Two bras and a sports car

A study of five English grammars from a gender perspective

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Abstract

Gender patterns in five English grammars published between 1972 and 2003 and used in Swedish schools are investigated in this study. The focus is on the occurrence of female and male characters respectively, how they are portrayed in the books and if the roles assigned to them have changed over time. The curricula in force during this period, Lgr 69, Lgy 70 and Lpf 94, are used as a reference point. The semantic notion of thematic roles, specifically agent and patient, is used as point of departure when categorizing the material. In addition the following categories have been included and analyzed from a gender perspective: professions, role models, character traits, appearance, objects and possessions, interests and location. The results show that there is very little gender awareness in the grammars, both over time and in relation to the curricula. Men are present as sole subjects or objects almost twice as often as women. In the category of role models, men were assigned roles six times more often than women. The investigation arrives at the conclusion that the grammar books do not conform to the gender guidelines presented in the relevant curricula.

Keywords: grammar, gender patterns, gender perspective, gender stereotypes, role models, Swedish curricula.
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1. Introduction

The notion that we are influenced by our surroundings at a linguistic level is very intriguing and has contributed to my choice of topic for this study. The language we use may indeed determine how we think. The term *social gender* is sometimes used to explain that gender is not only present at a linguistic level and the way in which we use the language, but also in the way we are made to think and act (Varga 2010:34).

In this study, five English grammars published 1972 – 2003 will be investigated from a gender perspective. Although gender equality has been part of the curricula for more than 40 years, examples perpetuating gender stereotypes are still present in learning material currently used.

Studies frequently show that equality in our schools and classrooms is formal rather than real (Tallberg Broman 2002:10ff). The ways in which students are treated and evaluated as well as the different expectations and demands they are faced with contribute to the perception of what is female and masculine (Tallberg Broman 2002:10ff).

A grammar can not and should not, for obvious reasons, be read as a novel. There is no plot and no protagonist, no beginning, middle or end. Grammars are however populated by people, ideas and values, and the content constitutes a microcosmos, which presents a reflection of the perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Aspects like these are interesting when applying a gender perspective to learning material.

In this respect learning material may have a double purpose. The primary purpose is of course to convey knowledge. The by-product, which I assume may be an unintended outcome, is that grammars convey not only knowledge, but also present a value system. If men are portrayed as belonging to the outer world with a job and a career and women to a more restricted universe, this affects the way in which students will relate to themselves and others.

Equality between women and men has been stated clearly as a goal in the curricula for both the compulsory and the non-compulsory school systems in Sweden since the late 1960s (Lgr 1969:14). It has continuously been written into the curricula, and gender equality is still today a goal to be achieved (Lgr 2011:8).
If we apply a gender perspective to languages, it becomes evident how important
gender is and how it is used to confirm our conceptions about what we consider feminine
and masculine (Josefsson 2010:50). Gender equality should be considered an educational
question. Not too long ago, during the industrial age, the term gender equality had not yet
been conceived, women’s suffrage was yet to become a reality and children were sent to
school in order to learn and become part of a productive workforce. Considering this, it is
hard to imagine what the future will bring. It is however clear that differences in gender
could be regarded as socially constructed (Svaleryd 2002:44ff).

The following example illustrates a stereotypical gender pattern found in one of
the grammars investigated – the woman as homemaker, caretaker with a limited field of
opportunities – the man positioned in the field of possibilities.

As the mother of five children she had little time to herself.
He's among the nominees for the Nobel Prize.

Hedström (2000:64).
2. **Aim and scope**

My hypothesis is that the examples in the grammars to a certain extent are reflections of the times in which they were written. The assumption is that the authors of the grammar books have been sensitive to discussions of gender and equality, and that the examples to some extent will reflect this. Given the fact that the Swedish curricula put an emphasis on gender equality, I expect an awareness and effort on the part of the authors so that an increased gender sensitivity will be present in the examples as time progresses.

The study aims to provide answers to the following questions, which are all related to how the gender perspective has been accounted for:

- What is the occurrence of women and men in the grammars?
- How are women and men portrayed in the grammars?
- Do the grammars work in line with what is laid down in the relevant curricula regarding gender equality?

The study adopts a descriptive as well as a normative/critical approach to the topic of investigation. While the primary aim is to provide a systematic description of the representation of gender roles in the grammars, an underlying driving force is to point to changes that may be made concerning any stereotyped gender patterns.
3. Previous work

In this chapter previous work relevant to the aim and scope is presented and discussed. The focus will be on gender and gender equality in relation to school and learning material as the scope of this study is gender patterns in English grammars.

3.1 Gender and gender equality

The question of equality between the sexes made its entrance on the political arena in the 1960s as the discussion concerning the position of women and the roles women played within the family and in society as a whole got more intense.

Calderon (2003:7ff) summarizes the experiences made from working with gender equality in Swedish primary and secondary schools and concludes that gender equality is a term that is being used frequently although it is neither static nor unambiguous. The fact is that our reality is constantly changing and the way in which we understand gender equality also affects how we understand what is happening in our schools. Calderon goes on to say that the fact that women and men are considered to be each other’s complementing opposites has given rise to the notion of the man as the active agent and the woman as the passive object.

During the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s gender became a word frequently used. It came to manifest the inherent social relation and the relation between the sexes, differences in behaviour and characteristics, that these had been socially and historically constructed rather than biologically given. (Tallberg Broman 2002:25ff).

Although few, if any, studies show that differences exist between women and men in terms of e.g. feelings, attitudes and character traits, our attitudes, whether they are conscious or unconscious, play an important part in the creation of what we consider to be feminine or masculine.

What is interesting to note in this context, and especially in relation to the curricula and school books, is that since gender roles have been created through a social process and in a social context, they can in fact be transformed. But even if attention is paid to the way in which school books are written, it goes without saying that old habits
sometimes die hard, as shown in a study involving Swedish students in grades 4-7. In this study the topic of gender was analyzed, and Eriksson Barajas (2008:2) found that when discussing literature, teachers as well as students brought up gender issues and discussed what happened in the books in a way that could be considered as gender-stereotyped. At the same time both teachers and students did in some cases transcend the stereotypes of gender when talking about fictional characters of their own age. What could be said to be noteworthy here is that teachers seemed to expect the students to identify with the fictional characters of their own gender.

Doyle (1998:149ff) presents her understanding of what happens if language is used in a way that alienates the readers: it leads to misunderstandings and is no longer a tool for effective communication. Especially in learning material aimed at students, such as text books and grammar books, this is a valid point if, as Doyle points out, the language is used to promote stereotypes, such as attributing certain roles or characteristics to women and men. By perpetuating stereotypes we actually use the language to support the idea that it is something we accept.

A report for SCB, Statistics Sweden, by Carlestam (2004:3) shows that traditional gender roles still prevail to a large extent in Swedish households. In the age group 51-74 years, these roles are the strongest. Overall though, women tend to their traditional domains and men to theirs. It is the women who clean and cook while the men are in charge of such tasks as minor reparations and work related to the car. The level of education has very little influence on how household work is divided.

If learning material mirrors conditions prevalent for a long time, as those shown among an older age group in the SCB report mentioned above, they actually contribute to the reproduction of traditional gender roles instead of challenging them.

Eilard (2008:448ff) focuses in her thesis on how children, family and society are presented in readers used in the Swedish Elementary School. Girls and women are portrayed as being stronger than the men, but the main character is still a boy, the girl being his partner. She finds, what she calls, a “hetero-normative discourse of difference” in that the content of the examined books seem to be in line with the equal opportunities aspect, but on a deeper level, they are not. Eilard concludes this to be more of the same old hierarchy of the sexes, with men still in the lead.
Working with and approaching the topic of gender as a teacher requires an awareness of the fact that stereotypes do exist, as well as a willingness to discuss them. Josefsson (2010:50) points out that if a gender perspective is applied to languages, the importance of how we view gender becomes very clear in that we see how the language is used to confirm our perception of women and men, what they should be like and how they should act.

In a report from Uppsala University (Andersson 2005), French and German grammatical exercise material used at the A level was studied and analyzed, particularly from a gender perspective, where sentences that had a sexual content, were patriarchal, contained gender stereotypes or had a statistically skewed distribution were examined. The authors found very few inappropriate sentences with a sexual content. What they found was that men were present to a higher degree than women in the texts and that men more often than women were described through their professional roles, whereas women were described in a social context, a context relating to family or to their appearance. There were very few well known or famous women in the texts whereas examples with famous men were more frequent.

The gender aspect was emphasized by the authors who expressed the opinion that it should be an integral part of teaching and instruction, and that a material that is fairly neutral, but at the same time reflects the time in which we live, is desirable. The report finally highlights an important question in that it asks if gender stereotypes are inherent in the wording of the text or rather at the level of the individual reader (Andersson 2005:52). How gender is represented in two English grammars used in Swedish schools is shown in a student paper. The author studied the frequency with which women and men occur in the examples, which gender roles emerged and if the connotations were positive or negative. The result shows that the content, i.e. the examples, were very different in the two grammar books. In the book from 1972 the majority of the examples contained male figures, in the book from 2003, women were in the majority, and one could also note an increased number of neutral examples (Davidsson 2004:25). It seems as if the authors of these books in many cases took an easy way out by reversing the examples in favour of women, maybe, as the author points out, due to an increased awareness of the question of gender.
The representation of gender in teaching material in Swedish for first graders and how it has changed over time was examined in a student paper. Six books over a time period of 90 years were analyzed. The content showed signs of becoming increasingly more gender neutral as time progressed. The curricula and greater demands for gender equality also seem to have had an impact, leading to a more equal gender representation (Nilsson & Nilsson 2007:26). Although the examined time period was lengthy, one would have wanted to see a larger number of books being examined. The analysis however is interesting and seems valid in that the authors point out that traditional gender patterns over time have been neutralized rather than challenged.

In a thesis on gender roles and gender equality in Swedish text books from 1963-1986, Kunnari & Sipponen (1989:47ff), conclude that even if gender roles became a topic of discussion in the 1960s the text book from that period does not reflect an awareness thereof. The material from the 1980s on the other hand shows time typical occurrences like divorce and unemployment, single mothers and remarried fathers. Again, as shown by many previous authors, it is stressed that teachers in particular should become more aware of questions related to gender, along with, of course, the authors of school books.

In a more recent study, a student paper, Andersson (2008) examines Swedish teaching material in biology, physics and chemistry in order to learn how gender is distributed and described among the men and women in the books; if gender stereotypes are represented in the form of pictures and text, and also how female and male sexuality is presented. The study shows that the distribution between women and men in the material is uneven; the man is the active part, when portraying sexuality, the woman is the object and the receiver; compared to women, the tasks that men perform are more elaborate. With few exceptions, traditional occupational roles are presented: men being boxers and women being for example midwives. It is also found that the creation of gender stemming from stereotypes is far more common than the author had expected (Andersson 2008:28ff).

On behalf of the Swedish National Agency for Education researchers have examined how ethnicity, disability, gender, religion and sexual orientation are presented in text books. The point of departure has been the Swedish curricula and the research question whether the examined material is in accordance with the values set herein. The
results regarding the gender aspect show an overrepresentation of men and boys, where the man is being portrayed as the norm. In several of the books there are examples where women and girls are being depreciated or ridiculed. The gender perspective as such is treated as a separate entity and discussed in separate chapters. It is consequently not common practice to let the gender perspective permeate the texts (Skolverket 2006:36).

Wright (2008) studies how gender is created in a report from the Swedish National Agency of Education, this time in physics books. She finds that the texts lack gender sensitivity and sometimes even conflict with what can be expected from a gender equal text. The traditional role that applies to men is valued higher than that of women and the texts contribute on a symbolical level to the re-creation of the kind of injustice that is supposed to be counteracted with a certain level of gender awareness.

Although the above selection of previous works on gender only represents a small fraction of the many works that have been written on this subject, it is worth noting that there still seems to be many stereotypical roles present in the material used in our schools even though the curricula clearly states that traditional gender patterns should be counteracted. It is almost as if authors of text books and grammars, editors and publishers have not been able to keep an even pace with what teachers and students can expect from a modern learning material. At the same time, a change from the 1960s when the question of gender started to be an issue, has clearly taken place, although I consider it fair to say that it still seems to be a work very much in progress.
4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter a general perspective on gender is explored further and a brief introduction to semantics and thematic roles is given before continuing to a more detailed presentation of method and material in Chapter 5.

4.1 General perspective on gender

Four categories of gender can be defined: grammatical gender, lexical gender, referential gender and social gender. In grammatical gender the difference between feminine, masculine and neuter is made. Lexical gender brings to light how words can be regarded as gender specific because of their “femaleness” and “maleness”, while other words remain gender-indefinite. Referential gender relates to a noun like teacher, which can refer to either a woman or a man or be gender-indefinite. Social gender associates e.g. secretary to women and lawyer to man because of social assumptions that are stereotypical (Hellinger and Bußmann 2003 in Varga 2010:37).

Whether gender is created or inherent is currently frequently discussed, often in an interdisciplinary debate. Hjernquist, a Ph.D. in biology states that there is no scientific proof that gender roles are created externally (Hjernquist 2012). Furthermore Hjernquist argues that our actions are influenced by our environment and the culture in which we live, and it is here that there is room for change.

In the 1980s, Hirdman, a historian, presented her theory about the gender system. The theory is widely accepted in Sweden and its point of departure is that women and men have entered an invisible gender contract based on our perception of what we consider to be masculine and feminine. It describes in a scientifically useful way both how gender segregation works and the power structure in relation to the differences it gives rise to (Calderon 2003:7).

Harding, a professor of philosophy at UCLA, argues that there are three aspects of gender: gender symbolism, gender structure and individual gender. Although the conception of femininity and masculinity depends on the culture in which we live, these
three gender forms are interrelated within any culture. (Harding 1986:18). Gender is created through a structural process where men and women have different tasks and there is a hierarchy concerning the division of labour. The cultural process involves e.g. language, appearance, behaviour and character traits, which show us how women and men are expected to act in different cultures and contexts. The individual gender is finally created from an understanding of what the structural and cultural gender mean to us personally.

The relationship between language and gender has been the topic for feminist research and feminist linguistics since the 1970s. Lakoff, a professor of linguistics at UC Berkeley published *Language and a Woman’s Place* in 1975. She argues that gender inequality and language is fundamentally connected and that the study of linguistic imbalances is worthwhile since real-world imbalances then are brought into focus (Lakoff 2004:69).

### 4.2 Semantics and thematic roles

Semantics is a branch of linguistics in which the meaning of words and sentences are studied. Semantic knowledge encompasses reference and sense. When talking about our reality from a semantic point of view, there are two different approaches that could be assumed: the denotational approach and the representational approach. The denotational approach puts an emphasis on the relation between language and the external reality, whereas the representational approach concentrates on the link between language and conceptual structure (Saeed 2009:19ff). The approach most relevant for this work is thus the representational approach.

Linguistic semantics makes it possible to look at words and sentences and the roles contained within for example a sentence, or a noun phrase, and thus identify a number of thematic roles (Yule 1996:114 ff in Davidson 2004). Many authors have contributed to this categorization. Linguists like Fillmore, Givón and Jackendoff have previously named thematic roles deep semantic cases and thematic relations (Saeed 2009:152).
These roles have constantly been expanded and now constitute the following ten roles: Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Beneficiary, Instrument, Location, Goal, Source and Stimulus. Saeed (2009:152ff) describes the roles in the following way:

- **Agent** is the one who initiates the action.
- **Patient** refers to the entity that undergoes the effect of the action.
- **Theme** describes the entity moved by an action or the described location of the action.
- **Experiencer** is the entity aware of the action or state, but without being in control of either
- **Beneficiary** can be said to be the entity for whose benefit the action was performed
- **Instrument** indicates with what the action was performed.
- **Location** describes where something is located or where an action happens.
- **Goal** refers to the entity which something moves towards, either in a literal, or a metaphorical sense.
- **Source** on the other hand is the entity which something moves from, also here in either a literal, or metaphorical sense.
- **Stimulus** describes the entity that causes the effect in the Experiencer, which in most cases is a psychological one.

Thematic roles have however been questioned, and critics have voiced their concern regarding the number of roles. Dowty (1991:547) addresses the theoretical status of thematic roles and argues that the principles that determine the roles associated with grammatical relations could be better described if only two roles were used instead of this traditional system of roles. Dowty instead suggests the two cluster-concepts Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient.

Thematic roles, in particular **Agent** and **Patient**, are relevant to this study and to the gender perspective in general in that they are means to clarify how women and men
are portrayed, and determine whether their actions fall into the roles of activity or passivity, which are often attributed to men and women.

5. Method and material

This chapter describes in detail the primary sources and the method of analysis. The grammar books from which the example sentences are collected, as well as the Swedish curricula in force during the time period in which the grammars were published, are accounted for here.

5.1 Method

Five grammars have been investigated from a gender perspective and a total of 500 example sentences have been categorized and analyzed using the following criteria and method:

**Occurrence**: The distribution of gender – i.e. the number of women/men present in the example sentences are counted in order to determine the frequency with which women and men are present. They have been divided into the following subcategories:

- **Women**: *She* bought a wrist watch (Engelsk grammatik, 1993)
- **Men**: *He* lost hundreds of pound on gambling (Engelsk grammatik. Blå, 1972)
- **Women+men**: Seldom does *Jack* come home without a present for *his wife* (Engelsk Grammatik. Blå, 2003)
- **Women+undefined**: *I saw her* on the stairs (Modern engelsk grammatik, 1985)
- **Men+undefined**: Hardly had the conductor raised *his* baton when the singer fainted (Engelsk gymnasiegrammatik, 2000)

**Thematic roles**: The roles *Agent* and *Patient* have been accounted for. As each occurrence was investigated, the examples containing a female and/or a male participant were analyzed and classified into *Agent* and *Patient* in order to determine the distribution of active/passive roles. For this purpose the two thematic roles below are relevant and
best suited to answer the research questions and exploring gender patterns. Thematic roles like instrument, location, goal etc. are of course valid when making a comprehensive analysis. From a more narrow perspective, as in this case the gender perspective, the two categories below serve the purpose of performing a gender distribution analysis as they relate to who is doing something or to whom something is being done.

The following examples are taken from Saeed (2009:153):

**AGENT – initiator of action, capable of a conscious choice or decision**

David cooked the rashers.
The fox jumped out of the ditch.

**PATIENT – entity subjected to the effect of an action, often resulting in a change**

Edna cut back these bushes.
The sun melted the ice.

In order to get as comprehensive a view as possible of the roles and patterns presented in the primary material, I have not only investigated occurrence and thematic roles, but also chosen to explore the following areas, as presented below.

**Professions.** The professions represented in the grammars and their respective gender distribution and occurrence. Examples:

**Women:**
Air hostess, tight rope dancer, teacher.

**Men:**
Policeman, painter, dentist.

**Role models.** Historical figures, fictional characters and celebrities fall into this category. Examples:
Women:
Sleeping Beauty, Queen Mary, Madonna.

Men:
Rockefeller, Pavarotti, Tennyson.

Character traits assigned to female and male characters. Examples:

Women:
Kind, nice, helpful.

Men:
Intelligent, clever, lazy.

Appearance. The way in which the characters physical traits are described. Examples:

Women:
Pretty, tall for her age, long red hair

Men:
Strong as a horse, tallest, angry look.

Objects/Possessions. Objects and possessions associated with the characters. Examples:

Women:
Skirts, lovely roses, reusable nappies.

Men:
Hundreds of pounds, cars, tennis rackets.

Interests. The interests, skills, activities and habits associated with the characters. Examples:
Women:
Dancing, walking, motherhood.

Men:
Gambling, football, deep-sea fishing.

**Location/direction.** The places in which women and men operate, where they are going and where they have been. Examples:

**Women:**
In the room, outside Sears, in the hospital.

**Men:**
At the university, at work, on the sofa.

The example sentences have been collected from the five English grammar books that constitute the research material. A total of 500 example sentences were analyzed - 100 sentences from each grammar where the gender of at least one human participant is clearly defined, have been chosen. The first 50 examples are taken starting from the beginning of the book, and the remaining 50 examples, starting from the end of the book.

To serve the purpose of the study, neutral examples where it is not possible to determine the gender of at least one human participant have been omitted. A sentence like “the Captain was very sick” was not chosen, as opposed to “The Captain, who was a woman, was a very sick”. The same principle applies to professions. The example ”I am a secretary” has not been counted as it is not evident if it refers to a woman or a man.

If an example consists of two sentences and it is only possible to determine the gender in the first with the help of the second sentence, these are counted as one. Example: “Professor Higgins will give one series of lectures this term. Last term he gave two series”.

Sentences illustrating a grammatical point such as ”He put on his coat”, followed by ”He put it on” was counted once. The same applies to examples that contain variations of the same sentence where the gender stays the same.
Concerning the material for the categories Professions and Role models, it was not restricted to the 500 investigated sentences, but was collected from the entire grammar books.

Examples such as "A waiter/a waitress" were not included as the sentence only serves the purpose to exemplify that "–ess" denotes femal, in order to make a necessary grammatical point that could not have been exemplified in any other way.

Some examples were categorized into more than one category. "General Powell" can for example be found both in the category Professions-male and in Famous people/role models.

Regarding thematic roles, a challenge when categorizing the sentences was, which is also addressed by Saeed (2009:156), if a single entity falls into more than one category, i.e. fulfils more than one thematic role. In such cases the sentence was counted into two categories, as in the following example, where the prince is the agent and the girl is the patient:

The prince married a poor girl (EGB 1972).

5.2 Material

In this chapter the primary sources, the grammars and curricula in place during the time period 1972 – 2010 are presented.

5.2.1 The grammars

The primary material consists of Engelsk grammatik. Blå (1972) and (2003), Modern engelsk grammatik (1985), (1991) and (2010), Engelsk grammatik (1993) and Engelsk gymnasiegrammatik (2000). The books are all intended for use in Swedish schools and were published during the period 1972 – 2010.

Engelsk grammatik. Blå (1972) by Jönsson, is a grammar book frequently used in Swedish schools from the 1970s. Intended for the primary school, grades 7-9 as well as
the first two years of upper secondary school and adult education, it is a book familiar to
many students. It has a limited scope, is shorter, and in many ways less comprehensive
than the other grammars in this study. The 2003 edition contains new and revised
example sentences.

Modern engelsk grammatik (1985), (1991) and (2010), by Svartvik and Sager, is a
classical and well known grammar book intended for the upper secondary school. The
2010 edition can also be used at both lower and higher levels in the educational system as
well as for self-study purposes.

Compared to Engelsk grammatik. Blå, the Svartvik/Sager grammars are more
theoretical and more comprehensive. The example sentences, however, have remained
the same throughout the editions.

Engelsk grammatik (1993) by Johansson, Lysvåg and Övergaard, is intended for
the upper secondary level and is different from the other grammars in this study in that it
emphasizes modern language, authentic example sentences and idiomatic expressions.

Engelsk gymnasiegrammatik (2000) by Hedström, is a comprehensive grammar
for the upper secondary level. It has many similarities with Modern engelsk grammatik
by Svartvik and Sager, in that it has a traditional content and layout.

My initial study comprised five grammar books frequently used when teaching
English grammar in Swedish schools. The number was expanded by two as it became
evident that the example sentences in three of the investigated books by authors Svartvik
and Sager, Modern Engelsk grammatik from 1985, 1991 and 2010, were identical and
had not been updated. Consequently, only one of these grammars, the 1985 edition, was
used for this study.

The two books by Jönsson, Engelsk grammatik Blå, from 1972 and 2003, were
included in the study as the 2003 edition contained updated examples and served its
purpose. As I wanted to make a comparison over the decades I decided to include the two
books Engelsk grammatik by Johansson, Lysvåg and Övergaard from 1993 and
Hedström’s Engelsk gymnasiegrammatik from 2000 in order to achieve the original goal.

The grammars will henceforth be referred to as EGB 1972 and 2003 (Engelsk
Grammatik. Blå), MEG 1985 (Modern Engelsk Grammatik), EG 1993 (Engelsk
Grammatik), and EGY 2000 (Engelsk Gymnasiegrammatik).
5.2.2 The curricula

The curricula were studied from a gender perspective in order to determine how the question of gender equality is approached and if the learning material reflects the wording in the corresponding curriculum. During the examined time period there were three different curricula in place that are relevant for this study: *The Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Lgr 69*, is relevant for the study of EGB (1972). *The Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School, Lgy 70*, relates to MEG (1985) and EG (1993). *The Curriculum for the upper secondary school, Lpf 94*, is relevant for the study of EGY (2000) and EGB (2003).

*Lgr 69* states that the school *should* be an advocate for the equality between men and women and that it should make the student familiar with the question of gender roles (1969:14). In a later passage in the curriculum the wording stays the same, but *should* is replaced by *shall* (1969:42).

*Lgy 70* emphasizes that in order to achieve an increased awareness of the fact that men and women should be equal, students need to debate and question current conditions. (Lgy 1970:40). This clearly reflects the time period as the discussion of equality between women and men started to take off.

*Lpf 94* displays a much greater emphasis on gender equality compared to the other curricula in this study. Equality between women and men is considered to be among the intrinsic values and it is the school’s responsibility to communicate these values to the students. The teacher’s responsibility is to ensure that both male and female perspectives are reflected in the classrooms (Lpf 1994:40).

The current curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre, states that “the school has a responsibility to counteract traditional gender patterns” (Lgr 2011:8), which indicates that the school has to take a more active role than previously.

Having presented method and material, reliability and validity need to be addressed. As for the reliability of this study, the examples have been collected, presented and analyzed with as much accuracy as possible. The material has been approached in a way that enables a thorough analysis in order to answer the research questions. Bryman
(2011:49) states that reliability relates to whether the obtained results will be the same if the study is performed again. If perhaps not completely replicable my intention has been to make the analytical procedure accessible to the reader, thus making it open for potential criticism.

As for the validity of a study it is based upon a judgment of whether the conclusions drawn are coherent (Bryman 2011:50). Since all students’ essays have their limitations, both with regard to the volume of the material and the time at hand, far-reaching generalizations based on the results are not possible. The results obtained could however possibly serve as food for thoughts and as a point of departure for further studies on gender equality in learning material.
6. Results and analysis

In this chapter the results of the study are presented and analyzed. The results are divided into nine subsections followed by an analysis in connection with each section. The focus will be on Occurrence, Agent/Patient roles and the way in which women and men are related to in the example sentences.

6.1 Results

Section 6.1 presents the nine categories Occurrence, Agent/Patient roles, Professions, Role models, Character traits, Appearance, Objects and Possessions, Interests and Location, which serve as point of departure for the analysis.

6.1.1 Occurrence

Occurrence has been investigated on five different levels in order to determine the gender distribution in the example sentences – Women (as sole subject/object), Men (as sole subject/object), Women+Men, Women+undefined (subject/object) and Men+undefined (subject/object).

![Figure 1. The relative number of women and men in the example sentences.](chart.png)
Figure 1 shows the distribution of women and men in the five grammar books that this study comprises. In every grammar 100 sentences have been examined, the total number of examined sentences are 500.

Over the examined time period, sentences in which there are only women present, account for between 20% and 32%, whereas sentences with only men present account for between 30% and 49%. On average, when looking at all the five books in the category Men, men are present almost twice as often as Women, or in 44% of the cases compared to women, present in 24% of the example sentences.

The category Women+Men accounts for between 4% and 11%. This category is relatively small in comparison with the two previous categories Women and Men. The average number for Women+Men is 8% for all five grammars.

The two remaining categories Women+undefined (subject/object) and Men+undefined (subject/object) also account for smaller ranges, 6-15% and 8-23%, respectively. The average number for this category in all five grammars is 11% for Women+undefined and 13% for Men+undefined.

In each grammar the category Women and the category Men account for the largest percentages (Fig. 1). Women are in minority in all of the five grammars compared to men. The lowest number of women can be found in MEG 1985 (20%) and EGB 2003 (20%). The lowest corresponding number for men is found in EG 1993 (30%).

It is interesting to note that there is 31 years of difference between the 1972 and 2003 editions of EGB, but the percentages related to the category Women and Men essentially remain the same (21/49% and 20/48%, women/men respectively).

The most equal grammar in this respect is EG 1993 with 26% Women and 30% Men.

6.1.2 Agent and patient roles

The purpose of the second category, Agent and Patient roles, is to investigate whether the preconceptions of women as the passive part and men as the active part is reinforced or challenged in the grammars. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the roles in the examined example sentences.
Table 1. The number of women and men as Agent or Patient in the examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar/Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thematic role</strong></td>
<td><strong>EGB 1972</strong></td>
<td><strong>MEG 1985</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 1 above the total number of thematic roles assigned to women is far less than those assigned to men. Women can be counted into the thematic role *Agent* in a total number of 39 cases and men in 69 cases. In the thematic role of *Patient* women are in the majority with 16 occurences whereas men appear 13 times.

In EGB 1972 the men are in the majority as *Agents*. In relation to women the figure is 25 for men and seven for women. As *Patients* women are counted four times and men three times. In the later 2003 edition of EGB the number of men has decreased to 18 in the *Agent* category and the number of women has increased by two, now counting nine women. EGB 1972 and 2003 stand out as having the highest number of men in the *Agent* category.

The number of women as *Agent* remains low and more or less the same in the different grammars since 1972. In MEG 1985 the number of women is eight, in EG 1993 it is nine and in EGY 2000 the number is six.
For men as *Agents* the results show a greater variance. Compared to the two editions of *EGB*, there are very few men in EGY 2000, only seven. The corresponding numbers for MEG 1985 and EG 1993 is 16 and 13.

When categorizing the sentences a small number of examples were found that fall into both the *Agent* and the *Patient* category and they have consequently been accounted for in both categories, as e.g.:

*The old man talked to himself* (EGB 2003).

### 6.1.3 Professions

In this category the professions associated with women and men in the 500 example sentences are presented. A further aspect in connection with professions, namely the verb forms and verb tenses that precede the designated professions, are accounted for in this section.

![Figure 2. The number of professions attributed to women and men.](image-url)
Figure 2 above shows the relative number of women and men that have been assigned a profession in the grammar books. A total number of 72 references to a profession were found, 28 of these references relate to women and 44 to men.

EGB 1972 and 2003 account for the lowest relative number of women at 14% and 15%, respectively. In absolute numbers, the 1972 edition only includes one reference to a woman in connection to a profession, compared to six referring to men. In the 2003 edition the number has approximately doubled for both categories, giving two women and eleven men in connection with a profession, which results in a huge underrepresentation of women in this area.

On the other hand, two of the three remaining grammars actually show a greater number of women than men in connection with a profession. In EG 1993 and EGY 2000 the number of men are one less in both cases, six compared to seven in 1993, and eleven men and twelve women in 2000. The relative number for women and a profession in EG 1993 is 54%. The number for men in the same grammar is 46%. In EGY the relative number for women is 52% and the relative number for men is 48%.

In MEG 1985 women are again found to be underrepresented, although not in the uneven proportions shown by the two editions of EGB, but there are still only six references to women and professions, compared to ten in connection with men. The relative number of women in connection with a profession is 38% in MEG 1985 and 63% for men.

Of the 28 references relating to women, six entries can be said to be traditional female professions, namely:

- **Air hostess** (2 entries) (EGB 1972, EGB 2003)
- **Secretary** (EGY 2000)
- **Trainee nurse** (EGY 2000)
- **Tightrope dancer** (EGY 2000)
- **Hostess** (EGB 2003)

The remaining 22 references in connection with women are professions like **doctor, engineer, journalist and politician**. Only one typically female profession was found among professions attributed to men, namely **nurse**.
Apart from the references in EGB 1972 and 2003, where the gender biased *air hostess* (2 entries) and *hostess* were the only references relating to women, there were a good many number of professions showing gender awareness in the other three grammars.

Professions that were attributed to men were, apart from the ones that also could be seen in connection with women, typical male occupations connected to workmanship, as for instance *carpenter*, *mason*, *painter*, or more high powered professions like *statesman*, *president*, *commander-in-chief* or *general*.

Even if women and men seem to be each others’ equals in this category it is worth noting which verbs and verb tenses that proceed the noun indicating the profession. An unintended but interesting aspect that became evident when examining this category, is that the verbs which precede the designated professions, in some cases vary depending on the gender of the subject. As stated earlier, the total number of professions attributed to women were 28. Out of these 28 there were 16 sentences where the professions were preceded by *like to be*, *wants to become*, *was to become* or *had been*.

*She wants to become a doctor* (MEG 1985)

*He is a doctor* (MEG 1985)

To a much higher degree than men’s professional status, where such wording could be found in six out of 44 cases, women’s professional status were to a lesser extent current or formulated in the present tense. It either had been or would/could become a reality, as shown in the above example from MEG 1985. Thompson (2006:77) talks about the realis and the irrealis mood when describing reality. As shown, the sentences in connection with men can thus be said to be expressed in the realis mood (related to here and now), whereas women’s professional status to a high degree is expressed in the irrealis mood, which is related to a possible future state.

### 6.1.4 Role models

This category reveals that women are grossly underrepresented in every grammar. The percentage of female role models account for between 0% and 22%, whereas the
corresponding range for men is between 78-100%. The material for this category has been collected from the *entire* five grammar books.

![Graph showing gender distribution of role models](image)

**Figure 3. The gender distribution of role models.**

Figure 3 shows the percentage of female and male role models. In the entire material of five different grammars, only 13 different female role models could be found. The number of male role models were 81, more than six times as high.

When examining the areas where the role models were found the following female subcategories could be distinguished: authors, historical figures, musicians, fictional characters, movie stars and explorers. For men, the subcategories were, in addition to the ones already mentioned: religious figures, military leaders, artists, political leaders, poets, architects, royalties, athletes and movie directors.

No female role models were found in EGB 1972. In the 2003 edition of the same grammar there were two, *Queen Mary* and *Sally Bauer* (the first Scandinavian to swim across the English Channel). As for men in those grammars, the numbers were seven in 1972, and 13 in 2003, displaying an ample variety of different subcategories.
In MEG 1985 there were two female role models, Doris Lessing and Mary Queen of Scots. The number of male rolemodels were 18, ranging from statesmen to artists, authors and poets, with names like Churchill, Picasso, Golding and Blake.

Madonna and Sleeping Beauty were the representatives for female role models in EG 1993, two altogether. The number of male role models were seven in this grammar, also displaying men from different walks of life, such as Bergman, the movie director, Henry Moore, the architect and Columbus, the explorer.

In EGY 2000 a total of 36 male role models were found. The number of women in this category was seven. The female role models came from three subcategories: royalties, in the form of English queens, living and deceased, movie stars, such as Garbo and Marilyn Monroe, and the author and pioneer, Amelia Erhart.

As with the male role models described in the other four grammars, the subcategories are very diverse and display a wide range of both famous and infamous men, both living and deceased. There are fictional characters, popstars, scientists and explorers, just to mention a few. They have names like General Schwarzkopf, Travolta, Shakespeare and Hawking.

6.1.5 Character traits

In the 500 example sentences, character traits were attributed to women a total of nine times and to men 18 times, i.e. twice as many times. In this category aspects in relation to character traits, such as positive and negative connotations depending on gender, as well as intellectual capacity, have been examined. These are described in connection with the respective grammar.
Table 2. The distribution of character traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EGB 1972</td>
<td>kind</td>
<td>intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lazy (not true)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEG 1985</td>
<td>nice</td>
<td>very good manners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>always in good spirits</td>
<td>morals (shocking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helpful</td>
<td>no fighting spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>could show terrible anger</td>
<td>behaved badly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG 1993</td>
<td>shy and reserved</td>
<td>always late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lively, outgoing</td>
<td>very stubborn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>complain (all he did was)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGY 2000</td>
<td>always in high spirits</td>
<td>honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>great patience</td>
<td>a bore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sceptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a terrible bore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGB 2003</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>honest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The least number of character traits were found in EGB 1972 and 2003 where only one trait was attributed to women, counting both editions. Men’s character traits were described four times in the 1972 edition and only once in EGB 2003.

As for positive connotations, the only female trait was kind. Men were described negatively twice (lazy), and another two times in relation to their intellectual capacity (intelligent and clever).

In MEG 1985 there were four traits attributed to women and six to men. Women were described positively three times and once in a negative way (could show terrible anger). No traits referred to either women’s or men’s intellectual capacity. Men were described in a positive way two times and negatively four times.

EG 1993 referred to men three times and women twice. All references to men were negative (e.g. always late and stubborn). The references to women could be
categorized as neutral (shy and reserved) and positive (lively, outgoing). No references were made to the intellectual capacity of either men or women.

In EGY 2000 traits attributed to women were found twice and male traits four times. Both references to women were positive (in high spirit and great patience). In three out of four times men were described negatively (e.g. a bore, a terrible bore). The only positive description of men was honest. As in the previous grammar, no references were made to women’s or men’s intellectual capacity.

In EGB 2003 there were no references at all made to women and only one to men (honest).

Overall in the grammars investigated there were no references to women’s intellectual capacity, whereas men in this respect were referred to three times. Positive connotations were found for women in all but two examples. Men were described positively in six out of 18 times and negatively in the remaining twelve.

### 6.1.6 Appearance

This is a category where the traits are more evenly distributed than e.g. role models or the previous category containing traits attributed to character. There is a seemingly equal display of female and male traits, but since the general occurrence of men are almost twice that of women, it should be noted that more weight is actually given to women’s appearances than to those of men’s.
Table 3. Traits referring to appearance and physical aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EGB 1972</td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very strong</td>
<td>tallest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>strong as a horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tall for her age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEG 1985</td>
<td>long red hair</td>
<td>tall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG 1993</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGY 2000</td>
<td>smile</td>
<td>hasn’t lost his looks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>friendly smile</td>
<td>angry look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prettyish</td>
<td>six feet tall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>six foot/feet four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>white (his hair turned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGB 2003</td>
<td>always wears beautiful clothes</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>tallest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skirts are short</td>
<td>taller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stout old</td>
<td>strong as a horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>looked as if she had been crying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grammars where the most examples in connection with appearance and physical aspects were found were EGB 1972 and 2003. In the 1972 edition four references were found in connection with women and in the latter, six examples. Two of these ten examples can be said to have a negative connotation (stout old, looks as if she had been crying). Both examples were found in the 2003 edition of EGB. The remaining examples referred to women in positive terms, indicating that they were pretty or had a friendly smile.

Examples relating to men were not as many. There were three in EGB 1972 and four in EGB 2003. Both editions contained examples relating to strength, using e.g. expressions related to the strength of animals (strong as a horse) and to men’s height (they were taller than the women).

In MEG 1985 there were two examples found that could be attributed to this category. One of them referred to a woman and her looks (long red hair) and the other example described a man’s height (tall, taller, tallest).
Similarly in EG 1993, there were very few examples found, none of them referred to women, whereas the only example found in connection with men referred to their height (*tall*).

EGY 2000 contained a total of eight examples. Three of them described the looks and smiles of women, all in a positive way (*prettyish* or *friendly smile*). The remaining five were found in connection with men. Two examples described the height (*tall*), the hair (*white*), the looks (*hasn’t lost his looks/had an angry look*). When looking at all sentences in this category, women were described positively in all but two sentences and men in all but one.

### 6.1.7 Objects and possessions

In this category the objects and possessions mentioned in connection with women and men will be accounted for. It will be established whether the objects are valuable or of lesser value and to what domains they belong.

![Figure 4. The number of objects and possessions related to women and men.](image-url)
As can be seen in Figure 4 above, there is an uneven distribution of objects and possessions relating to women and men. In none of the example sentences is the relation equal, as men are connected to objects and possessions more often than women.

A total of 93 objects were found in the example sentences. Approximately a third of them, or 33, were found in relation to women and the remaining 60 objects in relation to men.

Valuables in the form of money in some form (hundreds of pounds, pennies) were mentioned five times in connection with men and on no occasion in connection with women. Cars, boats, bicycles were mentioned eleven times in connection with men, the occurrence for women was one. In connection with leisure time activities and sports the following items were mentioned: football, tennis rackets and books. The example sentences in this area are related to women on three occasions and to men on seven occasions.

In EGB 1972 and 2003 the most occurrences of objects and possessions were found. In the 1972 edition the majority of items were attributed to men, 14 (70%), whereas women were described in connection with six (30%) items. As stated above only one of the items, or 5%, connected with women were valuable and the remaining items were not (skirts, lovely letters). Men’s possessions comprised both items of lesser value (pipe, red cap) and valuables (a car, a boat).

The EGB 2003 edition followed approximately the same pattern as its predecessor as far as the number of items is concerned – eleven (44%) in connection with women, which is slightly more than in the previous edition, and 14 (56%) in connection with men. In this edition house was mentioned in connection with a woman, which is to be considered as valuable. The remaining ten items could not be counted as valuables (e.g. beautiful clothes, telephone). Men’s items consisted of e.g. bicycles, a house, a hat and an electric razor.

In MEG 1985 the number of items in connection with women were seven (35%), none of them of any greater value (books, lovely cakes). 13 references (65%) were made to objects and possessions in relation to men, both valuable and items of lesser value (cattle, car, tennis rackets and shoes).
In EG 1993, none of the five items (42%) connected with women can be considered as having any relative value in general (lamb, Chanel soap, wrist watch). There were seven examples found in connection with men (58%), of which one could be categorized as valuable (sports car) and the remaining six as less valuable (five chickens, a letter, notes).

Among the four items (25%) mentioned in connection with women in EGY 2000, no valuable items could be found (e.g. two bras and four panties, reusable nappies). The twelve items (75%) in connection with men were also found to be of lesser value (e.g. binoculars, bike, baton).

6.1.8 Interests

The interests, skills, activities and habits that are attributed to women and men in the examples sentences are accounted for in this section. In addition, the purpose of this category has also been to determine in which domains women and men spend their free time and what their respective preferences are.
Table 4. Interests, skills and activities/habits according to gender and year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interests</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very fond of dancing (EGB 1972)</td>
<td>lost hundreds of pounds on gambling (EGB 1972)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not very fond of football (MEG 1985)</td>
<td>plays football (EGB 1972)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loves walking in the rain (EG 1993)</td>
<td>interested in playing football (EGB 1972)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(as the mother of five children she had little time to herself (EGY 2000))</td>
<td>likes thrillers (MEG 1985)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>all boys love games (EG 1993)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>has a large collection of oldies (EGY 2000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interested in modern art (EGB 2003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>a big name in music (MEG 1985)</td>
<td>what instrument does he play? (EGB 1972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are great musicians (EG 1993)</td>
<td>are great musicians (EG 1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/habits</td>
<td>saw a good play (MEG 1985)</td>
<td>saw a good play (MEG 1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>every morning she took the dog for a walk (EG 1993)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 above shows that there is a fairly even distribution of interests, skills, activities and habits attributed to women and men. Over the years the total occurrence was 18, where women accounted for seven of the activities and men for eleven. The distribution of interests over the years has remained stable overall and in relation to gender. The highest count of interests was related to men (4) and were found in EGB 1972. The lowest count (0) was found in EGB 2003 and related to women.

Music is found to be a common denominator and so is theatre (saw a good play). Men are interested in football (2), whereas women are not very fond of football. There were seven domains of interest in relation to men and three in relation to women. It should be mentioned that one of these three can be counted as a non-interest in that the woman was said to have little time for herself.

In general the activities connected with women can be considered as calmer or even safer than those of men’s. Women went for walks, danced or saw a play, whereas
men were connected to high risk behaviour like gambling. They enjoyed sports (football) and liked thrillers.

6.1.9 Location

Location is the last category. As men traditionally to a great extent have been connected with the outer world in the past and women with the home, the illustration displays what women’s and men’s assigned domains are in the examples.

Figure 5. Places in relation to women and men

Figure 5 illustrates places in connection with women and men, where they are at and where they are going.

Of the locations outside the home that are related to women all six can be associated with the role as home maker as they involve shopping and errands, trips to school and hospital. The corresponding figures for men’s domain outside the home are seven in relation to errands, school and university. The remaining ten are related to a foreign destination, Japan (EG 1993) (a corresponding location can not be found for
women), work (EGY 2000), at a party (MEG 1985), an an uncle’s garden (EGB 1972) and activities connected to the outdoors (down the river (EGB 1972), into the water (EGB 1972), running down the lane (EG 1993). The workplace is mentioned twice in connection with men (the office (EGB 1972), work (EGY 2000), whereas there is no reference to women.

6.2 Analysis

Section 6.2 presents the analysis of the nine subcategories in the previous chapter, which serve as point of departure for the analysis. They will be presented in the same order as in the result section.

6.2.1 Occurrence

The results in the category Occurrence reveal that there are far more men than women present in the grammars and that women never reach the presence that men have obtained in the examples.

There is in this respect a marginalization of women. Over the years there is no real increase in the number of women in the example sentences. The curricula in force during the investigated period had the equality between women and men written into them. A lack of awareness of the gender perspective must therefore be attributed to the authors of these grammars, even though the term had not yet entered everyman’s vocabulary when some of the grammars were written.

Furthermore, the number of women and men in the world’s population is about equal, with women actually outnumbering men. It would be fair to assume that their representation in learning material should be about equal as well. This is an important aspect in education, especially since it has to do with the way in which students are able to relate to the material, which in turn may have an effect on their motivation. Sunderland (1992:86ff) argues that learning material can have an unconscious influence on students and affect particularly female students if the female characters in the course books are relatively few in numbers.
6.2.2 The portrayal of women and men

Thematic roles have been used as a way to analyze to what extent women and men are portrayed as active or more passive, if they are the “doers” or the ones “being done to”. The results in this category showed that women were agents in 39 sentences and patients in 16. The corresponding figure for men was 69 sentences where they were agents and 13 as patients.

As indicated by the results, this is a category where gender stereotypes are represented. Women are portrayed as Agents to a much lesser degree than men, but when it comes to being Patients women are in a slight majority. Women and men are often thought of as each other’s opposites and functioning to complement each other, as pointed out by Calderon (2003:7ff). As a result men are considered to be active agents and women passive subjects. By not paying attention to the way in which these roles are expressed the stereotypes persist.

From a grammatical point of view, the evidence that Agent is a more common thematic role than Patient could probably be explained by the fact that there were more examples found where the present tense was used, than there were example sentences relating to the passive form. From a gender perspective it could again possibly mean that the gender had not been accounted for since women were in the majority as patients.

Professions is another category where the numbers do not reflect reality and the fact that women have become increasingly employed outside the home since the 1970s. Although there is no real progression, two grammars (EG 1993, EGY 2000) actually showed a greater number of women than men. On a further positive note, this is a category where gender awareness really shines through when it comes to the assigned professions. Women were doctors (MEG 1985), engineers (EG 1993) and politicians (EGY 2000). Had it not been for the verbs in connection with the professions (which indicate uncertainty whether women would actually be able to become doctors, dentists or politicians) the category would have been a very good example, showing an increased amount of awareness. In a study on grammatical learning material, Andersson (2005:52), points to the fact that men are described more often in their professional roles than women. It is important to analyze the frequency of gender stereotypes, e.g. who is doing
what and the nature of the activities performed by the female/male subject, since many examples suggest a lack of gender awareness and are a representation of stereotypes (Andersson, 2005:18ff). In connection herewith, Andersson also discusses an interesting thought, namely whether grammatical examples should be a reflection of reality, when it comes to e.g. the professions and the posts that women and men occupy, or whether they should be constructed so that they reflect the ideology of gender equality. This is of course a valid point. On a more philosophical note one might say be the change you want to see. If we want a society in which women and men are equal, active measures need to be taken in order to counteract gender stereotypes. This is something that authors of grammar books need to take into consideration when revising their material.

Role models are important as they often relate to the professional choices we make. It is often suggested that there are very few role models for women. Elvin-Nowak (2003:230) points to the fact that a role model is related to similarity and identification. It could be a historical figure, or someone we have not met. Women’s underrepresentation in e.g. the industry and in boardrooms can be related to the lack of female role models.

This is by far the most unequal category with a lopsidedness in favour of men. As shown in the results, 94 role models were found, 81 of them were male and only 13 female. That is more than six times as many. It would have been justified to include a much higher number of women in this category in order to achieve gender equality. The only woman still alive among the female role models is Lauren Bacall (EGY 2000), an actress born in the 1920s. As shown by Andersson (2005:51) in a report on grammatical exercises very few famous women were present in the examples compared to the presence of famous men.

It is also worth noting that no female scientists were included. Neither were female politicians like Thatcher, Albright or Clinton. For every male sports figure there could have been a female equivalent, but there was not. For every Pete Sampras (EGB 2003), a Navratilova or Graaf could have been added. The English language has many great authors, many of them women. They were also excluded.

This is, as already stated, a category were women are grossly underrepresented. Unfortunately, it seems that the inclusion of more women in learning material still requires a conscious effort on the part of the authors. The choice of role models can of
course be discussed. The swimmer Sally Bauer (EGB 2003) might not be the most obvious choice as she is relatively unknown. She may, on the other hand, be considered a good choice just because of that. Overall more female role models need to be included in the examples in order to have a more balanced gender representation. A good way to break this pattern, as shown by Fredriksson (1969:142), is to show boys choosing traditionally female occupations and vice versa, especially in examples that are intended as models.

Character traits is another category where women and men are portrayed very differently. Men’s traits were described twice as often as women’s when counting all the five grammars. This may not be as surprising as the way in which the respective gender was described given the fact that men outnumber women in the examples overall. What stands out is that men were described very differently from women, and often in a negative way.

Women overall were attributed positive traits such as nice (MEG 1985) and kind (EGB 1972), whereas men were rude (MEG 1985) and lazy (EGB 1972). The fact that women were described in such a positive way, as kind and helpful, men in relation to their intellectual capacity and also in a negative way in twelve out of 18 examples, may be a reflection of a stereotyped way of looking at women and men, perhaps even expecting and accepting different behaviour depending on their gender.

The inherent perceptions about what is tolerated from boys and girls, women and men may play a part here as we tend to expect different kinds of behaviour depending on the gender. Harding (1986:18) argues that character traits are part of a cultural process where women and men are expected to act in certain ways depending on culture and context. This is interesting since it influences the way in which gender is finally created, i.e. from an understanding of what we consider to be the structural or cultural gender.

Appearance is a category which was chosen because there is in general an immense focus in all areas on the way women look, on weight and the way of dressing. Men do not get the same attention, positive or negative, as women do in relation to their appearance in e.g. the media.

The ways in which women and men were described do show traits of gender stereotyping. Although a girl could be described as tall (EGB 1972), men were described
in superlatives, they were the tallest (EGB 1972, EGB 2003). References were made to their specific height, six foot four (EGU 2000) and on one occasion a man was described as being strong as a horse (EGB 2003). Women were pretty (EGB 1972, EBG 2003), prettyish (EG 2000), whereas men in general were tall and strong. Although women may be tall and strong the men were always depicted as taller and stronger. Boys are not described as pretty in the grammars, they do not wear beautiful clothes, but they might have an angry look (EGY 2000). Describing women and men so differently and without much variety as to their designated roles, suggests a striking unawareness of the question and representation of gender.

Objects and possessions found in relation to women and men were of a very diverse nature. The way in which they were divided between the genders were not. Men generally had more possessions/objects connected to them. The nature of the objects and their value differ from those connected to women. While women make do with roses (EGB 1972), bras and reusable nappies (EGY 2000), men have cars (EGB 1972, MEG 1985, EG 1993,) and tennis rackets (MEG 1985), belonging to the world outside the home, going places, engaging in activities with others.

In the category Interests men can be said to be depicted as more active and risk taking than women. They gamble (EGB 1972) and play football (EGB 1972) while women love walking in the rain (EG 1993) and, as opposed to men are not very fond of football (MEG 1985). As pointed out by Kunnari and Sipponen (1989:47) there is a danger in describing modern society as a place where women and men are always seen as representing their respective traditional gender roles as it may suggest the endorsement of the traditional way of looking at women and men and thus impede the strive for gender equality.

Is there a typical gender stereotyping here? What are women and men supposed to be interested in? The example As the mother of five children she had little time to herself (EGY 2000) expresses a very traditional way of seeing the woman as the caretaker. A man may explore the world and become an expert of deep-sea fishes (EGY 2000) as long as women tend to their domains, traditionally home and children. It implies that women have little time and energy to pursue their interests or become experts of deep-sea fishes should they feel an urge to do so.
The category *Location* was chosen in order to show the spheres in which women and men move, as women and men tend to hold on to their traditional domains (Carlestam 2004:3). The female sphere in the grammars is far more restricted than men’s. Women do not seem to be gainfully employed as they do not go to work as men do. Women do not spend as much time with outdoor activities as men do. They are *in the village* (EGB 1972), *in a guest house* (EG 1993) or *a modest studio* (EG 1993), *in a room* (EGB 1972), *on the stairs* (MEG 1985), *on the step* (EGY 2000). They go *to the market* (EG 1993), *to the butcher’s, the baker’s and the chemist’s* (MEG 1985), *to school* (EG 1993), can be seen *outside Sears* (EG 1993) or *in the hospital* (EGY 2000). The home and its nearby surroundings is still connected with women. While men too are present in these areas, they are to a greater extent associated with a variety of locations and activities (*into the water, down the river* (EGB 1972), *out of the forest* (MEG 1985)).

Overall, in all five grammars very few examples of reversed gender roles, as seen in the example below, were found in the texts:

*He wants a pair of kitchen scales for his birthday* (EG 1993).

*He got up to peel the potatoes* (EG 1993).

Examples as the ones shown above seem to be part of a life less ordinary. If the pronoun would have been *she* instead of *he*, it would probably have been considered part of everyday life instead of an anamoly.

### 6.2.3 The grammars in relation to the curricula

Having presented and analyzed the results, a few words need to be said about the relation between the curricula and the learning material. In general there seems to be little connection between the wording in the curricula and the way in which the examples in the grammars have been constructed. The gender perspective and gender equality seldom seem to have been a priority.
EGB 1972 and 2003 have been among the most popular grammars in Swedish schools for many years. They are also the ones that show a huge underrepresentation of women and many stereotyped gender roles.

MEG 1985 is also a grammar that has been frequently used in schools. I first intended to use also the 1993 and 2010 editions, but after having examined them, I noticed that the investigated example sentences were identical in all three and had remained so over a time span of 30 years. (I therefore abandoned my initial idea.)

EG 1993 is a grammar that emphasizes modern language, authentic example sentences and idiomatic expressions. It does not show a high level of gender awareness, but stands out in a positive way in the category Professions, where it together with EGY 2000 shows a slightly higher share of women present in connection with professions.

EGY 2000 is a comprehensive grammar that, as mentioned above, together with MEG had a higher representation of women in connection with professions compared to the other three grammars. As for role models it did very little for gender equality – 36 male role models and only seven female.

The curricula in place during the investigated period all stated gender equality in different wordings. Lgr 69 relates to EGB 1972. The wording of the text expressed that school should be an advocate for the equality between men and women (note that men was still mentioned before women in the wording of this version). As shown there were few, if any, initiatives from the side of the authors of EGB 1972 which point in that direction.

Lgy 70 relates to MEG 1985 and EG 1993. The wording in this curriculum is sharper and it emphasizes increased awareness and the importance of students debating and questioning current conditions. Neither MEG 1985 nor EG 1993 show any signs of increased gender awareness.

Lpf 94 is relevant for the study of EG 2000 and EGB 2003. The curricula put an increased responsibility on the teachers, whose task it is to ensure that both male and female perspectives are reflected in the classrooms. Specific guidelines on how to write learning material that takes the gender perspective into account would have been useful given the fact that the curricula have become less prescriptive over the years, leaving more room for individual interpretations.
7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to examine the following:

- What is the occurrence of women and men in the grammars?
- How are women and men portrayed in the grammars?
- Do the grammars work in line with what is laid down in the relevant curricula regarding gender equality?

The aim has been reached insofar as all the research questions have been answered. Five English grammars have been studied from a gender perspective. In order to give as full a view as possible of gender patterns that might be present in the grammars, 100 sentences from each grammar, a total of 500 sentences were examined.

Nine different categories have served as point of departure when compiling and analyzing the material. The following categories were used: Occurrence, Agent and patient roles, Professions, Role models, Character traits, Appearance, Objects and possessions, Interests and Location.

In every grammar, women are in minority when it comes to Occurrence. They are in minority as the Agent (initiator of action) and in majority as the Patient (the one subjected to the action) in three out of five grammars (EGB 1972, EG 1993, EGY 2000).

Professions is a category where the distribution in favor of men is very uneven in two grammars (EGB1972 and 2003). In EG 1993 and EGY 2000 the distribution is about even, with women in majority. In MEG 1985 men are in majority.

Role models is the category that really stands out in a negative way. Women are hugely underrepresented in every grammar. The largest underrepresentation is found in EGY 2000.

Character traits is a category where the distribution of traits is uneven and in favour of men. Women are generally and to a higher degree portrayed in a positive light, whereas men tend to be described with more variation, but in a more negative way.
Appearance is related to women and men in very different ways. Although the distribution of descriptions in this category is fairly even, women tend to be pretty and men strong and tall.

In the category Objects and Possessions, men are mentioned more often in every grammar. Men’s objects and possessions tend to be more valuable than women’s. Women’s possessions include clothing to a greater extent than men’s possessions.

As for Interests, men are related to more often in this category than women, and in a different way. Men’s interests are different from those of women in that they e.g. involve sports and women’s do not. The only reference to sports and a woman stated that she was not very fond of football (MEG 1985), which is a negative connotation.

Location, or the domains of women and men, reflect many traditional or even obsolete ways of looking at women and men. Men are more active outside the home than women as they go to work and engage in other activities connected with nature, activities not mentioned in connection with women.

There are of course differences between the five grammars, but considering that they have been written and published over a period of 30 years, the differences can not be said to be noteworthy. EGB 1972 and 2003 have e.g. both been written by the same authors, and although there are differences in the ways in which women and men are described, it is not possible to see any major changes in the ways in which women and men are referred to.

Very little gender sensitivity is reflected in the example sentences. The analyzed sentences in the five grammars are in general preserving traditional gender stereotypes, which suggests a low level of gender awareness on the part of the authors. The curricula and the wording in relation to gender equality do not seem to have been the point of departure when creating the examples in the grammars.

It is hard to try and find an explanation as to why there seems to be no real increase in the number of women present and why the figures show random peaks and an almost haphazard progression. A possible explanation might be that change requires an intentional effort and the easiest way out is always to continue producing “more of the same” or leaving things as they are.
It is also striking how many examples still involve men and how many male professions and role models are represented. As for Occurrence, the material does not give a true representation of reality. If it had, women would be present in half of the example sentences and be the sole participants in as many as the men. Hennessy (1994 in Chavez 2001:127) considers a good way of dealing with gender stereotypes is to face them and not assume that the material, just because it is authentic, is free of stereotyped attitudes.

From a language didactic point of view, it would of course be desirable if all learning material would contain a more balanced representation of both women and men. This awareness is of particular importance since girls and women always have been presented with very few inspiring role models. The representation of gender roles is equally important within and outside a school setting.

In 1969, three years before the first grammar in this study was published, a survey was performed regarding gender roles in learning material. The author (Fredriksson 1969:142) emphasized how essential it is that course books do not further reinforce attitudes related to gender inequality. She also pointed to the possibility that a gender sensitive material might contribute to a change in attitudes. This shows that there was an awareness of gender equality at the time, but that the authors of e.g. EGB 1972 chose to focus on the linguistic aspects although the curricula in force emphasized gender equality.

As for the results and whether they turned out as expected or not, I might have been overly optimistic when anticipating a positive progression in the favour of women. I had indeed expected an increased gender awareness and a stronger presence of women in the investigated material, which was not the case.

There are of course many ways in which to carry out a study. In retrospect I would perhaps have chosen fewer grammars. With nine different categories and five different grammars in combination with the relevant curricula, time went very fast, to say the least. Considering that the time for a student’s essay is limited, it would have been wiser to have less voluminous primary material. On the other hand, a less complex approach would not have resulted in the multi-faceted view that I strived for.
Having examined 500, sometimes very bland, example sentences, it would be interesting to see future research on how to make learning materials more interesting to children and young adults and of course research on how authors think about gender equality in regard to the material they are producing.

Whether or not it has been a conscious choice of the authors to place women and men in situations where gender stereotypes are perpetuated, an increased amount of gender awareness is called for on the part of those involved in the process. Awareness is key and teachers, authors of learning material and publishers obviously need to be more aware of the gender perspective, not only of what and how something is presented or taught, but also of what is included in learning material. A conscious effort is needed in order to ensure that the gender perspective has actually been accounted for.

As could be seen from my results, grammar books have been updated without taking account of the gender perspective (MEG 1985). There are also grammars (EG 1993) where the authors promote the importance of using authentic material. While this may be advantageous from a knowledge perspective, it is also essential to keep the gender perspective in mind.

For the benefit of the students I strongly believe that learning material needs to be more inspiring with topics and examples that children and young adults can relate to. The added value of learning something apart from what you are supposed to learn is very appealing, as shown e.g. in the following sentence:

George Orwell, whose real name was Eric Blair, was born in India (EGY 2000).

A further educational aspect is the ever present discussion of motivation. Many students feel that school is not relevant to them, that it is a place with no connection to the real world, as they see it. Why not try to make the examples at least a little bit more interesting and to use examples with authentic names, like e.g. Bobbie Brown instead of the “generic” Mr Brown and update names like Mary and Bengt to names that are more frequent among today’s students?
On a more humorous note, one might point out that the characters in the grammars seem rather dull, with not much going on in their lives. This is shown in sentences like the following:

*He got up to peel the potatoes* (EGB 1993).

On the other hand this is a good example of reversed gender roles, and they certainly need to be applauded given their scarcity.

Finally, what consequences will it have if women are present to a lesser degree in learning material and if there is a huge underrepresentation of female role models? Since women still, in the year 2012, do not earn as much as men, still are underrepresented in boardrooms and on higher posts, it does matter how school books are written and which points of views are expressed.
8. References

Primary sources


Secondary sources


Davidsson, Jenny. 2004. John washes the car and the woman was holding her baby in her arms. Växjö: Växjö Universitet.


