Language, Gender, and Sexuality in EFL Textbooks
The Case of Greek Public Secondary Schools

Maria Koutsoupaki
Language, Gender, and Sexuality in EFL Textbooks
The Case of Greek Public Secondary Schools

Maria Koutsoupaki

Abstract

The past few decades have been marked by increasing awareness of issues pertaining to gender and sexuality, since both concepts have started being treated as continuums or spectrums, rather than as binaries. Therefore, the fields of gender and queer linguistics have been growing in significance, in an effort to identify underlying ideologies and biases in language, and to challenge them. Nevertheless, the reality is far from ideal, as gender inequalities and discrimination against non-normative sexualities are still prevalent in many sectors of life, one of which is education. In fact, education plays a prime role in shaping people’s views; not only do textbooks and other learning materials have a considerable effect on learners’ attitudes and sense of self, but also teachers’ beliefs and approaches can reinforce or challenge biases. In the present study, two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks used in Greek secondary public schools were examined, in order to investigate how gender and sexuality are represented on a lexical and discursive level. Additionally, three EFL teachers using said textbooks were interviewed to investigate their awareness of these topics as well as their attitudes and approaches towards them. The results from the textbook content analysis reveal that gender is overwhelmingly treated as a binary concept, and inclusivity is not always a consideration. Specifically, stereotypical gender representations were identified both on a word and a discourse level. Moreover, any topics explicitly concerning sexuality are avoided, and the only vocabulary made available for students to discuss these topics indexes heteronormativity. The teachers interviewed demonstrated some awareness of these issues, but were only able to point out very few problematic representations and examples of non-inclusive language. All teachers emphasised the need for training in order to be able to address these topics with their learners, and agreed that learners show limited awareness of discrimination and sexism in the language used in the textbooks. Furthermore, they argued that lack of progress in education is due to the fact that Greek society is not ready to embrace changes in how gender and sexuality are viewed. The conclusion drawn in the present study is that this lack of progress can potentially be attributed to how deeply rooted religious beliefs are in Greek society, reinforcing traditional gender roles and family values, while denouncing non-heterosexual expression. Overall, the present study corroborated the results found in other, similar investigations of EFL textbooks from around the world, and suggested that linguistic change cannot happen independently, but should be part of radical social reforms.

Keywords
Language and gender, sexuality, non-binary, LGBTQ+, heteronormativity, queer theory, patriarchy, EFL, Greek public school, textbooks, interviews
## Contents

1. Introduction 1  
2. Background 2  
   2.1 Definitions 2  
      2.1.1 Gender, sex, and sexism 2  
      2.1.2 Heteronormativity and queer theory 3  
      2.1.3 Inclusive and gendered language 3  
   2.2 Patriarchy, the gender hierarchy, and gender-based violence 3  
   2.3 New capitalism: implications for inclusion of non-heteronormative identities and discourses 4  
      2.3.1 The case of Greece 4  
2.4 The role of textbooks and the hidden curriculum 5  
2.5 Previous Research 6  
   2.5.1 Research on textbooks 6  
   2.5.2. Research on teacher awareness, attitudes, and practices 6  
3. Method and material 7  
   3.1 Content analysis 7  
   3.2 Textbook Analysis 8  
      3.2.1 Material 8  
      3.2.2 Conducting the analysis 9  
   3.3 Interviews 10  
      3.3.1 Participants and ethical considerations 10  
      3.3.2 Conducting and analysing the interviews 10  
4. Results 12  
   4.1 Discursive construction of gender and sexuality 12  
      4.1.1 (Non)heterosexual representations in the textbooks 12  
      4.1.2 Gender representations: stereotypes and inclusivity 13  
   4.2 Male, female and non-heteronormative character frequencies 16  
      4.2.1 Famous persons 17  
      4.2.2 Mythical characters 18  
      4.2.3 Non-heteronormative characters. 19  
   4.3 Gendered and inclusive language in the textbooks 19  
      4.3.1 Gendered and inclusive pronouns 19  
      4.3.2 Use of gendered adjectives and nouns 21  
   4.4 Teachers’ awareness, attitudes, and approaches 22  
      4.4.1 Using the textbooks in the classroom 22  
      4.4.2 Student and teacher awareness 22  
      4.4.3 Practices, responsibilities and challenges 24
5. Discussion

5.1 Gender representations in a patriarchal system

5.2 Heteronormativity, religion, and the consequences of avoidance

5.3 Male, female, and non-heteronormative characters: issues of inclusivity

5.4 Gendered and inclusive lexis

5.5 Challenges teachers are facing and the issue of responsibility

6. Conclusion

References

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C
1. Introduction

The field of language and gender has been growing in significance and popularity among researchers over the past few decades. However, it is still topical as societies are encouraged to acknowledge gender not as a binary concept but as a spectrum or a continuum (Motschenbacher, 2011). Alongside the reconceptualisation of what constitutes gender is a view that sexuality, commonly accepted to mean one’s sexual orientation and behaviour (Cameron & Kulick, 2003), should not be viewed in heteronormative terms, that is, in terms that accept heterosexuality as the norm and the natural state of things.

Despite the growing awareness, gender inequality and heteronormativity are still widespread issues. According to two studies conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), one in 2012 and one in 2019, very little progress has been made in how LGBTQ+ people in the EU experience their fundamental human rights (FRA, 2020, p.10). Similarly, the Me-Too movement, which started in 2006 and saw resurgence in 2017 as an online phenomenon, acted as a catalyst for activism as it brought to light an unprecedented number of stories of sexual harassment, assault, and discrimination primarily against women (Williams, Singh & Mezey, 2019).

As places of learning but also social environments, schools’ impact on learners’ attitudes, and, even, identities, is undeniable, and this is to a large extent due to the influence of textbooks on students’ way of thinking. With English language teaching (ELT) being the common denominator internationally¹, there is a very tangible possibility to combat gender stereotypes and promote diversity by integrating inclusive practices and learning materials in the English classroom. Nevertheless, a number of studies from around the world agree not only on the presence of (hetero)sexist language and gender stereotyping, but also on the lack of non-binary, queer, and non-heteronormative identities in (EFL) textbooks (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018; Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2015; Sunderland, 2015; Temple, 2005, Ullah & Skelton, 2013; Xiong, Li & He, 2017). At the same time, others call for a queer-inclusive pedagogy, which encompasses not only learning materials but also teachers’ attitudes and preparation to engage with these issues (Paiz, 2019).

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the discursive and lexical representation of gender and sexuality in the Greek public-school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks. The context of Greece was selected as the country recently saw a revival of the Me-Too movement, as well as a significant number of femicides. Considering that sexual violence and intimate partner violence are closely related to gender stereotypes (Bates, Klement, Kaye & Pennington, 2019), an investigation into the extent to which the latter are present in Greek compulsory EFL textbooks is relevant and significant. Moreover, a law was passed in 2019 to promote gender equality, prevent and combat gender-based violence. Article 17 of Law 4604/2019 specifically promotes gender equality in education, including learning materials (Greek Ministry of Interior, 2019). Therefore, it is interesting to see whether the state-approved textbooks abide by this law. The focus will be on the third year of lower secondary and the first year of upper

¹ This could encompass English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL), English as a Second Language (ESL), or English as an Additional Language (EFL); any distinction among these is beyond the scope and purpose of the present study.
secondary school, which are transition but key stages in an adolescent’s education. Teacher’s attitudes and preparedness to address the topics of language, gender, and sexuality will also be explored. Specifically, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How are gender and sexual identities discursively represented in Greek public school EFL textbooks?

2. What is the frequency of male, female, and non-binary/LGBTQ+ characters in the textbooks?

3. To what extent is representation in the textbooks gender-neutral on a lexical level?
   a. What is the frequency of inclusive as opposed to gendered pronouns?
   b. Are there contexts in which adjectives and (agentive) nouns used to describe people are gendered?

4. How do EFL teachers approach issues of gender and sexual identity, and (lack of) representation in the textbooks?

2. Background

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Gender, sex, and sexism

The present study follows Butler’s (1999) distinction between the constructed gender and the biological sex. Sex is considered a physiological binary category, though the existence of intersex individuals, people with characteristics that fall outside of this strict dichotomy (Roen, 2015) problematises this. Gender, on the other hand, is seen as a cultural construct. Traditionally, it is taken to correspond to one’s sex; however Butler (1999) contends that one’s biological sex does not predetermine their gender, that is, the set of behaviours and tendencies defined by society as either masculine or feminine (p. 10). Though this seems to agree with Maggie Humm’s (1989) definition of gender as “a culturally-shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or the male” (p.84), the latter appears to deny people agency over which attributes to embrace and which to reject. Butler (1999), however, sees gender not as a given but as a social performance, granting people the possibility to defy societal norms reinforced by masculine domination (p. 180).

Etymologically related to sex, sexism can denote discrimination on the basis of one’s sex. Nevertheless, sexism in language is often seen as practices that specifically discriminate against women by excluding, stereotyping, or degrading them (Sunderland 2000b). Common instances of the first would be the use of the generic he and the term man used instead of human; the other two types of discrimination include but are not limited to roles traditionally assumed by women (housewife), and terms signifying a woman’s marital status (spinster) or behaviour (hysterical, bossy). In her state-of-the-art review article, Sunderland (2000b, p. 211) references Cameron (1994), claiming that opposition to the use of sexist language might have also facilitated a more progressive understanding of gender, thus linking the two.
2.1.2 Heteronormativity and queer theory

A key term in this study is that of heteronormativity, described as consisting of “those structures, institutions, relations and actions that promote and produce heterosexuality as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged, and necessary” (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 55). This institutional heterosexuality, on one hand links to the oppression of the LGBTQ+ individuals (Marchia & Sommer, 2019), on the other hand encourages the subordination of women by men, as it is within heterosexual relationships that men exercise power over women (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). In other words, heterosexuality is reinforcing the gender hierarchy. Therefore, although heteronormativity has traditionally been associated only with sexuality (Foucault, 1978, Warner, 1991), in this paper it is seen as referring to both sexuality and gender, following the approach of Rich (1980), Butler (1999), and more recent work (Marchia & Sommer, 2019; Motschenbacher, 2011; Sunderland, 2017). Heteronormativity is often viewed through the lens of Queer Theory, which criticises gender binarism, institutional heterosexuality, and the mechanisms that reinforce it (Gray 2013, p.43). One of these mechanisms is, undoubtedly, language, which is why Queer Linguistics (QL) has emerged, that is, to investigate and question the linguistic structures and practices that reinforce gender binarism and heteronormativity (Motschenbacher, 2011; Leinonen, 2020). Its relevance in the present study and in general is clear: gender dichotomy and heteronormativity can be oppressive even for heterosexuals and those who identify within the binary, as it assumes that one must constantly adhere to prescribed linguistic practices (Motschenbacher, 2011).

2.1.3 Inclusive and gendered language

The term ‘gendered language’ denotes words that grammatically or semantically refer to a specific gender. For instance, the word businessman grammatically indicates a man, while wife semantically refers to a woman. Despite the limited number of inflections in English, there are still a few grammatically masculine words which are used generically to encompass any gender (Lindqvist, Renström & Gustafsson Sendén, 2019). The most common cases are the epicene pronoun he and the word and suffix man, used to refer to humans. The male bias and androcentrism inherent in both of these render them examples of gendered language (Lindqvist et al., 2019). On the other hand, language that is inclusive is not only gender-fair, such as the use of the paired pronoun he/she (Szcesny, Formanowicz & Moser, 2016) but it also accounts for individuals that identify outside the gender binary, for instance the singular pronoun they. Despite the grammatically plural meaning of they, its use as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun has become more acceptable alongside the growing social visibility of nonbinary individuals (Björkman, 2017). Efforts to neutralise traditionally gendered words, such as using chairperson instead of chairman, are also seen as inclusive, unless they are used in a gendered context; an example of the latter would be when the term police officers is used to describe a group of men. This is because, according to Lindqvist et al. (2019, p. 113) even gender-neutral nouns could carry a male bias; hence, using them in a gendered context makes them unequivocally non-inclusive.

2.2 Patriarchy, the gender hierarchy, and gender-based violence

Bucholtz (2014) defines patriarchy through the lens of radical, or ‘root’, feminism as “men’s systematic and structural subordination of women, [...] from which every man
benefits in countless ways, even without recognizing or intentionally participating in this system” (p. 30). Considering the relationship between the gender hierarchy and heteronormativity, patriarchy can thus be seen as a social structure or system that reinforces the gender hierarchy, upholds heterosexuality as the norm, and justifies beliefs of male dominance. Researchers have also suggested that there is a connection between patriarchy and gender-based violence (Bates et al., 2019; Bucholtz, 2014; Ozaki & Otis, 2016; Tsiganou, 2021). Specifically, Bucholtz (2014) discusses the ideas of two influential radical feminist theorists, Susan Brownmiller (1975) and Andrea Dworkin (1974), who “argue that male sexualized violence against women is the very cornerstone of patriarchy” (p. 30). Moreover, in a study examining the relationship between gender stereotypes and violence, Bates et al. (2019) concluded that problematic gendered ideas, such as the subordination of women and the right of men to exert their power and control over them, can only be challenged by questioning traditional gender roles. The implications of this have become even more significant considering the number of domestic femicides (Karakasi et al., 2022) and the resurgence of the MeToo movement in a number of countries, including Greece (Williams et al., 2019). As a result, an examination into how gender and, by extension, sexuality, are represented in Greek society and specifically in educational contexts, is important in order to better understand the extent to which the patriarchal societal structure sustains and promotes these problematic ideas to individuals from a young age.

2.3 New capitalism: implications for inclusion of non-heteronormative identities and discourses

In this age of globalisation, when it comes to the publication and distribution of EFL textbooks, the question of queer and non-heteronormative representation can be examined from the perspective of ‘new capitalism’, the current economic system which is driven by neoliberal policies as well as technological innovations (Gray, 2010, p. 14). Gray (2010) defines neoliberalism as entailing “the opening up of domestic markets to unrestricted free trade, the privatization of state assets and the marketization of areas such as health and education” (p. 13). The significance of this interplay of technological advancements and the marketization of education is, at least, twofold.

On one hand, it suggests that writers and publishers of EFL textbooks mass produced to reach a wider audience have to tailor the content to meet the needs and beliefs of a broad range of users; as a result, heteronormativity is often treated as the default position in order to maximise profits (Gray, 2013, p. 52). On the other hand, language, and specifically English, becomes a commodity in the ‘new work order’: possessing certain linguistic abilities can ensure success in the job market (Fairclough, 2002; Gray, 2010). This can have wider implications for students who do not see themselves represented in the learning material, and by extension in the teaching practices, as this exclusion might have an impact on their motivation to gain this linguistic capital.

2.3.1 The case of Greece

As discussed above, in the case of learning materials privately produced by businesses that compete over domestic and international markets, prioritising profit over inclusion can be understood through a capitalist lens. However, one might expect the situation to look different in the Greek public-school context, since textbooks used in primary and secondary education are commissioned by the Ministry of Education, produced by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), which is a public organisation, and distributed to
public schools for free. Consequently, since profit is not a consideration, one needs to look elsewhere in order to explain the extent to which non-heteronormative identities are represented in Greek public-school EFL textbooks. In fact, it is possible that gender and sexual representations in the textbooks are determined not on economic grounds but on religious and political ones, considering how deeply ingrained in Greek society the former is, and how the conservatism pervasive in the latter shapes norms and beliefs. Supported by both of the above, the long-established patriarchal structure could also be assumed to drive people’s understanding of gender and sexuality, and its portrayal through language. These hypotheses will be explored further in the results and the discussion sections.

2.4 The role of textbooks and the hidden curriculum

Critical discourse analysis perceives no text as innocent but as advocating particular ideologies (Babaii, 2021, p. 689). Specifically, it explores how the use of language not only reflects but is also shaped by the sociopolitical contexts in which it occurs. The term discourse in itself refers to how knowledge is produced through language and representation and how it becomes regulatory, shaping and dictating social practices (Hall, 1997, p. 222). Since critical discourse analysis explores how ideologies and identities are constructed and reflected in texts (Paltridge, 2021), it can be argued that textbooks are not neutral either, but that they convey the ideologies of those that commissioned, wrote, or published them (Gray, 2000). Some scholars allow that, in the process of construction, the language and content of textbooks can be negotiated (Babaii, 2021). Others assume a less neutral stance, claiming that textbooks convey the dominant ideas and attitudes of a society (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018). Realising the significance of this, Babaii (2021) advocates for learners’ right to “non-imposing, non-inculcating linguistic input” (p. 689).

The question remains, however, whether textbooks can indeed have an impact on a student’s sense of self and beliefs. Some challenge this view as it denies learners agency over how they perceive, interpret, and use the learning material (Sunderland, 2000a); others suggest that learners who cannot identify with the values conveyed through the language and discourses of a text can feel othered, alienated, or excluded (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018; Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2019; Sunderland, 2017, Xiong et al, 2017). Moreover, it can still be questioned whether learners are able to exercise their agency if they are not presented with the language needed to contest certain values, especially in the case of EFL learners.

At the same time, there are studies that assert the influence of textbooks on learners, suggesting that it is not explicit but found in what they term “hidden curriculum” (Stromquist, Lee & Brock-Utne, 1998; Mustapha, 2013; Papadakis, 2018; Sunderland, 2017, among others). For the purposes of this paper, the studies briefly discussed below pertain to only gender and sexual representations in the hidden curriculum, though the term can certainly be explored through different lens, for instance race. The hidden curriculum is understood as encompassing biased or even discriminatory depictions of men and women in linguistic and pictorial form, as well as high representation of certain subjects and identities, and exclusion of others (Mustafa, 2013, p.456). Sunderland (2017) also uses it in the context of teaching materials, in that characters are often explicitly male or female, with no non-binary or queer options. Both Sunderland (2017) and Motschenbacher (2016) also draw attention to the fact that certain subject matters and discourses can be seen as gender-exclusive as they directly or indirectly index masculinity or femininity. Another aspect of the hidden curriculum is the practices and roles evident
in a school environment, such as the way teachers treat male and female students (Stromquist et al., 1998).

### 2.5 Previous Research

#### 2.5.1 Research on textbooks

In a comprehensive review on gender and language education research, Mustapha (2013) suggests that, already in the 1960s, studies on textbooks indicated a bias towards the representation of masculinity. In the next two decades, though both men and women were portrayed as performing stereotypical roles and activities, males were generally found to be overrepresented or depicted in more powerful positions (Hartman & Judd, 1978; Hellinger, 1980; Porreca, 1984; U’ren, 1971). Researchers in the 1990s appear to have taken a more argumentative stance, stressing the importance of eliminating sexism (Renner, 1997), encouraging a break away from traditions that reinforce the oppression of women (Stromquist et al., 1998), and even urging the need for change towards a gender-free language (Mills, 1995). Gender representation in textbooks was even described as encompassing “the extent to which male or female characters are primarily responsible for "requesting", "seeking information", and "giving directives"” (Mustapha, 2013, p. 459). In the Greek context, the only study found examining EFL textbooks focuses only on cultural stereotypes and discrimination (Theologou & Dimasi, 2020). However, studies on Greek public-school textbooks for other subjects are in line with these findings, reporting on the use of gendered and sexist language, such as masculine generics (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018), the prevalence of male characters, especially famous people (Papadakis, 2018), and the pervasiveness of stereotypes in terms of family roles and occupations (Maragoudaki, 2007).

Importantly, these observations do not stop at the representation of women. Over recent decades, sexuality has been incorporated as a factor in the study of language and gender (Sunderland, 2017). In his study of ten EFL textbooks produced in the UK for the global market, John Gray (2013) reports no non-heterosexual references, and when famous gay figures feature, their sexuality is not discussed. Gray (2013) suggests that this is problematic as “[it] may well be taken by students as meaning that what is erased is off limits, literally unmentionable in class” (p. 50). Another negative consequence is brought up by Liddicoat (2009), who argues that non-heteronormative linguistic practices (such as a male student saying ‘My boyfriend’) can be marked as language ‘mistakes’ by teachers. Finally, Paiz (2019) explains that avoidance is not neutral, but ideological, that is, it is a conscious choice aiming to silence or censure certain topics. Nevertheless, Gray (2010, 2013) also problematizes the inclusion of same-sex relationships in some textbooks. In the former study, he suggests the possibility that inclusion can be seen by some (in his case, by students) as nothing more than an attempt at political correctness (Gray, 2010, p. 6); in the latter, he points out that, when discussed, homosexual relationships are presented as controversial topics, they are idealised in the image of “the good gays”, or they are explicitly questioned (Gray, 2013). Among recent studies, one of the most promising ones is that of Smestad (2018), which focuses on Norwegian textbooks and reports that LGBT issues, though not extensively represented, are primarily constructed in a positive light.

#### 2.5.2. Research on teacher awareness, attitudes, and practices

Focusing on just textbooks to investigate gender and sexuality in language education would ignore the significant roles a teacher can play in imparting knowledge and values
by accepting or questioning the representations and ideologies found in the learning material. Sunderland (2000a) goes as far as to claim that gender bias in textbooks does not matter as much as a teacher’s treatment of it (p. 152-153), what Mustapha (2013) calls “teacher talk around the text” (p. 458). However, earlier studies (Aeginitou et al., 1994) report that teachers are not always aware of gender as an issue or a distinctive factor in language learning. Even more recent research suggests inconclusive results around teachers’ awareness of gender stereotypes (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018). Looking into studies conducted in Greek schools (Kladouchou, 2005) and internationally (Biemmi, 2015; Tatar & Emmanou, 2001), Gouvias and Alexopoulos (2018) observe that teachers recognise gender issues mostly when these are the focus of a project or highlighted to them by others (p. 646).

Even when awareness is not an issue, teachers may refrain from challenging a textbook due to its perceived authority (Gray, 2010). Sunderland (2000a) identifies three potential teacher attitudes towards gendered textbooks: ignoring the issues, endorsing or extending traditional gender representations, or subverting them (p. 157). However, her analysis did not encompass teachers’ attitudes towards sexual diversity, which is the focus of more recent studies (Moore, 2016; Paiz, 2017, Rhodes & Coda, 2017). Paiz (2017) himself also acknowledges that newly graduated teachers might hesitate to deviate much from the learning materials, as well as that educators’ workload does not always allow them to revise and improve the learning resources. However, in a later article, he offers practical suggestions on how to queer EFL materials and practice (Paiz, 2019).

All this suggests that an investigation into EFL teachers’ awareness and approaches towards gender and LGBTQ+ issues is not only relevant but also necessary. In other words, the extent to which gender and sexuality feature in EFL education should be examined from a holistic perspective: one that can offer insight into not only the language and topics present in the textbooks, but also teacher’s knowledge and practices when dealing with these topics.

3. Method and material

In this section, the methodology and materials used in the present study will be discussed. Content analysis is conducted on two EFL textbooks used in lower and upper secondary public schools in Greece. The approach is primarily qualitative as the objective is to provide an in-depth understanding of the types of gender and sexual representations in Greek EFL textbooks, rather than to present a large size of quantitative data. Quantitative methods will be used only to present the frequencies of certain terms. As Mayring (2000) suggests, triangulation is a useful technique to ensure validity in qualitative research, so teachers actively using the examined textbooks will also be interviewed to offer insight into their awareness of gender and sexual representation issues, and their preparedness to address them in class.

3.1 Content analysis

Content analysis has often been conducted when researching issues of representation in textbooks (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018; Leinonen 2020; Temple, 2005; Theologou & Dimasi, 2020). In the present study, basic content analysis was used to examine manifest or literal content, specifically gendered and inclusive language. Often quantitative in nature, basic content analysis is the preferred method when calculating “frequencies of specific content or events to describe the data under study” (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p.
A combination of a priori and inductive coding was used, the former drawing on previous theoretical and empirical research primarily on Greek public-school textbooks (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018; Papadakis, 2018), the latter based on observations about the preliminary raw data, as suggested by Drisko and Maschi (2015). Furthermore, interpretative analysis was used for latent content, such as themes and ideas emerging in the text that require a certain level of inference-making when categorised, described, and discussed. As a result, coding of latent content started inductively drawing on the raw data, and these emergent codes were descriptive in nature to “closely reflect [the content’s] meaning in context” (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 73).

When it came to the interviews, the objective was to observe and discuss the extent to which teachers were aware of the gender and sexual representation issues identified in the textbooks, and their attitudes and approaches towards addressing them. For this reason, qualitative content analysis was used in order to identify and describe patterns in the transcribed data, which were then coded descriptively to reflect emergent themes and core ideas (Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

Qualitative approaches in sociolinguistics attempt to analyse society as it is perceived or explained by people themselves (Heller, Pietikäinen & Pujolar, 2017). Although this is evident and is to be expected in the interview results presented in this paper, a further consideration needs to be made. Heller et al. (2017) use the concept of reflexivity to draw attention to the fact that “the researcher is just another person with personal views and perceptions, just like the people who are investigated” and therefore should “own[...] up to [their] theoretical and political affiliations” (p. 10). Hence, the research process, from the questions to the analysis, often reflects the researcher’s own social understanding. As this concept of reflexivity can raise certain ethical and methodological issues, a disclaimer needs to be made at this point. When moving beyond mere observations from the primary sources to indicating potential connections between the results and current societal issues, I have followed my own trajectory, drawing on my experience growing up in Greece, and my background in feminist and queer studies. Naturally, secondary resources have been used and referenced in order to discuss and lend support to the conclusions drawn.

### 3.2 Textbook Analysis

#### 3.2.1 Material

As the present study is primarily qualitative in nature, only two EFL textbooks used in Greek public education were examined. The ones chosen were the online, digital versions of *Think Teen! 3rd Grade of Junior High School* (Mc Gavigan), henceforth *Think Teen! 3*, and *English in 1st Grade of High School: Student’s Book* (Institute of Educational Policy [IEP]), henceforth *English HS1*. The publication dates of the textbooks are unavailable, a fact that will be further discussed in Section 5. These two textbooks were selected in order to gain insight into both the lower and upper secondary levels of education, though the results cannot be taken to necessarily extend to the remaining four grades\(^2\). Additionally, the *Think Teen! 3rd Grade of Junior High School: Teacher’s Book* was consulted to gain insight into the answers suggested for discussion and writing tasks, and for the scripts to listening tasks. A teacher’s book for *English HS1* was not available.

---

\(^2\) 1st and 2nd Grade of Junior High School and 2nd and 3rd Grade of High School.
online. The online, digital versions of the textbooks used do not differ from printed ones in terms of content, but they provide direct access to listening tasks. Both textbooks examined are divided into thematic units, and *Think Teen! 3* is subdivided into further thematic chapters that include practice of the four skills, reading, writing, speaking, listening, as well as grammar and vocabulary. *English HIS* lacks a detailed table of contents specifying the syllabus, and it seems to be focusing primarily on the four skills, with few exercises focusing on vocabulary and grammar. The section in which instances are found will be specified when necessary, as it can otherwise lead to methodological problems (Sunderland, 2015). The sections identified in these two textbooks are reading passages, listening comprehension, language production (speaking/writing), and practice exercises (vocabulary/grammar).

### 3.2.2 Conducting the analysis

The first research question was addressed in two parts. To start with, implicit and explicit references to heterosexual and non-heterosexual relationships were identified to investigate the extent and the contexts in which the latter is acknowledged. Implicit references include cases in which non-heterosexuality was not openly excluded as an option but remained as a possibility, through the use of neutral language or ambiguity in the context; a degree of inference was required for this. When lexical choices were considered, the analysis had to be interpretative as well, as meaning can be contextual; for instance, the term *wife* can be seen as heteronormative, but if it is used to describe a partner in a lesbian couple, it can be regarded as inclusive. Secondly, five additional categories were identified, in which gender representation was relevant: occupations and leadership, family roles, activities, attitudes, and physical appearance. The first two were a priori codes, drawing on previous research primarily on Greek public-school textbooks (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018; Papadakis, 2018); the last three were themes that emerged during the data collection, reflected in the remaining results. Lexical items and discourses pertaining to these topics were coded to identify gender stereotypes and examples that defy them. In all cases, images and illustrations were considered when clarifying or disambiguating the meaning of a text (Sunderland, 2017), such as when revealing the gender of a character otherwise identified by a gender-neutral word. A fully-fledged multi-modal approach, which would look into meaning communicated through body language and facial expressions in the pictures, is beyond the scope of this study.

For the second and third research questions, the analysis was primarily quantitative, with the exception of question 3b. However, the results were also viewed from a qualitative perspective in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of otherwise ambiguous cases (Motschenbacher, 2011). It should be clarified that when investigating the second question, each character was counted only once even if there were multiple tokens of their names in a text, as the focus is on the frequency of each of the different gender identities, rather than on the frequency of individual instances. Individuals such as famous persons and mythological characters appearing in pictures used for discussion or vocabulary tasks were also counted. The non-heteronormative category encompassed both LGBTQ+ and nonbinary characters, as explained in Section 2.1.2. The third research question examined the extent to which representation in the textbooks is gender-neutral on a lexical level. Pronoun use was examined in all sections of the textbooks and the frequency of gendered and inclusive pronouns was counted. The latter term here refers only to the singular *they*. Though *he/she* variants have been a step forward, in the present study they are counted separately from the singular *they* as they exclude individuals who do not identify within the gender binary. Moreover, *he/she* was counted separately from *she/he*, as the latter can
be taken to suggest a desire to refrain from using the masculine pronoun first. Finally, the generic *he*, an epicene pronoun, is here seen as gendered, since it suggests male bias (Lindqvist et al., 2019) and it excludes non-binary individuals. When it comes to adjectives and nouns, contexts in which they appear as gendered were coded and discussed.

### 3.3 Interviews

#### 3.3.1 Participants and ethical considerations

Participants were initially sought through Greek EFL teacher groups on social media. The intention was to find educators with several years of experience, and more recent graduates. Despite this, it was a prerequisite that participants should have at least one full academic year of experience teaching the examined textbooks in either middle school or high school. However, due to the lack of responses, snowball sampling was used (Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2019), starting with a former contact, a lower secondary school EFL teacher, who not only fit the criteria but was also able to recommend another suitable and willing participant working in a lower secondary public school in a different city. The latter was, in turn, able to recommend an upper secondary school EFL teacher. It was important that participants be generally aware of the topics they would discuss, and willing to provide their honest views rather than socially acceptable responses (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p.42). As a result, participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix A) that included the aims of the study and their rights; it was also specified that their real names will not be disclosed, to ensure anonymity. Participants were, then, asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B). Before the interviews, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw their consent at any point.

#### 3.3.2 Conducting and analysing the interviews

In order to respond to the last research question, the interviews explored the participants’ awareness of gender and sexual representation issues in the textbooks, their practices when dealing with this topic in class, and their observations on student attitudes. Background questions were asked first, the answers to which are presented in Table 1 below. The rest of the interview followed a semi-structured format, taking care not to favour and overemphasise one perspective over others (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 101). For this reason, the interview was piloted with an experienced teacher fitting the profile of the participants, who helped ensure that the questions allowed for a variety of viewpoints (Pyett, 2003). The questions can be found on Appendix C. The interviews, conducted in English, took place via Zoom, and each lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. They were recorded and, subsequently, manually transcribed. Qualitative content analysis was used in order to identify patterns or themes in the data, and these were coded descriptively (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). A limitation in the present study is that, due to the difficulty of finding participants, the final number is small, and their profiles quite similar, considering that they are all females teaching in small-town settings. However, although their responses cannot be considered representative, “there will be within each story ‘episodes, experiences and emotions with which teachers can readily identify’ (Thomas 1995: xiv, as cited in Gray 2010, p. 11).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Anna</th>
<th>Eva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identification</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1, L2, other languages spoken</td>
<td>Greek: native language</td>
<td>Greek: native language</td>
<td>Greek: native language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English and German:</td>
<td>English: C2 level on the</td>
<td>English and French: C2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 level on the CEFR scale</td>
<td>CEFR scale</td>
<td>level on the CEFR scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of teaching experience</td>
<td>4 years in public schools, 7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23 in public schools, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>years in total, including</td>
<td></td>
<td>in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>private education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current teaching context</td>
<td>Middle school, small-town</td>
<td>Middle school, small-town</td>
<td>High school, Small-town,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>setting</td>
<td>setting</td>
<td>rural setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience with the textbooks</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7 years, since they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>became compulsory in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>high schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently using the textbooks</td>
<td>Yes, the <em>Think Teen!</em> series</td>
<td>Yes, the <em>Think Teen!</em> series</td>
<td>Yes, the <em>English HS</em> series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on the topic of gender, sexuality,</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>One course during her BA</td>
<td>One course during her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and language.</td>
<td></td>
<td>studies</td>
<td>BA studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
4. Results

In this section, results from the textbook analysis and the interviews are presented. Section 4.1 focuses on how gender and sexuality are discursively constructed in the two examined textbooks. In Section 4.2, the frequency of male, female and non-binary/LGBTQ+ characters found in the textbooks is presented. Section 4.3 presents the frequency of neutral and gendered pronouns, and discusses the contexts in which gendered adjectives and nouns are used. Teachers’ views on issues related to language and gender or sexual representation in the textbooks are presented and analysed in Section 4.4.

4.1 Discursive construction of gender and sexuality

Though gender and sexuality are related and should be treated in conjunction with each other, they are constructed separately in the two examined textbooks, and their results will be presented and discussed in separate sections here. A total of six categories related to sexuality and gender representations were identified and are presented with examples in this section.

4.1.1 (Non)heterosexual representations in the textbooks

The first category, relationships, focuses overwhelmingly on the theme of marriage. In *Think Teen! 3*, this is done implicitly in five different chapters, and explicitly in the chapter “Keeping Traditions and Customs Alive,” which focuses on wedding traditions and on Valentine’s Day. Of these, only two references were neutral, allowing the possibility that the relationship could be non-heterosexual, but no such discussion was encouraged. In the first example, demonstrated in Table 2, the gender of the recipient is not specified, while in the second one, the word *partner* could refer to any gender within and beyond the binary. In *English HSI*, there are no references of non-heterosexual relationships and only two instances of heterosexual ones, one of which is signposted on a lexical level through the words *husband* and *wife*; the second one is an entire chapter focusing on the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, which discussed romantic relationships in the story, as well as the social and financial considerations behind marriages. Example passages in which sexual identities are discursively constructed are presented in Table 2.
Table 2. Passages where sexual identities are in focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Heterosexual relationships</th>
<th>Neutral references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think Teen! 3</td>
<td>English HS1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice exercises</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples

- “It is March 14th (the White Day) [in Japan], when men give gifts of chocolate to all the ladies who remembered them on Valentine’s Day” (Think Teen! 3, p.144, Appendix)
- “Why was it really important for women of the era to get married, especially to someone who was well-off? Discuss the position of women and compare it with their position in the 21st century” (English HS1, p.84)
- “In Wales, young men and women carve wooden spoons and give them as gifts” (Think Teen! 3, p.144, Appendix)
- “[T]he singer associates the yellow of the sun with joy and happiness and love for her partner” (Think Teen! 3, Teacher’s Book, p.112)

4.1.2 Gender representations: stereotypes and inclusivity

The remaining five categories relate to gender representations, and specifically focus on (a) occupations and leadership, (b) family roles, (c) activities people participate in, (d) attitudes/personality traits, and (e) physical appearance. It should be noted that in English HS1, only three of these rendered examples, with activities and physical appearance not being at all in focus. In each of these categories, tokens were coded as either stereotypical or inclusive. Gender issues are overwhelmingly related to men and women in the two textbooks, with no explicit references to non-binary identities.

a. Occupations and leadership

In Think Teen! 3, and specifically in the category of occupations, men are seen in important or leading positions, such as that of a businessman (p. 126), politician (p. 126), scientist (p. 126), or captain (p. 111), in roles involving manual labour, such as electrician (p. 104) and sailor (p. 4), and in a few less marked positions, such as that of an office employee (p. 39) or sports teacher (p. 121); in contrast, women are presented in the role of a housewife (p. 90), and less stereotypically as working in the medical field (p. 3) or as a science teacher (p. 102). In other words, there is a wider variety of professional options given for men, and most of them are positions associated with stereotypically masculine traits, such as power and physical strength. As for women, the female depicted in a medical shirt in an illustration (p. 3) is described as “a young woman” on the next page (p. 4), and as a “professional woman” in the Teacher’s Book (p. 3), leaving space
for the reader to question her position and experience in the medical field. Similarly, the science teacher in a listening task (p. 102) is identified as female through the use of the pronoun she, but the accompanying illustration is that of a man.

In *English HS1*, the results are comparable to those of *Think Teen! 3*, though women are seen in a wider range of roles and in more leadership positions. An entire BBC radio show used as a listening task is dedicated to a female monarch, Queen Victoria (p. 106), while a YouTube video used as a starting point for discussion (p. 15) and a follow-up reading comprehension text (p. 16) feature the female mayor of the Greek island of Tilos. On the other hand, in the same text, two men are presented in leadership roles, one a team leader in an NGO working in Tilos (p. 17), and the other one as a special adviser to the mayor herself (p. 18). Therefore, although women are featured in more prominent positions, in the latter case she is surrounded and supported by men. In the same text, the only other female figure is a primary school teacher (p. 17), a role traditionally associated with women and the feminine qualities of patience and empathy. Most other references to occupations are gendered. Here, too, men are seen in positions of power, including those of an interior minister (p. 26), a state prosecutor (p. 26), and a president of a nation (p. 29); though these are found in an article simplified for a reading comprehension task, and, hence, refer to actual and not fictional individuals, texts are discourses and the decision of which ones to include reflects a judgement about which stories are worth sharing and what societal values these reflect. Moreover, in two BBC radio shows and one TED Talk, used as listening tasks, the presenters are men (p. 57; p. 106).

An overwhelmingly masculine domain appears to be that of Science, with reference to ten different men occupying relevant positions, such as head of research (p. 51), neuroscientist (p. 51), professor of physiology (p. 57), environmentalist (p. 57), genetic engineer (p. 57), cryopreservation pioneer (p. 57), conservationist (p. 57), among others whose specific disciplines are not identified. Five women are associated with the field of Science, the first one identified as a biologist and a feminist (p. 57), though it is unclear how specifying the latter relates to the topic she is invited to discuss in the text, which is animal testing. Interestingly, the next female in a science-related position is introduced by the male TED Talk speaker as “my wife who ran a biotech business” (p. 57), described first by her marital status and in relation to the male speaker and then by her professional role. The remaining ones are a molecular biologist (p. 57), a conservationist (p. 57), and a social psychologist (p. 106). Another male dominated profession is that of the police officer, with an entire reading text devoted to a male gendarme (p.26) who sacrificed himself, and another male former police officer (p.27) who was a witness. These are followed up by a number of grammar and vocabulary exercises, in which their actions are repeated. A female police officer is only featured in a photo accompanied by a short caption (p. 33). The only inclusive reference in terms of occupations is in a grammar practice exercise, where the word technician is used without the gender being specified (p. 104).

Though the focus here was on discourses rather than on lexis, specific vocabulary related to this category is also included; this is because items that were morphologically gendered or neutral can acquire the opposite meaning in context. In *Think Teen! 3*, two instances of gender-inclusive nouns related to leadership and occupations were identified, both tokens of the compound word “head teacher” (p. 81 and p. 129); these maintained a neutral meaning in context, as they referred to hypothetical scenarios in which the head teacher could identify within or outside the binary. Two more examples related to
leadership were the gender-masculine “heroes” (p.52) and “headmaster” (p. 54 and p. 82). Though there is no further evidence as to the referent’s gender in either case, a masculine bias is inherent in their morphology, something which is especially problematic in the case of “headmaster”, since the neutral alternative principal exists but was not chosen. Finally, the words “businessman” (p. 126) and “housewives” (p. 90) are used in the context of professions, and they are both grammatically and contextually gendered. In English HS1, there are only three lexical tokens related to gender representations, all of them in the category of occupations, and all of them morphologically and discursively inclusive: “law enforcement officers”, “cops”, and “police officers” (p. 33).

b. Family roles

In the roles they occupy in the family, no representations in Think Teen! 3 defy the norms, with females preoccupied with household and childcare matters, and males handling more physical tasks. Specifically, women are presented as cooking (p. 95; p. 100), being concerned about or taking care of their children (p. 4; p. 65) and complaining about their bad habits (p. 39; p. 42; p. 108), while men are described as washing the car (p. 44), building a house (p. 100), or working (p. 79). The only instance in which a male character is seen in the realm of the house is when he is assumed to act the disciplinarian when the mother fails (p. 42). Though not related to physical strength, this example, too, places the man in a position of power.

Family roles are also primarily traditional in English HS1, though fathers are also portrayed as taking care of their children in two cases in the same reading text about refugees (p. 14; p. 17). However, in the latter case the father is described as “[l]eading a toddler by the hand” (p. 17), diction which connotes a position of control rather than of concern or complaint, as was the case with mothers in Think Teen! 3. Furthermore, in English HS1, mothers are metaphorically set apart from other refugees, as they look after their children rather than finding work (p. 16), or because “[t]hose asylum seekers, many of them women and small children, are suffering ever greater levels of ‘psychological stress’” (p. 17). This latter example not only groups women and children due to their implied shared helplessness, but it also attributes parental duty to women.

c. Activities they participate in

In terms of activities in Think Teen! 3, men are stereotypically presented as playing sports (p. 44, p. 78), video games (p. 39), and enjoying adventures such as “climb[ing] the highest mountain in the world” (p. 4). Women’s behaviour is also normative, since they are portrayed as faint-hearted, shying away from activities that involve thrill and risk, such as going to a fair or a theme park (p. 36). The possibility that women could serve in the army is open for discussion, but the sentence structure and diction could suggest negative consequences: “‘What would happen if …girls had to go to the army?’” (p.56).

d. Attitudes and personality traits

Attitudes and personality traits are also overwhelmingly gendered. In Think Teen! 3, boys are described as “breaking the shop window” (p. 119), or “aggressive” and “want[ing] to fight” (p. 149), while a little girl is presented as crying when getting scared (p. 65). Moreover, among mythological women presented are the Greek, malevolent Sphinx, known for eating people who fail to answer her questions, the monstrous Medusa, turning people into stone, and curious and naive Pandora, accidentally releasing curses upon
mankind (p. 50). Therefore, female behaviour is depicted through two extremes, timidity and innocence as opposed to spite, while masculinity is associated with pugnacity.

Considering the rest of the results, it is not surprising that attitudes and personality traits rarely defy normative representations in *English HSI*, too. One context in which tokens for this category were found was in the unit “On Duty”, which mainly focuses on the heroic acts of male police officers. As such, traits related to masculinity in that context are “courage and self-sacrifice,” heroism, “exceptional sang froid”, “military virtues” (p. 29), and “bravery” (p. 32). Very little focus is placed on women or femininity in this textbook, other than emphasising the empathetic and caring side of women as mothers and teachers. The unit “Pride and Prejudice” is the only exception as it offers an insight into the character of Elizabeth Bennet; nonetheless, her qualities as presented in the textbook are stereotypically feminine. The authors explain, “The story charts the emotional development of the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, who learns from her mistakes, regrets having made hasty judgments and comes to appreciate the difference between superficial and essential” (p. 81). This focus on Elizabeth’s prejudice only highlights the flaws of the female protagonist, failing to account for Mr Darcy’s, the male protagonist’s, prideful behaviour. Considering that Elizabeth is generally seen as bold, stubborn, yet intelligent and independent, it is interesting that the textbook asks the students to comment on her narrow-mindedness, and whether she should feel more humble by the end of the story (p. 89). Questions about the male counterpart’s behaviour are more open-ended, and can lead to a variety of responses. The one example that subverts gender representations is in Unit 4, where the artist and titular character Vincent Van Gogh is presented as “highly emotional and lacking self-confidence.” (p. 41), as well as “filled with beauty, passion, and love” (p. 44), qualities traditionally associated with femininity. However, Van Gogh’s rumoured bisexuality (Neurokrish, 2021) is not discussed or hinted at otherwise in the unit.

e. Physical appearance

Finally, in terms of physical appearance, the option of using make-up, wearing different colours (p. 14; p. 79) or dying one’s hair (p. 150) is given in *Think Teen! 3* without any gender being specified, so it can be seen as inclusive, even extending to students identifying outside the gender binary. However, the same textbook is also abundant with gendered references to physical appearance: the topic of make-up reappears as “being all the go for young and old women everywhere today” (p. 77); the question of whether school boys should have beards and tattoos, and school girls brightly coloured hair highlights or painted nails emerges (p. 81); a woman is presented as using “a blonde dye to hide the brown bits in her hair” (p. 150); another woman is brought up for her love of pure silk blouses (p. 149), while the choice of a father to wear a pink hat is openly questioned (p. 79). Due to this, it can be contested whether the more gender-neutral examples will be perceived as such by students and teachers using the textbook.

4.2 Male, female and non-heteronormative character frequencies

This section presents results related to the gender and sexuality, explicit or implied, of both real-life figures and fictional characters featured in the two textbooks. Since neither textbook included explicit sections discussing gender issues outside the binary or LGBTQ+ related issues, identifying characters belonging to the latter category is difficult, unless explicitly stated. Nonetheless, when famous people who are known or presumed to be non-heterosexual featured in the texts, they were counted as non-heteronormative.
This is due to the fact that, although their sexuality was not openly discussed, it offers an opportunity for teachers and students to initiate this conversation.

Some clarifications need to be made regarding the data collection process and the categories presented in this section. Firstly, individual example sentences in instructions or exercises are not included in the count, as they cannot really be considered as characters. Individuals presented in pictures are counted only as long as they are linked to a text or task. Secondly, though non-binary and LGBTQ+ identities are not synonymous, they are treated here as one category, since they are both instances of non-heteronormative identities (Marchia & Sommer, 2019; Motschenbacher, 2011). Finally, when groups of characters function collectively, for instance the gladiators described in the unit “Teen Idols” (p. 13), they are counted as one character.

In both textbooks, male characters appear more frequently than female ones, while non-heteronormative characters are significantly underrepresented, with only 2 implicit instances in Think Teen! 3 and 2 in English HS1. Moreover, in English HS1, male characters are more than twice as many as the female ones. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Character frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Think Teen! 3</th>
<th></th>
<th>English HS1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total heteronormative</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>98.21%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>97.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41.07%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total non-heteronormative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.79%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famous heteronormative</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famous non-heteronormative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mythical heteronormative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mythical non-heteronormative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 Famous persons

Of the characters found in Think Teen! 3, 29 are famous men of the past or present, while only 19 are famous women. Detailed results regarding the only two non-heteronormative characters in this textbook, the artists Yannis Tsarouchis and Vincent van Gogh, are presented in Section 4.2.3. The difference in the frequencies of famous persons is comparable to the overall results. Moreover, two patterns were observed. The famous
men are actors, singers, athletes, scientists, inventors/discoverers, and politicians; meanwhile, the women are only actresses, singers, with a mere two figures in a different role, Catherine of Braganza of Portugal, who served as Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland during her marriage to King Charles II, and Queen Marie Antoinette. Just like in Section 4.1, the range of female representation is more limited compared to that of men.

Similarly, there are 9 famous males in *English HS1*, including the French president Macron (p. 29) and the CEO of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg (p. 108); quotes by both are provided as starting points for speaking tasks, highlighting them as experts on the topic of heroism, in the case of the former, and social media, when it comes to the latter. As for famous women, there are only two instances, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth, both mentioned in a listening task about diarists of the past. Not only do famous women constitute a mere 15.4% of the total, but there are instances of women who are not even named. Specifically, in the biography of Vincent van Gogh, his brother Theo is discussed in some detail. In contrast, their sister is mentioned in passing when describing Vincent as a child, while Theo’s wife, who is known to have dedicated her life to get van Gogh widely recognised, is only mentioned in relation to the two men, as “Vincent’s brother’s wife” (p. 42). Similarly to famous females, famous non-heteronormative characters also amount to a mere two cases, those of the Greek poet Konstantinos Kavafis, and the painter Vincent van Gogh.

In conclusion, famous men predominated over famous women both in their number and in the range of things they are known for. Moreover, in both textbooks, the few instances of implicitly non-heteronormative famous persons are all artists.

4.2.2 Mythical characters

*Think Teen! 3* has an entire unit dedicated to mythology, entitled “The myths we live by.” Of the figures mentioned, 9 are male and 7 are female. Except for the prevalence of men, what stands out is the type of characters that have been selected, and the way they are discursively represented. Among the male figures are Thor, the Norse God; Perseus, the Greek hero and killer of Medusa; King Midas; Finn McCool, a hero in Irish mythology; and King Arthur (p. 51). Except for the fact that most of them, with the exception of King Midas, hold heroic status, they are also discussed in stereotypically masculine terms. For instance, Thor is described as “a large powerful man who protected the gods and the lives of mortal men,” but who “had a quick and hot temper and would get angry very easily” (p. 53); similarly, Perseus is described as successful “in cutting off Medusa's head” (p. 53), and Finn Mc Cool as a “hunter-warrior” (Teacher’s Book, p. 70). The teacher’s book also offers suggestions on other mythical characters worth discussing because they have influenced the English language; though these are not counted in the results presented in Table 3, every single example given, such Atlas, Hercules, and the Titans, are male characters (pp. 73-74), many of them known for their physical prowess.

The female mythical characters described in the *Think Teen! 3* are, on one hand, the earth and fertility goddesses Demeter, Citalicue, and Cybele, and on the other hand, Pythia, the Sphinx, Medusa, and Pandora. Regarding the first three, they feature briefly alongside two male gods of fertility, Geb and Lono, in pictures used for a discussion task at the start of the unit. Of the remaining four cases, Pythia, the Oracle of Delphi, is known for her ambiguous prophecies, while, as discussed in Section 4.1, the Sphinx, Medusa, and Pandora carry the connotations of danger, and the way they are described in the textbook conveys exactly this. For instance, it is stated that “If you look at [Medusa], you will turn
into stone” and that “If you answer [the Sphinx’s] question incorrectly, she will eat you” (p. 50). In the textbook, compared to the male figures which are discussed in entire paragraphs, the aforementioned women are described in single sentences, as part of a matching exercise.

In other words, not only do most of the male mythological figures hold a position of power, but they are also represented as masculine in an overly assertive or aggressive way. By contrast mythological females presented are cryptic, threatening humanity, or symbolic of (re)birth.

4.2.3 Non-heteronormative characters.

The only two persons mentioned in *Think Teen! 3* who have been historically identified or presumed to be non-heterosexuals are the artists Yannis Tsarouchis and Vincent van Gogh (p. 86); however, no reference is made to their sexuality, and the painting chosen to represent each artist’s work does not reveal this either, even though Tsarouchis is known for his homoerotic content which is subverting the gender binary (Gripari & Szymczyk, 2022). Despite this, they are counted in the non-heteronormative category as they offer an opportunity for students and teachers to bring up this topic. In *English HS1*, the two instances are the Greek poet Konstantinos Kavafis, and, again, the artist Vincent van Gogh. The writer’s sexuality is not in focus, and the work provided is not one of his poems focusing on sexuality as a theme. He is brought up because of his poem “Thermopile,” which fits thematically in the unit “On Duty”. Nevertheless, he is counted in this category as he was famously homosexual (Bien, 1990), a fact Greek students might be aware of. Van Gogh’s sexuality is not discussed either, and in fact, his bisexuality is only rumoured (Neurokrish, 2021). However, the reason he is counted in the non-heteronormative category is the way he is portrayed. In his biography, he is described as “highly emotional” (p. 41), a trait generally associated with femininity. Furthermore, in a listening task, he is called an “eccentric”, which most probably refers to his lifestyle but could also encompass sexuality (p. 44). By contrast, the artist Paul Gauguin is counted in the male category as no evidence, implicit or explicit, is provided in the textbook, hinting towards his alleged homosexuality. As suggested earlier, the absence of explicit references to non-binary or LGBTQ+ characters meant that a degree of inference-making would be required during the data collection.

### 4.3 Gendered and inclusive language in the textbooks

The results presented in this section will demonstrate the extent to which the two textbooks use gender-neutral language. The frequency of gendered and inclusive pronouns will be provided, and the types of pronouns preferred in different contexts will be discussed. Moreover, when gendered adjectives and nouns are used in the two textbooks, the contexts in which they are used will also be presented and discussed.

#### 4.3.1 Gendered and inclusive pronouns

As evident from Table 4, when pronouns are used referring to gender-indefinite antecedents, the authors of *Think Teen! 3* and *English HS1* show a preference for the paired pronoun, which is inclusive but only within the gender binary. In both textbooks, the *he/she* option, which prioritises the masculine pronoun, predominates. The paired pronoun is primarily used when referring to the students’ partner in class as well as to hypothetical scenarios. In *Think Teen! 3*, the second most common option is *she/he*, which could indicate an effort to give precedence to the feminine counterpart. In *English HS1*,
the only instance of the she/he pair is in the sentence “Your teacher will let you choose a card or a piece of paper from the ones she/he has prepared” (p. 10); this could be seen as a gendered choice, since it could suggest that the teacher will most probably be a female; however, it might also simply be reflective of the reality, as according to the statistical office of the European Union, the percentage of female teachers in the European Union countries was 72% in 2018 (Eurostat, 2021).

In English HS1, the singular they is the second most frequently used pronoun, a potentially important finding as it is the only option that is inclusive outside the binary. However, the overall number of pronouns referring to gender-indefinite antecedents in English HS1 is very small, so even the frequency of this more inclusive pronoun might remain unnoticed. Importantly, both instances of the singular they are found in the same text, an article adapted from BBC, the original of which uses the singular they. Moreover, of the two cases in which the singular they is used in Think Teen! 3, the second one is “Try to convince him or her why they should go there” (p. 29). The fact that they comes right after the him or her paired pronoun in the sentence can be interpreted as excluding non-binary possibilities.

Finally, the category of non-inclusive pronouns includes the third-person singular epicene pronoun he, otherwise known as the generic he, since considering the masculine pronoun a generic option is a gendered decision. Gendered pronouns are almost completely absent from English HS1, with only one instance of the generic he used to refer to the protagonist in narrative texts (p. 34). Interestingly, in Think Teen! 3, the feminine pronoun is used as often as the masculine one in hypothetical scenarios presented in task instructions. By way of illustration, this included sentences like “Imagine you are talking to a tourist who is going to visit Epidaurus for a couple of days. Read the leaflet above and tell her what she can do there” (Think Teen! 3, p. 58). Four of the five instances, such as the one exemplified above, could be interpreted as attempts at male/female equality, since they do not assume that an antecedent whose gender is unknown would be masculine. However, the fifth one could suggest a gender bias; the sentence “Discuss your ideas with your Home Economics teacher and compare her answers with your class” (p. 94) could reveal an assumption that the subject of Home Economics would most probably be taught by a woman rather than a man.

Table 4. Gendered and inclusive pronoun frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Think Teen! 3</th>
<th>English HS1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-inclusive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered she</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic he</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive within the binary</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>73.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she/he</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive outside of the binary - singular they</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2 Use of gendered adjectives and nouns

The overwhelming majority of gendered nouns in both textbooks is the generic *man* used to refer to humans. In *Think Teen! 3*, most instances are found in the unit “The myths we live by” and specifically in a reading text followed up by two comprehension tasks referring to male mythical figures. For instance, students are told that Thor “helped ordinary men” (p.53), a word choice which is meant to denote humans, but which by definition does not encompass women. The word *man* is also used as a suffix in two cases, in the word “Norsemen” (p. 53) found in the second comprehension task, and in the word “businessman” (p. 126). *English HS1* only has two instances of the generic *man*, one in a text discussing Vincent van Gogh’s “effort to explain […] the spiritual essence of man and nature” (p. 42), and one in the unit “Animal Rights,” where it questions whether animals are “man's property” (p. 50).

When it comes specifically to agentive nouns, there are only few instances in both textbooks, and they are primarily gendered and referring to men. The only two instances in *Think Teen! 3* are the word “climber” (p. 5) in a vocabulary exercise and “Mayor” (p. 57), appearing in a short reading task, both of which are gendered since they are used to refer to men in hypothetical scenarios. The four examples of masculine agentive nouns in *English HS1* are all found in the same reading text in the unit “On duty,” referring to real-life persons, a “minister,” an “attacker,” a “state prosecutor,” and a “former police officer” (pp. 26-27); as such, they are not interpreted as gendered as they reflect reality. Moreover, the latter term is used generically later in the same unit (p. 33) as well as to refer to a female officer (p. 33). The word “mayor” is also used in an inclusive manner in *English HS1* as it refers to a woman, the Mayor of Tilos (p. 16).

Despite the limited range of gendered suffixes in English, adjectives can still carry gendered connotations when used to describe the traits people carry according to their biological sex. For instance, in a listening task in *Think Teen! 3*, a girl is described as “caring”, another one as “cheerful”, and a man as “confident” (p. 18). It should be noted, however, that the remaining instances in the same task are not gendered and some of them could be seen as gender-defying; for instance, a young boy is described as “shy”, a characteristic stereotypically associated with femininity. Similarly, in a vocabulary exercise at the end of the unit, a man is described as “daft” and a woman as “successful”, though there are two gendered adjectives as well, since another woman is presented as “snobbish” and a tough-looking man as “cruel” (p. 23). In other words, there seems to be some effort to avoid or bend stereotypes through the use of adjectives, but this is not successfully done.

The only context in which gendered adjectives are used in *English HS1* is the unit “Pride and Prejudice”, which is discussing the concept of love, and by extension the position of the woman in the 18th century. Already from the beginning of the chapter, a dichotomy between male and female characteristics is observed. The first reading text, a plot summary of the novel, starts by introducing the “English gentleman” (p. 81), Mr Bennet, with his “overbearing wife” (p. 81), who is also “a foolish and fussy gossip” (p. 82), as well as their daughters, “beautiful Jane, clever Elizabeth, bookish Mary, immature Kitty and wild Lydia” (p. 81); it then proceeds to talk about the “attractive, wealthy and proud” Mr Darcy (p. 81). Darcy is further described as “pompous” and “intriguing” while Elizabeth as “spirited and lovely” (p. 81). One consideration that needs to be made is that the adjectives used reflect the characters’ personalities in the novel and, thus, could not
have been very different. However, word choices among a number of synonyms are rarely neutral or innocent, as synonyms carry distinct connotations. Adjectives describing Mr Darcy suggest power and being in control. On the other hand, words like ‘beautiful’ and ‘lovely’, which could be considered synonymous to ‘attractive’, do not have the same nuance of being fascinating or alluring; instead, they often imply that a woman is the object of (a man’s) attention. Along the same lines, the description of Elizabeth as ‘clever’ and ‘spirited’ can be interpreted as defying stereotypical gender traits, but the effect of this is minimised by the juxtaposition of the latter word with the adjective ‘lovely’. In a discussion task later on, Elizabeth Bennet is characterised as “a remarkable woman”, which is the first extreme adjective in relation to a female character. Importantly, the extent to which she would still be considered remarkable nowadays is questioned (p. 86); this might reveal an intention on the part of the textbook authors to suggest that what was impressive or gender-defying in the 18th century is not sufficient or the same nowadays.

4.4 Teachers’ awareness, attitudes, and approaches

This section presents findings from the interviews, with a focus on how EFL teachers use the state-approved textbooks in the classroom, their own and their students’ awareness of gender and sexual representation issues in the textbooks, and their practices when dealing with these topics in class. Findings regarding whose responsibility it is to ensure inclusivity and representation are also presented in this section, along with challenges Greek EFL educators face with regards to addressing these topics.

4.4.1 Using the textbooks in the classroom

All three teachers interviewed explained that they are obligated to use the textbooks provided by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) that works under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Education. This is primarily due to the fact that students have to take an end-of-year state exam, which includes topics and vocabulary from the state-approved textbooks. Although, according to the teachers, there is some freedom in terms of using supplementary materials for differentiation, they clarified that they cannot deviate from the topics, and that there is usually very little time to use extra resources, considering that they have a total of 90 minutes of English per class weekly. Anna further stressed that the Think Teen! textbooks have not been revised in the past fifteen years, which might justify the more traditional approach and vocabulary found in the text. As a result, all teachers concluded that there is limited opportunity to discuss issues of gender discrimination and inclusivity in language or sexual diversity, since these topics are not explicitly found in the textbooks.

4.4.2 Student and teacher awareness

All three participants agreed that students’ awareness around issues of representation and (lack of) inclusivity in language is limited. Alice explained that her students do not even seem to recognise these issues in their mother tongue, and it would therefore be hard for them to do so independently as learners of a foreign language. However, Eva brought up an experience, which revealed that students might sometimes be aware of issues related to the gender binary:

(1) There was an incident, there was an interactive game provided by BBC, and to start you need to choose between male or female. This always goes unnoticed. This year there were two students, a girl and a boy, and when they saw this they looked at each other, smiling, and I knew what they meant with that smile is that there should be a
third gender. I know because I know these students as personalities. But it was the first time I noticed this reaction. But we didn't discuss the matter in the classroom.

In fact, though not stated explicitly, the participants seemed to suggest that students might be more aware of issues of inclusivity and diversity than they let on. Specifically, Anna argued that students in her teaching context would not admit to identifying outside the binary or to being non-heterosexual, as they would be bullied. Eva stressed that the issue is deeper than that, since students in her teaching context, that is, in a small, rural town, are not given the opportunity to express their gender or sexual identity.

The participants also argued that their own knowledge around gender and sexuality is limited, even when related to language. When specific examples were brought up in the interviews, such as the different types of pronouns used in the textbooks, the participants were able to discuss them further and talk about the pronouns they use in the classroom. Alice emphasised that she uses the singular ‘they’, as it is the most inclusive, while Anna and Eva claimed to use ‘he/she’. While Alice encourages her students to use ‘they’ in their speech and writing, Anna explained that her students find it confusing, and that she reinforces the paired he/she pronoun instead.

When it comes to other instances of gendered language, the participants were not able to bring up any, with the exception of Eva mentioning the generic use of the word ‘man’ when referring to humans. This could be due to the fact that English, compared to Greek, has few gendered suffixes and explicitly gendered terms; the same conclusion was drawn in the textbook analysis. However, as presented in Sections 4.1 and 4.3, there were several instances in both textbooks of adjectives and nouns that carried gendered connotations or that could be interpreted as non-inclusive contextually. Participants' lack of awareness of those reinforces the idea that sufficient training is required for teachers to be able to recognise and address these issues.

On the other hand, Alice and Anna, both of whom currently teach in middle school, raised the issue of gender stereotypes in the illustrations found in Think Teen!, and specifically the representation of women as housewives or mothers. Alice explained that “[m]ost of the time they are depicted as ‘normal’, as the way they should be perceived.” Likewise, Anna compares representation in the textbooks to how Greek society views gender:

(2) I think [gender roles] are represented mostly in the same way that gender is perceived in Greek society. Even in the pictures, the woman is the one who does the cooking or the cleaning, and the boys are the ones who play football or who do sports more often. And it’s the way our society perceives gender. The roles are quite distinct between boys and girls.

Finally, when asked whether issues of sexuality are openly addressed in the textbooks, the participants agreed that they are not. Anna, a lower-secondary school teacher, placed emphasis on the unlikelihood of finding sexual diversity openly discussed in the state textbooks, by responding without second of hesitation “No, no, no. No way.” Eva, who is teaching in upper secondary school, mentioned that the topic of sexuality was only brought up in her class when discussing Vincent van Gogh:

(3) Starting from Van Gogh and studying other artists, the issue of sexual preferences came up, and luckily the students were welcoming and receptive and accepting of the different sexuality of artists. But I'm not sure if they would find it acceptable for other professions or kinds of people. I'm not so sure about their reactions if it was, for example, about a teacher or somebody else. Greek society is not ready yet.
All in all, it is clear that neither students nor teachers are fully aware of issues pertaining to language, gender, and sexuality in the textbooks. When recognising certain issues, teachers seem to rarely bring them up. The participants’ approaches and classroom practices are further discussed in the next section.

4.4.3 Practices, responsibilities and challenges

When asked whose responsibility it is to raise awareness around gender and sexual representation, or to ensure more inclusivity on a language level, all three participants agreed that it is ultimately up to the Institute of Educational Policy and the Ministry of Education, since they are the ones authorised to design the curriculum, the textbooks, and even the training teachers have to complete. Regarding the availability of training on relevant topics, participants explained that there are seminars they can attend, which, however, are provided by private organisations and are therefore not obligatory or affiliated with public schools.

When it comes to classroom practices and teachers’ role in ensuring inclusivity, participants contended that there are a number of limitations and challenges. Both Anna and Eva claimed that the topic of gender and sexual representation is a taboo in Greek society, and that parents and students alike react when a teacher attempts to discuss gender or sexual diversity. Anna specifically attributed these attitudes to religion:

(4) I think that uh, Greek society is to a great extent affected by religion, and that's the problem with these issues. If it's something which is considered to be a sin, it can't be discussed in the classrooms. And it's difficult to make your students understand that something like that [homosexuality] is normal when they use it in order to make fun of somebody, you know, boys between them, they make fun, “you are gay”. So it's difficult to make them realise that it's something perfectly normal and something that we shouldn't care about. Everyone should do whatever they want. It’s not something that concerns us. But I think that the biggest obstacle is religion.

Similarly, Eva argued that the Greek society is not ready to accept diversity. Interestingly, she clarified that though she does not hesitate to address issues of gender and sexual inclusivity, she refrains from handing out materials not approved by the Ministry of Education, as they can be used against her. However, she also differentiated between the attitude of citizens and the state itself, claiming that the latter is willing to take steps forward:

(5) The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) and the Ministry [of Education] are trying to bring about some change. But they are also a conservative party. And it comes down to the fact that our society after all is deeply conservative. And religious. So you can’t discuss these topics. Or at least only verbally, not in handouts. Scripta manent. Even educators themselves and students and parents react. It’s not the state. The state wants to bring about new things because they see what’s happening abroad. It’s us who need more time.

With regards to the challenge posed by parents’ and students’ disapproval of certain ideas, both Anna and Eva shared specific incidents to illustrate the extent of the issue:

(6) Sometimes you can be misunderstood and parents may be opposed to discussions like that in the class, so you can't do much about it. For example, last year, we had a unit about sexual education and there was so much opposition from parents who
didn’t want their children to be taught this subject at school. And so it’s a bit difficult to openly talk to students about sexuality and inclusion and things like that. (Anna)

(7) Last year there was an incident in the class when we had to talk about other genders, and there was opposition from many students in the class, especially the boys. It’s difficult for teachers in Greek schools, especially in the social context and towns we live in to talk about it, students coming from rural areas. (Eva)

Throughout her interview, Eva also stressed that she does not feel sufficiently educated or prepared to talk about gender and sexual representation in language or in general: “We need training. I cannot think of other ways to identify and address issues unless the materials change.” A similar view is presented by Alice, who argued that although there might be multiple resources available online, the internet as a source can be overwhelming, and someone with insufficient training on these matters does not know where to start: “I need to be informed about the changes, to be familiarised with new concepts. There is almost too much available, and you don’t know what to trust.” Taking into account that Alice completed her studies much more recently, less than a decade ago, the content of an English teacher’s course of studies does not seem to have changed considerably.

Overall, all three participants seem to agree that the primary responsibility to make inclusive language and representation an integral part of the curriculum belongs to the Ministry of Education. Additionally, they contend that there are several challenges teachers face when attempting to address these issues in class, including society’s disapproval, and the lack of available resources and training on these topics.

5. Discussion

In this section, the results for each research question will be discussed with reference to relevant studies presented in the literature review. Overall, the present study agrees with a number of others from around the world on the persistence of gendered language, gender stereotyping, as well as on the lack of non-normative gender and sexual representation in textbooks (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018; Gray, 2013; Lee, 2016; Paiz, 2015; Sunderland, 2015; Ullah & Skelton, 2013; Xiong et al., 2017). Moreover, findings from the interviews indicate that despite being aware of the problematic representation of gender and the absence of LGBTQ+ discourses, EFL teachers may refrain from raising these issues with their students. According to the participants in this study, this is not due to considering the textbook an ‘authority’, as suggested in some studies (Gray, 2010), but due to their own lack of training on the subject, as well as parents’ and students’ disapproval of these topics.

5.1 Gender representations in a patriarchal system

With regard to the first research question, which focused on the discursive representations of gender and sexuality, the findings suggest that gender in the two examined textbooks is constructed only within the male-female binary and that sexuality is presented through a heteronormative lens. More specifically, men and women alike are depicted in stereotypical roles, partaking in gendered activities, and there is a clear distinction between masculine and feminine traits. Males are especially presented in positions of power, whereas females as caretakers and responsible for housekeeping. This motif was also discussed by Mustapha (2013) in his review of studies on textbooks from the 1970s.
and 1980s, and it is, thus, an indication that little appears to have changed in the past six decades, at least in the context of Greek education. Moreover, this power imbalance can be seen as a product of the patriarchal social structure in which the textbooks were written (Tsiganou, 2021). More specifically, the depiction of men and women as occupying separate professional spheres in the textbooks can be explained considering that the division of labour by sex is an aspect of the gender hierarchy deeply rooted in the patriarchal system. Feminist economist Heidi Hartmann (1976) established this connection between gender inequality in society and the capitalist system, arguing that job segregation by sex needs to be eliminated if “women and men are to attain the full development of their human potential” (p.137). This suggests that despite the prevalence of male representation in the textbooks, for instance in the range of occupations individuals can choose from, both males and females are negatively impacted by gender stereotypes. That is, both males and females are limited by the linguistic choices and representations available in the textbooks for them to adhere to, and might be hesitant to defy them (Motschenbacher, 2011). The impact is, of course, even greater on students who occupy identity positions outside the binary, and who might not find themselves represented in the learning materials.

5.2 Heteronormativity, religion, and the consequences of avoidance

When it comes to sexuality, the topic is not explicitly discussed, and non-heterosexuality is never given openly as an option in Think Teen! 3 or in English HSI. This paints a less promising picture than that presented in other recent studies, which report some LGBTQ+ visibility in ESL textbooks (Smestad, 2018) or, at least, in the topics ESL teachers encourage in their classrooms (Leinonen, 2020). When referring to romantic love in the examined textbooks, this is mostly related to the theme of marriage and is done using heteronormative terms, such as husband and wife; in fact, there is complete absence of lexis related to sexual diversity. The obvious impact of this would be on non-heterosexual students, who are not provided with the linguistic tools to express their sexual identity. For this reason, Paiz (2019) has recommended the queering of textbooks by including “authentic materials that represent a variety of LGBTQ+ identities [...] in ways that are sensitive to the needs and linguistic capabilities of the students” (p. 271). Furthermore, from the perspective of Queer Theory, the prevalence of heteronormativity and the absence of other options can also have a negative impact on heterosexuals, for instance on “men and women who never marry” and “women who openly reject motherhood” (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 149).

Two references related to sexuality were neutral, both of them in Think Teen! 3. However, though neutral wording, such as the term partner, allows the possibility of non-heterosexuality, no such discussion was proposed in Think Teen! 3. Likewise, in the unit on Vincent van Gogh found in English HSI, his sexuality and relationships are never encouraged as a topic for discussion. The implications of this need to be considered, since, according to Paiz (2019), avoidance is ideological and, therefore, not unproblematic. Though avoidance can be perceived as less contentious than presenting a topic in an unfavourable light, excluding non-binary and non-heterosexual discourses is a choice that conveys the dominant ideologies of society (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018) or of those who produced the textbooks (Gray, 2000). In other words, omission of certain discourses and vocabulary are aspects of the hidden curriculum (Stromquist et al., 1998) and, as such, it can still have an impact on learners. According to Gray (2013), this “message of erasure” can be considered as setting the omitted topics off limits, rendering them unmentionable in class (p. 50).
When considering the motivation behind the lack of non-binary and LGBTQ+ representation, previous research has suggested that it is driven by the capitalist demands for profit, as it is intended to make EFL textbooks relevant to a wide range of markets (Gray, 2013). However, as indicated in Section 2.2, Greek public-school EFL textbooks are not produced for commercial reasons and, thus, the prevalence of heteronormativity cannot be justified on the grounds of prioritising financial gain over inclusivity. On the contrary, a possible explanation can be found in the social system firmly established in the Greek context, patriarchy (Tsiganou, 2021). Supported by the institutions of family and religion, the patriarchal structure conditions individuals to adhere to prescribed gender roles, accept and tolerate gendered power imbalances, and adopt heteronormative views. However, although Gray's (2013) theory does not necessarily apply to the Greek context, capitalism can still be taken to play a role in the absence of non-heteronormative identities in the examined textbooks; as Hartmann (1976) suggested, deeply rooted in the capitalist system is the division of labour by sex, which leaves little to no space for individuals who do not identify with their biological sex or who position themselves outside the binary.

Similarly, it is also likely that the explanation can be found at the intersection of the religious and cultural belief systems of the country, and its political and legal environment. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Friedrich Engels (2010 [1884], p.4) wrote, “[t]he less labor is developed, and the less abundant the quantity of its production and, therefore, the wealth of society, the more society is seen to be under the domination of [hetero]sexual ties” (as cited in Gray 2013, p. 44). This is because the family unit then becomes central in the production system, and, in turn, the protection and inheritance of property depends on the continuation of the family. The economic system of Greece seems to fall into this definition, as it is described by deindustrialisation and a focus on agriculture, tourism, and service (Louri & Pepelasis Minoglou, 2002), sectors often taking the form of family businesses. Therefore, heterosexual ties dominate the society and the economy by reinforcing traditions and cultural beliefs around family, while in turn being reinforced and strengthened by religion and the institution of marriage. It is then through the political and legal system that these beliefs are consolidated. In the case of Greece, this can be seen in the illegality of same-sex marriage (Kantsa, 2014). All in all, the results presented and discussed so far do not come as a surprise considering the sociopolitical context in which the examined textbooks were produced, an observation which was also shared by the interview participants.

### 5.3 Male, female, and non-heteronormative characters: issues of inclusivity

As to the second research question, which focused on the frequencies of male, female, and non-heteronormative characters, the results are similar to those of the first one. Even though the data analysis method employed here was quantitative, the results were also approached from a qualitative perspective, as an attempt to merely categorise and quantify the findings would fail to shed light on ambiguous cases (Motschenbacher, 2011). For instance, although there is no explicit reference to Vincent van Gogh’s sexuality, he was counted in the non-heteronormative category, due to his alleged bisexuality (Neurokrish, 2021) and drawing on his representation in the unit as highly emotional and sensitive, features not stereotypically indexing heterosexual masculinity. Not surprisingly, findings related to this research question are also comparable to similar analyses conducted both in the Greek context (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018) and internationally (Lee, 2016; Xiong et al., 2017). Specifically, there is an unequal representation of male and female
figures, such as famous persons, with the former predominating (Hellinger, 1980) and the latter being underrepresented (Papadakis, 2018). At the same time, neither of the textbooks features any explicitly non-heterosexual characters, which is also the reality in multiple other studies (Gray, 2013; Pakula, Pawelczyk & Sunderland, 2015; Temple, 2005). As a result, learners who cannot identify with the characters and values presented in the textbooks may feel excluded or othered (Paiz, 2019).

5.4 Gendered and inclusive lexis

The third research question explored the topic of inclusivity and representation on a lexical level, examining pronouns, nouns, and adjectives. Of the different pronoun options available, a preference for the paired he/she is evident in both Think Teen! 3 and English HS1. A study by Lindqvist et al. (2019) indicated that the paired pronoun does not evoke a male bias, and is therefore a more inclusive alternative to the generic he; nonetheless, it was here not treated as a neutral choice as it excludes people identifying outside the gender binary. Moreover, although no distinction was made between he/she and she/he in the studies presented in the literature review, the two paired alternatives were here examined and counted separately as the latter could indicate an attempt to depart from prioritising the masculine pronoun in the pair; in fact, in Think Teen! 3 the paired she/he was the second more commonly used pronoun, possibly suggesting an attempt toward male/female equality on the part of the textbook authors. As for the gender-neutral singular they, a mere two instances were found in each textbook. Although Björkman (2017) has observed that the use of the singular they has expanded and that now “speakers accept they even with an antecedent that is singular, definite, and specific, referring to an individual whose binary gender is known” (pp. 1-2), none of the four examples belonged in this category, and its underuse could also be reflective of the lack of nonbinary visibility in the textbooks. Some instances of gendered pronouns can also be found in Think Teen! 3, but their overall low frequency compared to more inclusive alternatives suggests an intention to avoid them. Moreover, the equal number of instances of the gendered he and she in hypothetical scenarios in which the antecedent’s gender is unknown could suggest an attempt to move away from using only the masculine pronoun generically; however, as is the case with the paired he/she, all gendered pronoun instances could have been replaced with the singular they to make language inclusive outside the gender binary.

Concerning nouns and adjectives, there were very few morphologically gendered instances, such as the word businessman. Irrespective of their rare occurrence, instances such as the use of the generic man, which excludes women, or the term housewives, which ascribes a stereotypical role to them, could be considered forms of linguistic sexism (Sunderland, 2000b). Additionally, several instances in both textbooks were non-inclusive contextually. Considering that even morphologically neutral words have been found to carry a male bias (Lindqvist et al., 2019), the fact that several nouns and adjectives were used in gendered contexts renders them problematic. However, one area in which gender-defying adjectives were found in Think Teen! 3 was that of personality traits. If gender is to be perceived, in accordance with Butler’s (1999) definition, as a social performance rather than a fixed concept, then learners are given the option to construct their character in gender-bending ways.

5.5 Challenges teachers are facing and the issue of responsibility

Results from the teacher interviews verify the conclusions drawn so far. All participants demonstrated awareness of problematic gender and sexual representations, but they
focused primarily on illustrations used in the textbooks rather than the language itself, finding it difficult to point out issues on a lexical or discursive level. Additionally, they all showed preference either for the paired *he/she* pronoun or for the singular *they*, as they considered them more inclusive. However, when it came to whether they address these issues in class, they all showed hesitation, either because they felt untrained to do so, or due to the topics being considered taboo in Greek society. Regarding the former reason, it can be deduced that, despite their years of experience or how recently their studies have been completed, teachers might feel unprepared to select the right type of materials or initiate informative discussions pertaining to issues of gender and sexuality, even from a language point of view. It should also be considered that only 90 minutes a week are allocated to the English subject in Greek public schools; thus, if a topic is not acknowledged in the prescribed learning materials, it might be difficult for a teacher of English to identify and use the right type of supplementary resources in such a limited time.

As for the second reason, the participants ascribed the lack of sexual diversity discourses to the fact that the Greek society is deeply religious. This empirical finding can be further supported by recent research. Drawing on Greek citizens’ comments in a public online consultation regarding the Cohabitation Agreement bill for same-sex couples, Michos and Figgou (2019) also concluded that the Greek national identity is intricately linked to the Orthodox religious identity, which, in turn, is incompatible with homosexuality and views it as a sin. Furthermore, to justify their reluctance towards discussing not only sexuality but also gender issues, especially non-binary, one of the participants brought up the students’ own negative reactions, while another explained that students do not recognise the gender stereotypes in the textbooks as these representations reflect how gender is perceived in Greek society. Thus, it appears that learners can subconsciously adopt or at least accept the heteronormative views and gender roles constructed within the patriarchal system, and textbook representations, discourses, and language can perpetuate problematic ideas by failing to address them. Being primed to adopt heteronormativity and tolerate or ignore the power imbalance between males and females might lead to justifying LGBTQ+ oppression in society, and even to normalising gender-based violence. Though it cannot be claimed that the Greek state EFL textbooks intentionally convey such harmful ideologies, the connection between gender stereotypes and gender-based violence is undeniable (Bates et al., 2019; Bucholtz, 2014; Ozaki & Otis, 2016) and should inform curriculum design and the creation of learning materials.

Of course, the English subject does not bear the sole responsibility for this. After all, school as a whole and as a social environment should allow and encourage students to explore their sense of self. One might specifically expect the topics of gender and sexual diversity to be primarily addressed in a Social Sciences class or in different subjects within the discipline of Humanities, as they are matters related to identity and society. Nonetheless, studies have suggested that similar stereotypes are reproduced in learning materials used in those classes as well (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018; Maragoudaki, 2007). Being almost detached from these so-called core subjects, EFL could be considered one of the classes where more experimentation and freedom of expression is nurtured and encouraged; besides, the subject of English encompasses topics such as family and social relationships, which would quite naturally allow for discussions on gender identity and sexual diversity to occur. Therefore, avoidance of these issues can only make room for problematic attitudes to continue.
Finally, one of the participants specifically pointed out that *Think Teen! 3* has not been revised for over a decade, and another described it as ‘outdated’. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that the textbook content and language contradicts Article 17 of Law 4604/2019, established in 2019 intending to promote gender equality in education, and specifically in learning materials (Greek Ministry of Interior, 2019). Since the law is more recent than the EFL textbooks used in public education, it should have entailed an update of the teaching resources. Evidently, this has not been the case so far. In fact, the original publication dates of the two examined textbooks are unavailable, a rather uncommon omission from the copyright page of the books. It is especially interesting that *Think Teen! 3* bears a mark on the title page declaring that it has been updated; the nature of these updates was unknown to the study participants, who insisted on the book not having been revised. All this points to one thing, an urgent need for the textbooks to be updated. In fact, it can be predicted that this sense of urgency will only grow in the future, considering the increased awareness of gender and sexuality issues as a result of the media attention that the number of femicides and the #MeToo movement have drawn.

All in all, it is clear that gender stereotypes and a heteronormative view of sexuality predominate in the two examined EFL textbooks, and representation is not inclusive for those students and teachers who position themselves outside the gender binary or who identify as non-heterosexuals. Instances of gendered nouns and adjectives are present in the textbooks, while the relatively gender-neutral paired pronoun *he/she*, which is preferred by both the textbook authors and the interviewed teachers, maintains the gender dichotomy. Non-heteronormative vocabulary or discourses are not provided for learners who might need them in order to express their identity, rendering heteronormativity the only acceptable state of things. Educators who teach using the examined textbooks might recognise the lack of representation and problematic cases in the textbooks, but often do not feel knowledgeable enough or socially permitted to discuss them with their students. Ultimately, representation in the textbooks seems to align with patriarchal structures and Greek Orthodox religious views.

### 6. Conclusion

The present study has investigated the extent to which language in two EFL textbooks used in Greek public education is inclusive, in terms of gender and sexuality issues, and whether non-binary and LGBTQ+ identities are acknowledged and represented in the textbooks. Considering the active role teachers play in the learning process, EFL teachers’ perspectives and practices when using these mandatory textbooks were also investigated. The findings suggest that gender stereotypes prevail in the two examined EFL textbooks, as well as that representation is not inclusive for those students and teachers who position themselves outside the gender binary or who identify as non-heterosexuals. Moreover, the interviews show that, though teachers recognise the issues to some extent, they are not trained or supported to address them. It was also suggested that the situation described might reflect the beliefs and norms of Greek society at large, in which non-heteronormativity is incompatible with the institutions of patriarchy and the Greek Orthodox religion. However, the need for change is undeniable, especially considering that society’s awareness of gender and sexuality issues might be expected to continue increasing with the media attention that domestic femicides and the #MeToo movement have provoked. Thus, taking into account that EFL teachers feel unprepared and discouraged to independently introduce a more inclusive approach, the first step could be to incorporate discourses of gender equality and sexual diversity in the mandatory EFL
textbooks. It is also suggested that refraining from taking such steps forward can only perpetuate problematic attitudes, such as discrimination, and, in some more extreme cases, gender-based violence. It is important to acknowledge, though, that this last conclusion reflects the researcher’s own social understanding and feminist trajectory, rather than being a widely established connection.

Further research into the full set of EFL textbooks used in Greek public schools is recommended to offer a more comprehensive picture of gender and sexual representation in primary and secondary learning materials; this could also encompass popular supplementary resources found online. To gain a more thorough understanding of the motivation behind lexical, discursive, and thematic choices in the textbooks, future research on the topic could include the perspective of the Ministry of Education to explore whether they recognise the issues and are indeed willing to make a change, as one of the participants suggested; similarly, future studies could also invite the participation of the Institute of Educational Policy and its textbook writers and editors, looking into their awareness, beliefs, and, if possible, gender and sexual orientation. A fully-fledged multimodal approach might also be worthwhile, considering the abundance of illustrations and pictures used in the EFL textbooks to complement the texts and tasks. This could also be accompanied by more focus on latent content, such as whether female or male characters are given more turns or control the conversation in texts. Research into the EFL teacher training programs can also help shed more light on the extent to which teachers are educated to recognise and address these issues. Finally, conducting a study with a higher number of participants might make the results more representative, especially if it involves educators from both rural and more urban or metropolitan teaching settings, with different gender and sexual orientations. In conclusion, there is a number of research opportunities on the topic of gender and sexual representation in Greek EFL education, which can contribute towards the queering of learning materials and encourage a more inclusive EFL classroom.
References

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Engels, F. (2010 [1884]). *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. Memphis: General Books LLC.


Maragoudaki, E. (2007). Βοηθητικό εκπαιδευτικό υλικό για τα σχολικά εγχειρίδια μαθημάτων θεωρητικής κατεύθυνσης. Γενικό λύκειο: Συμπληρωματικές φυλλάδια των σχολικών εγχειριδίων [Auxiliary training material for highschool textbooks of Humanities and Social Sciences. General lyceum: Supplementary brochures of


Appendix A

Gender, Language, and Sexuality in Greek Secondary Public-School EFL Textbooks

Maria Koutsoupaki
MA student, Department of English, Stockholm University
Phone: +46 765625236
Email: mkoutsoup@gmail.com
Supervisor: Josep Soler (Associate professor)
Research conducted as part of the degree project

Information for participants

The purpose of this MA degree project is to examine the representation of gender and sexuality in the Greek secondary public school EFL textbooks. Specifically, I am investigating the representation of femininity and masculinity, and the extent to which nonbinary and LGBTQ+ identities are acknowledged. Written within the field of English Linguistics, the project examines issues of inclusivity and representation on a lexical and discourse level in two textbooks: Think Teen 3rd Grade of Junior High School (Advanced level) and English in 1st Grade of High School. The focus will also be on how English teachers working with these textbooks perceive these topics, and how they deal with them in their teaching.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any given point. By signing the form on the next page:

- you consent to your answers being recorded, transcribed, and analysed.
- you consent to your answers being used for research purposes only.
- you are guaranteed anonymity. A nickname will be used throughout the interview and the answers cannot be traced back to you.
- you are guaranteed confidentiality. All data will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

You have the right to request a copy of your transcribed interview to review whether its content is accurate and truthful. You may also ask to be updated regarding the results of the research. Finally, you are welcome to ask any further questions before signing the consent form.
Appendix B

Gender, Language, and Sexuality in Greek Secondary Public-School EFL Textbooks

Maria Koutsoupaki
MA student, Department of English, Stockholm University
Phone: +46 765625236
Email: mkoutsoup@gmail.com
Supervisor: Josep Soler (Associate professor)
Research conducted as part of the degree project

Consent Form

● I understand that participation in this project is voluntary, and that I can withdraw my permission at any point.

● I have read the information sheet regarding the purpose of the study, and have been given the opportunity to ask questions about it.

● I understand that by signing this form, I am giving permission for my answers to be recorded, transcribed, and analysed.

● I understand that I can request a copy of my transcript to review my answers.

● I understand that any information I provide will be treated confidentially and that full anonymity is guaranteed.

● I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted. My name or any information related to my identity will not be revealed or associated with my quotes.

Name of participant: Place and Date:

Signature:

Name of researcher: Maria Koutsoupaki Place and Date: Stockholm, October 10, 2022

Investigator’s Signature:
Appendix C

Interview questions

1) Background questions:
   a. What is your age?
   b. Would you mind sharing which gender you identify with?
   c. Which languages do you speak and at what level?
   d. How many years of experience teaching English do you have?
   e. How many years have you been using the textbooks for, and are you currently using them?
   f. Have you had any studies or training on the topics of language and gender, or gender and sexuality?

2) Using textbooks in the classroom:
   a. When do you use the state-commissioned textbooks in your lessons? To what extent are you using other, complementary resources?
   b. In what ways are you using the textbooks? For example, are there prescribed pages, or can you deviate from it?

3) Language-and-gender/sexuality issues in the textbooks:
   a. What is your opinion on how gender roles are represented in the textbooks, for example in the reading/listening texts?
      i. Are there texts or other sections explicitly discussing this topic?
   b. What is your opinion on the language used in the textbooks, for example the vocabulary? Is it inclusive or have you identified any cases of stereotyping or sexism?
   c. There seems to be an effort to include gender-fair pronouns in the textbooks, such as the use of he/she or she/he, and less commonly the singular ‘they’.
      i. How do you use pronouns in your teaching?
      ii. More broadly, what can teachers do to include more fair and inclusive language in the classroom?
   d. Is there any topic related to sexual diversity (eg. LGBTQ+ rights, gay marriage, homophobia) or any characters clearly identified as LGBTQ+ in the textbooks?
      i. If so, is the topic of sexual diversity discussed in a positive light? Are representations realistic or stereotypical and problematic?
   e. Overall, are the learning resources you are using (textbooks and other materials) giving more options to gender identification other than as a woman or man?
Similarly, are they giving alternatives to heterosexuality or is this presented as the ‘normal’ state of things?

f. Even if they are not addressed in the textbooks, are gender and sexual diversity, roles and stereotypes, or even sexism in language, topics that you actively discuss with your students? Why/why not?

g. Do students show awareness of gendered language or potential stereotypes around gender and sexuality?
   i. Has this ever been a demotivating factor for students?
   ii. If students don’t recognise or react to stereotypes and gendered language, is this something you would point out to them?

4) Gender and sexual issues in education more broadly:

a. Is the issue of gender equality in language discussed in the context of Greek secondary education, for example in staff meetings, in educational conferences, etc?
   i. Has there been any change over the past few years? Any steps that your school has taken?

b. In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to make inclusivity (on a language level or overall) an integral part of the curriculum? How can this be achieved?

5) Anything else to add? It can be opinion, stories from lessons, reflections, etc.