Mankind- humankind

Man and wife - husband and wife

Mothering - parenting

Middleman - go-between

Policeman/policewomen – police officer

Postman – mail deliverer

Snowman – snowperson
Stewardess - steward – flight attendant

Waitress / Waiter – Server

( Ratwich, 2004; 193-218)