

“There’s Kanga. She isn’t Clever, Kanga isn’t, but she would be so anxious about Roo that she would do a Good Thing to Do without thinking about it.”

Heteronormativity and gender roles in
A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926)

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Abstract

This thesis examines the heteronormativity and gender roles in A. A. Milne's popular children's book *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). The research question is "To what extent is A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) portraying heterosexuality as norm?" *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) was used as a data corpus and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis. One of the main themes examined was masculinity, which was further divided into themes such as social hierarchy and active boys. Another main theme was femininity, which examines *Winnie-the-Pooh's* (Milne, 1926) only female character Kanga as a mother and as a passive and less intelligent character. The findings of this thesis suggest that A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) portrays heterosexuality as norm for most part of the data corpus.

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1 Introduction

We often assume that most of us have the freedom to decide our stances towards certain things. For example, we think that it is up to us to decide what kind of personalities we have and what our sexualities are. However, the language we use, and that is used around us, has a great influence to the way we see the world. Professors Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick say in their book *Language and Sexuality* (2006) that “Language, arguably the most powerful definitional/representational medium available to humans, shapes our understanding of what we are doing (and of what we *should* be doing) when we do sex or sexuality” (p. 12). Especially with young children who are just learning how to talk, language plays an exceptionally significant role at helping them to build their identities (Harley, 2008). This is one of the reasons why it is important to critically analyse the language that is used e.g. in educational materials or in children’s literature. The aim of this Bachelor’s thesis is to find out, whether the language used in A. A. Milne’s popular children’s book *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) is portraying heterosexuality as norm, i.e. if the language used in the book is heteronormative or not. The research question is: “To what extent is A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) portraying heterosexuality as norm?”

In order to be able to study the relationship between sexuality and language, it is important to analyse the relationships between gender and sexuality, as well as gender and language. Gender and sexuality are both terms that are often hard to define. In this thesis, the term “*gender*” is seen as a sociocultural “being a woman” or “being a man”, rather than biological (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Gender is not seen to be anything fixed, but rather something that can change over time. There also are many other genders than just two; however, this thesis is concentrated mainly to the aspects of how gender is shown socioculturally. In addition, “*sexuality*” is defined as “the socially constructed expression of erotic desire” (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). In this thesis sexuality is not necessarily discussed as an erotic desire due to the context of the study. However, it will be explained later, how every individual unconsciously constructs their sexuality in the way they speak and behave (Cameron & Kulick, 2003), and this is why the concept of sexuality an important part of this study. Although sexuality and gender are different things, they are both still closely linked together and they are both seen to be socially constructed, cultural phenomena. If the relationship between sexuality and language would be studied without taking gender into account (or vice versa), the findings would not be accurate (Cameron & Kulick, 2003).

When studying children's literature, there most likely will not be any direct indications to sexual desires. However, this does not mean that the language used could not be heteronormative; i.e. portray heterosexuality as norm. Cameron and Kulick (2003) claim that people do not usually see being a heterosexual as an identity, whereas e.g. being gay or lesbian is. This leads to the phenomenon that heterosexuality is seen as invisible. For example, when describing a person, people are more likely going to mention if he is homosexual, rather than heterosexual. This means that heterosexuality becomes hidden, not noticeable, whereas things indicating homosexuality are noticed more often. Even though heterosexuality would be invisible, it does not mean that the Western cultures and e.g. the English language are not heteronormative. What people say and do not say shapes their identities. Heterosexuality is constantly present in people's everyday language; people keep "doing" their sexualities in the way they speak and act. Heterosexuality "shapes (and is shaped by) what is not said, or cannot be said, as well as what is actually put into words" (p. 12) (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Sexualities, and especially heterosexuality, are represented in a variety of discourse genres. Heteronormativity and heteronormative language seem to be present almost everywhere, where there is human communication. This should be acknowledged, as well as the idea that this kind of discourse can have an impact on people's identities.

Winnie-the-Pooh (Milne, 1926) was analysed using thematic analysis as it is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The themes of how masculinity and femininity were represented in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) were studied in detail and these themes were further divided into minor themes. After this, it was analysed to see how the described gender roles make the text heteronormative. In the next section, the theoretical background used in the study is explained more thoroughly.

2 Theoretical Background

In this section, the theory and previous research about heteronormativity and gender roles will be explained in detail. These theories are used later on for interpreting the data and forming the analysis. This section is divided into three subsections: the first one is explaining about the theories behind the connection of language and identity and therefore stating, why this study is important. The second section is about heteronormativity and the third section is more concentrated on stereotypical ways men and women usually communicate.

2.1 Language and Identity

The Psychology of Language: From Data to Theory (Harley, 2008) states that the way people think can affect their cognition. This can be seen especially with young children, who are just starting to learn their first language and begin to develop their identities. The language that the children learn to use, and the language that is used around the children, can affect their identities, and in this case the way the children think about concepts such as gender and sexuality. Harley (2008) describes the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which supports the idea that language has the ability to affect the way people perceive the world. The hypothesis suggests that some differences in languages and cultures can make their speakers to experience the world differently from people, who e.g. speak other languages (Harley, 2008). However, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is not clearly stating that the language can affect people's gender and sexual identities, but it suggests that the language indeed can affect the way how people think about the world around them. This supports the idea that it is important to be aware of the kind of language children are thought, since it can have an impact on the children's identities. Children's literature is a discourse used by many children, and therefore it is important to analyse, whether it can have an effect on young children's identities or not.

In the next section it is explained how Cameron and Kulick (2003) also believe that there is a connection between language and identity. Their theories are more considering the fact that sexuality is an important part of individual's identity, and they support the idea that there is a link between language and sexual identity.

2.2 Sexuality and Gender

In their book *Language and Sexuality* (2003), Cameron and Kulick discuss how people's sexual identities can be seen in the way they communicate. They claim that language plays a crucial role in the cultural construction of both, gender and sexuality, and also one's identity. Cameron and Kulick (2003) talk about heterosexuality, and claim that heterosexuality is norm in our society. If

heterosexuality is seen to be the norm in the society and culture, then heterosexuality is the norm in our language as well, i.e. the language we use is heteronormative. People might often claim that people are naturally heterosexuals because of biological and reproductive reasons. However, Cameron and Kulick (2003) state that people do not let heterosexuality occur naturally. They claim that heterosexuality is “aggressively promoted in every part of the culture” (p. 44) and repeated over and over again until people believe that it is the norm. The society does not let people to decide about their sexualities on their own, which should be the case, if heterosexuality was naturally the norm.

Cameron and Kulick (2003) claim that heterosexuality is a political recognition, which requires opposites. There has to be a clear difference between men and women, but also a distinction between heterosexual and homosexual people. It is also claimed that heterosexuality is about power in one way or another, e.g. there is a power difference between men and women and between heterosexual and non-heterosexual people. Because of this power relation, it is important to analyse heterosexuality and heteronormativity critically. Neglecting to examine heterosexuality in different social contexts only reinforces its dominant status in the society. Cameron and Kulick’s (2003) claims about heterosexuality as norm are interesting, and because of these reasons it is important to analyse whether the language used in children’s literature could be heteronormative.

The book *theorizing gender* (Alsop, Fitzsimons, Lennon, & Minsky, 2002) contains an article *Judith Butler: Queen of Queer*, which explains that according to Judith Butler, people are divided into the different genders of men and women mainly because of heterosexuality. This restriction to two genders is crucial for compulsory heterosexuality, and this differentiation into male and female mainly serves the reproductive aims. When heterosexuality is seen as norm in general, it leads people to believe in gender roles; what it is to be a man or a woman. This connection between heterosexuality and gender roles is one of the reasons why it is important to study gender aspects as well when researching the relationship between language and sexuality. According to the article, Butler claims that people are not e.g. born to be women, but they rather become women because of the culture and society, that believe heterosexuality being the “normal” sexuality. This compulsory heterosexuality provides laws that give people the ideals of what kind of behaviour is appropriate for masculinity and femininity and what is not (Alsop et al., 2002). This can mean that when people perform, they are expected to make a difference between masculinity and femininity.

When people are performing in a certain, gendered way, in addition to gendering their own identities, they can gender other people as well, based on their expectations.

Motschenbacher is one of the latest researchers of queer linguistics and heteronormativity. In the article *Taking queer linguistics further: Sociolinguistics and critical heteronormativity research* (Motschenbacher, 2011), he says that according to Judith Butler, the strict classification into men and women is a part of maintaining the so called “heterosexual matrix” and this is again related to the maintenance of the power structures of heterosexuality, like Cameron and Kulick (2003) claim. According to the article, Butler claims that the normative conceptualisations of femininity and masculinity are an important part of heterosexuality. Femininity and masculinity, and the genders, are linguistically often showed with the usage of personal nouns and pronouns that are based on the biological sexes of men and women, e.g. “man vs. woman”, “boy vs. girl”, “she vs. he” etc. Butler suggests that this identification of people with gendered personal reference forms “functions as a normative imperative urging people to perform their identities in established ways” (p. 156) (Motschenbacher, 2011).

Heteronormativity, and the demand for two strict, binary genders is problematic for heterosexual people as well as for non-heterosexual people. The ideas of ideal heterosexual men and women are difficult to reach perfectly, and they require constant production and representation (Motschenbacher, 2011). According to Motschenbacher, the heteronormative masculinity “is a lifelong construction site on which ‘real manhood’ has to be repeatedly asserted” (p. 158). Heterosexual men are often expected to be strong and powerful, and, for example, only use clothes that are meant for men. The role of heterosexual men is also fairly restricted by norms, at least compared to the role of heterosexual women. Heterosexual women can more do female-associated practices, as well as male-associated ones, e.g. wear clothes meant for both men and women. However, heterosexual women are stereotypically supposed to be weak and caring compared to men (Motschenbacher, 2011). The reason why these models of the ideal heterosexual men and women can be difficult for heterosexual people is that they do not allow people to let them to construct their identities and sexualities independently, but rather try to apply the laws of the “correct” masculinities and femininities.

In her book *Gender Trouble* (1999), Judith Butler is referring to the anthropologist and philosopher Claude Lévi-Strauss, who has been talking about the distinction between sex and gender. Lévi-Strauss claims that there is a natural and biological female, who is then socially transformed into a

“woman” when she gets older. It could be imagined that if the biological body of an individual is “raw”, the culture and social aspects then “cook” the individual by gendering it. However, Butler is slightly questioning Lévi-Strauss’ view. She says that if Lévi-Strauss’ claims were true, “it would be possible to trace the transformation of sex into gender by locating that stable mechanism of cultures, the exchange rules of kinship, which effect that transformation in fairly regular ways. Within such a view, ‘sex’ is before the law in the sense that it is culturally and political undetermined, providing the ‘raw material’ of culture, as it were, that begins to signify only through and after its subjection to the rules of kinship” (p. 47) (Butler, 1999). According to Butler (1999), Lévi-Strauss also claims that the cultural identity of masculinity and femininity are established through the act of difference, which simultaneously distinguishes people from each other and binds them together. This supports the views mentioned earlier by Butler and Motschenbacher (2011) that the main requirement for maintaining heterosexuality as norm is that there are two binary genders, men and women, who differ from each other. This difference between the genders and the question how femininities and masculinities are constructed through certain acts is crucial when studying sexualities and especially when studying heterosexuality as norm.

Earlier in this section, Judith Butler’s theory about heterosexual matrix was mentioned. In *Gender Trouble* (1999) Butler is elaborating the topic and, for example, referring to the views of the French feminist Monique Wittig about heterosexual matrix. Butler explains that according to Wittig, the category of “sex” is a part of heterosexual matrix and compulsory heterosexuality “that clearly operates through a system of compulsory sexual reproduction” (p. 141). In Wittig’s view, the concepts of “masculinity” and “femininity”, as well as “male” and “female” exist only within the heterosexual matrix. She claims that all of these naturalised terms keep the heterosexual matrix concealed and protect the matrix from critique. Again, these views support what has been mentioned several times in this section before: that the separation into men and women and the ideas of masculinity and femininity could be thought to be the “lungs” of heterosexuality: without them, the heterosexuality cannot exist and cannot be the norm. Therefore it is important to critically analyse the gender roles and masculinities and femininities, and especially how these aspects are constructed linguistically, when studying the heteronormativity of the children’s book *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). Without studying the gender roles, the heteronormativity of the discourse cannot be analysed and studied as thoroughly as it should be.

2.3 Men and Women in Communication

Deborah Tannen has written a popularised book *You just don't understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1991) in which she explains how heterosexual men and women stereotypically communicate differently and for different reasons. Tannen has researched the topic a lot over many years and published many books related to the topic. She claims that men and women often get into situations, where they do not necessarily understand each other and this is because of their different means of communication. According to Tannen's difference theory, there are a few concepts that cause men and women to communicate differently. One of these is independence versus intimacy. Tannen claims that when women communicate, they are concentrated on getting friends and having a wide social network. Men, on the other hand, want to show that they are independent and they do not need or want anyone else to feel sorry for them or tell them what to do. This is closely linked to the second communicational difference that Tannen states: status vs. connections. Based on that, men think that maintaining a high status in the societal hierarchy is important, whereas women do not see this hierarchy and think that it is more important to have a wide network of relationships. Tannen says that every time men are interacting, they are thinking about who has the highest or lowest status in the social situation, consciously or unconsciously. For example, if someone is asking for help, the one asking for the help has lower social status, whereas the one providing the help has higher social status, at least in that particular social situation. For women this is different: they try to gain support from others, form emotional connections and remain equal with each other.

The other theories that Tannen (1991) presents are all linked to these two topics, about how men care about status and try to be straightforward in their communication, whereas women want to be emotionally supported. According to Tannen, the core of men's communication seems to be the awareness of the social hierarchy. It seems like this awareness is greatly present in heterosexual men's lives either consciously or unconsciously, and it is greatly affecting the way they communicate with others. However, Tannen's theories are highly generalising. They seem to leave out all the "non-normative" sexualities, concentrating only on heterosexual men and women. When studying if the language used in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) is heteronormative and how the masculinities and femininities have been constructed throughout the data, Tannen's theories can be useful. They show how and why men and women stereotypically communicate, and therefore the same ideas can be applied to the analysis of the relationships between the characters in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926).

One chapter of *You just don't understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (Tannen, 1991) explains that one of the reasons why men and women communicate differently is because they have been raised in different kinds of cultures. Tannen (1991) claims that first of all, adults tend to talk differently to girls than they talk to boys. They often also expect girls and boys to speak differently and this is when the people learn how they are supposed to talk. Secondly, peers can also have a great impact on the way the children learn to speak and behave. When children are playing in same-sex groups, boys usually play different kinds of games and use different kind of language compared to the girls. As an example, girls prefer playing in small groups with their best friends. They often have activities that do not involve having winners or losers, such as playing home or playing with dolls. Boys, on the other hand, like to play in bigger groups where they have some kind of hierarchy; they often have a leader, who tells the rest of the boys what should be done and how. Boys also more often play games that have both winners and losers, and they are often "heard to boast of their skill and argue who is best at what" (p. 43) (Tannen, 1991). According to Tannen (1991), living in these different cultures and playing different kinds of games with their peers is the reason why men and women tend to communicate differently when they are adults. If it is true that our childhood experiences affect our identities and the way we talk with other people, then it is important to find out if and how children's literature is portraying certain kinds of world views.

According to Motschenbacher (2011), "linguistic manifestations of heteronormative discourses are, over wide stretches, identical with the linguistic construction of gender as a binary category, because where language constructs people as female and male, it also normatively implies opposite-gender relations" (p. 163). This idea of genders as each other's opposites supports the normative conceptualisations of femininity and masculinity as important parts of heterosexuality, as it was mentioned earlier in the section 2.2. Motschenbacher (2011) refers to his earlier research from 2007 in which he is talking about the performative potential of the genders. He claims that in addition to commonly used gendered pronouns and nouns, there can be certain features that are stereotypically connected to either female or male speech behaviour. For example, women could be seen to use more adjectives and descriptive colours in their speech, whereas men stereotypically use more swear-words. This could be linked to the way Tannen (1991) explains that men and women communicate differently.

However, the idea of having stereotypical ways of speech behaviour and communication can be criticised as well. Moschenbacher (2011) himself says these features cannot necessarily be found

from the speech of every man and woman. It is possible that in different contexts for example men might use lots of descriptive colours, whereas women can be found to swear a lot. The same critique could be applied to Tannen's (1991) theories as well: not all people, who identify themselves as men necessarily care about the social hierarchy, and at the same time there can be women who do. However, Motschenbacher (2011) says that even if the gendered features often are stereotypical, it is important to study the way these features can affect and construct people's identities, even if they cannot be "determinately connected to gendered macro-groups" (p. 163). Many of these linguistic features can be seen as performative and they can have the power of producing gendered identities. This is one of the reasons why it is important to study speech and other discourses as well, such as literature.

3 Winnie-the-Pooh (1926) and Thematic Analysis

As data corpus for this thesis, the text of A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) was used and analysed. The text was drawn from *The Complete Tales & Poems of Winnie-the-Pooh*, published in 2001 by Dutton Books for Young Children. It includes all the original Winnie the Pooh stories and poems that were written by A. A. Milne, including *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) was the first Winnie the Pooh book that Milne wrote, and that is one of the reasons why I chose to analyse that, among the popularity of the book. Later on, the rest of the Winnie the Pooh tales and poems could be analysed the same way as well.

Winnie-the-Pooh (Milne, 1926) is an old children's book, which is still now in the 21st Century popular in many countries worldwide. *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) is a collection of ten Winnie the Pooh tales. The tales in the book were originally told to A. A. Milne's son Christopher Robin Milne. The tales tell about Christopher Robin's stuffed teddy bear Winnie the Pooh and his friends. In addition to Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin, there are many other characters in the book, such as Rabbit, Piglet, Owl, Eeyore, Kanga and Roo. With his friends, Winnie the Pooh hunts heffalumps, tries to steal honey from a bees' nest and does many other funny and adventurous things. The majority of the characters present in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) are males, or at least they are referred to with the pronoun "he". There is only one female character, which is Kanga. She is referred to with the pronoun "she" and her gender and identity as a caring mother is represented often in the data corpus.

Winnie-the-Pooh (Milne, 1926) was analysed using the theoretical thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). The meaning of the analysis was to find out, whether the book portrays any specific gender roles and if those gender roles portray heterosexuality as norm. Following the phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) the data corpus was divided into two major themes of how masculinity and femininity are presented in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). These major themes were then further divided into subthemes, which were formed in relation to different feminist and linguistic theories, e.g. based on Deborah Tannen's difference theory presented in *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation* (1991).

Theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was chosen to be used because it was seen to provide a detailed analysis of gender roles and heteronormativity in the data. Thematic analysis is also a good way to analyse the underlying ideas and ideologies within the data. The model of

thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) has six phases that were all followed when analysing *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926).

Before explaining the phases, it is important to define the terminology that Braun and Clarke (2006) use. "Data corpus" means all the data that is collected for a certain project, in this case the book *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). "Data set" refers to all the data that is drawn out from the data corpus, i.e. all of the pieces of text needed for this research to support the themes of femininity and masculinity. "Data item" means an individual piece of text or a quotation from the text. Then, a "data extract" is an individual chunk of data within the data item, such as a meaningful word within a meaningful sentence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The same terminology will be used throughout this thesis as well, for example when describing the phases of thematic analysis.

The first phase was to get to know the data. *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) was read through carefully. At the same time notes were taken and everything, that could even slightly be related to either gender roles or heteronormativity were written down on a separate text document. When the data was familiarised, during the second phase all the data items that were written down on the separate text document were coded systematically and organised into several meaningful groups. Because this study and the data are theory-driven, each of these groups had something to do with either gender roles or heteronormativity. An example of a meaningful group at this point could be "Situations, where a male character was telling the other characters what they should do". Some data items clearly fit into many of the groups formed. The idea of dividing the data items into these many meaningful groups was to find out, if there were any interesting aspects in the data, such as repeated patterns, i.e. themes, across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The third phase according to Braun and Clarke (2006) was to form broader themes. It was looked how the data items were distributed to the several small groups and what kind of relevant patterns they formed. The two main themes that rose out of the data items were how masculinity and femininity were performed. These two themes were then further divided into minor themes: masculinity was divided into the themes of "Social hierarchy" and "Active boys", and femininity was divided into "Kanga as a mother" and "Passive and stupid women". These themes were seen to represent the data in the best way and at the same time answer the research question. After these themes were formed, the fourth phase was to review the themes and the data set and create a thematic map. The data items were read through once more, in order to make sure that the coded data items fit the themes and if some relevant data items had been accidentally left out. After this

the thematic map was created and the previously stated themes of masculinity and femininity were decided to be the final themes. On the fifth phase the selected themes were further “refined and defined”, i.e. the essence of each theme was identified in detail. A detailed analysis was written for each theme. After this the sixth and the last phase was to produce the report of the analysis, which means producing this thesis.

4 Analysis

In this section, the analysis of the data and the findings will be explained in detail. When reading the analysis, it is important to note that when talking about masculinity and femininity and mentioning certain characters being male or female, it does not refer to their “biological” genders, but rather to the way the characters are described to act socioculturally. Often in the media the genders of certain characters have been argued about, but the genders of the characters claimed in this thesis are based on the way the characters were described in the data corpus and how they follow the theories of masculinities and femininities mentioned earlier in the section 2.

The analysis has been divided into two main themes: masculinity and femininity. These main themes have then been further divided into subthemes: masculinity –section consists of the subthemes of Social Hierarchy and Active Boys, whereas the femininity –section is further divided into Kanga as mother and Passive and Stupid Women. Examples and extracts from the data corpus will be provided alongside the analysis.

4.1 Masculinity

Masculinity and what it is to be a boy are continuously constructed throughout the data corpus. This is visible in the way the characters and the milieu are described, as well as in the characters’ behaviour and the way they are described to communicate with each other. *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) has overall eight main characters; Winnie the Pooh, Christopher Robin, Piglet, Rabbit, Owl, Eeyore, Kanga and Roo. Seven of these are described to be male characters. This can be seen in the pronouns that are used for describing them (he/him/his), but also in the way the characters act and talk. This unequal division between the male and female characters supports the idea that in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926), male is seen as norm. All of the male characters are actively building their masculinity throughout the data corpus, and in the following sections the two main themes and actions of constructing masculinity among the characters will be discussed.

4.1.1 Social hierarchy

Tannen (1991) claims that every time men are interacting with each other, they are aware of the social hierarchy between the people. She claims that there are a couple of aspects that men value, and which cause men to communicate and behave the way they do. The first aspect Tannen mentions is independence: it is important for men to seem independent and decide over one’s own life. This can also be seen in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). A good example of this can be found from the second tale in the book, called “*Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets Into a Tight Place*”, in which

Winnie the Pooh visits his friend Rabbit's place and whilst being there, eats some honey and condensed milk with bread. When is Pooh's time to leave, he has got bigger because of eating and he gets stuck to the Rabbit's doorway. He does not want to admit that he got stuck and even when Rabbit offers to help him, he refuses to admit that he is in trouble. The extract 1 below shows, how Pooh is trying to remain independent. The text inside the square brackets is added just for this analysis:

Extract 1.

"Hallo, are you stuck?" he [Rabbit] asked.

"N-no," said Pooh carelessly. "Just resting and thinking and humming to myself."

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 26

Later on in the same tale, Pooh's behaviour also supports other theories that Tannen has claimed about men's behaviour. In the extract 2, Pooh is trying to maintain his status in the social hierarchy. When Rabbit comes and tries to pull Pooh out of his doorway, Pooh does not want to admit that it was his own fault that he got stuck in the doorway. He is trying to blame others and he even blames Rabbit's doorway. Admitting the mistake would possibly make Pooh seem less smart in the eyes of Rabbit and make Rabbit seem "better" than Pooh, positioning Pooh to a one-down position compared to Rabbit. According to Tannen (1991) men try to avoid this, just like Pooh in the extract 2.

Extract 2.

"It all comes," said Pooh crossly, "of not having front doors big enough."

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 26

Trying to maintain one's social status and trying to seem better than others can be constantly seen in the way the male characters act. Many characters try to seem either smarter, braver or better in some other ways compared to each other. The other phenomena is that they may not want to show it to others if they do not know about something or if they are scared. The extract 3 shows how Piglet is trying to hide it from the other characters that he got frightened. On the other hand, in the extract 4 Pooh is asking Christopher Robin how Kanga and Roo came to the Forest. Christopher Robin does not necessarily know how to answer Pooh's question, so he just says "In the Usual Way" and after Pooh, who still does not understand how, claims to understand, because he does not want to ask again or seem stupid in the eyes of Christopher Robin.

Extract 3.

“*What?*” said Piglet, with a jump. And then, to show that he hadn’t been frightened, he jumped up and down once or twice in an exercising sort of way.

Milne, A. A. (1926) p. 37

Extract 4.

When Pooh asked Christopher Robin, “How did they come here?” Christopher Robin said, “In the Usual Way, if you know what I mean, Pooh,” and Pooh, who didn’t, said “Oh!” Then he nodded his head twice and said, “In the Usual Way. Ah!”

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 88

Christopher Robin is a character, who clearly has the highest social status among the characters. This can be seen mostly in the way the other characters talk about him: they look up for him and think he is the smartest and the bravest of all. This can be seen for example in the extract 5, which has been taken from the third tale, “*Pooh and Piglet Go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Woozle*”. In the scene Pooh and Piglet have gone hunting woozles and they are both scared. Piglet is trying to come up with an excuse to leave without admitting Pooh that he is scared. Finally they see Christopher Robin, and Piglet says to Pooh that he will be safe with Christopher Robin, giving him the excuse to leave.

Extract 5.

“Ah, then you’ll be all right,” said Piglet. “You’ll be quite safe with *him*. Good-bye,” and he trotted off home as quickly as he could, very glad to be Out of All Danger again.

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 40

In addition to Christopher Robin being braver than everyone else, it is quite obvious that he is also smarter than anyone else. For example, the extract 6 shows how it is clearly stated in the book that Christopher Robin is the only one who can write. It is noticeable, that this might be because Christopher Robin is described as a human, whereas the other characters are animals or even stuffed toys.

Extract 6.

--- Christopher Robin, who was the only one in the forest who could spell ---

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 46

It seems like Christopher Robin is aware that he is smarter and has higher social status than the other characters. This could be claimed, because the extract 7 shows how Christopher Robin does not want to admit to the other characters if he does not know something. He is rather bringing this

up only in front of another character that he thinks is as intelligent as he is, in this case Rabbit, in order to maintain his higher social status among the other characters. Nevertheless, he does not even want to admit to Rabbit that he is unsure about something, but justifying his lack of knowledge by saying that he had forgotten what he used to know. It is noticeable that he is also assuming that Rabbit does not know the answer either, expecting himself being smarter than Rabbit.

Extract 7.

As soon as he had finished his lunch Christopher Robin whispered to Rabbit, and Rabbit said, "Yes, yes, of course," and they walked a little way up the stream together.

"I didn't want the others to hear," said Christopher Robin.

"Quite so," said Rabbit, looking important.

"It's – I wondered – It's only – Rabbit, I suppose *you* don't know, What does the North Pole *look* like?"

"Well," said Rabbit, stroking his whiskers, "Now you're asking me."

"I did know once, only I've sort of forgotten," said Christopher Robin carelessly.

"It's a funny thing," said Rabbit, "but I've sort of forgotten too, although I did know *once*."

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 120

Competition is another theme that can often be seen among the male characters in *Winnie-The-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). For example, there can be some competition about the highest status in the social hierarchy, in which the characters with the highest hierarchy position are being challenged. Like it was mentioned earlier, the characters seem to be aware of the fact that Christopher Robin has the highest position in the social hierarchy. In the extract 8 it can be seen, how Owl is trying to challenge Christopher Robin by showing that he is smarter than him, or at least equally smart. At the end of the extract 8 Christopher Robin realises that he is being outsmarted by Owl and therefore he is interrupting Owl by asking where Pooh is, so that he did not need to admit that Owl is smarter and better with certain things than he is.

Extract 8.

"The atmospheric conditions have been very unfavourable lately," said Owl.

"The what?" [Says Christopher Robin]

"It has been raining," explained Owl.

"Yes," said Christopher Robin. "It has."

"The flood-level has reached an unprecedented height."

"The who?"

"There's a lot of water about," explained Owl.

"Yes," said Christopher Robin, "there is."

"However, the prospects are rapidly becoming more favourable. At any moment—"

"Have you seen Pooh?"

Milne, A. A. (1926), pp. 138-139

In *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) it could be said that Piglet is Winnie the Pooh's best friend, since they spend more time together than what they spend with other characters. However, there is still quite a lot of competition between the two about whom is smarter and braver etc. This can be seen several times throughout the book, but only a couple of examples will be shown here. The extract 9 is taken from the fifth tale, "*Piglet Meets a Heffalump*", in which Piglet and Pooh have decided to catch a heffalump. Pooh suggests this before Piglet and this annoys Piglet, because like the extract 9 states, he was hoping that he had thought about that before Pooh. Piglet would have wanted to seem smarter and braver in the eyes of Pooh. On the other hand, Pooh is also trying to impress Piglet and is hoping that Piglet would convince him not to catch a heffalump.

Extract 9.

"I have decided to catch a Heffalump."

Pooh nodded his head several times as he said this, and waited for Piglet to say "How?" or "Pooh, you couldn't!" or something helpful of that sort, but Piglet said nothing. The fact was Piglet was wishing that *he* had thought about it first.

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 56

The extract 10 then has been taken from the seventh tale, "*Kanga and Baby Roo Come to the Forest, and Piglet Has a Bath*", in which the Piglet, Pooh and Rabbit meet Kanga and baby Roo for the first time and they are planning how to kidnap Roo. In the following scene it can be seen that Rabbit has the highest social status, because he is controlling the others and telling them what to do. Before starting to discuss this theme, it can be seen in the extract 10 how Piglet is again wanting to seem better and more useful to the plan than Pooh. When Piglet hears that without Pooh "the adventure would be impossible" he gets disappointed, whereas Pooh is really proud of himself.

Extract 10.

"What about me?" said Pooh sadly. "I suppose *I* shan't be useful?"

"Never mind, Pooh," said Piglet comfortingly. "Another time perhaps."

"Without Pooh," said Rabbit solemnly as he sharpened his pencil, "the adventure would be impossible."

"Oh!" said Piglet, and tried not to look disappointed. But Pooh went into a corner of the room and said proudly to himself, "Impossible without Me! *That* sort of Bear."

"Now listen all of you," said Rabbit when he had finished writing, and Pooh and Piglet sat listening very eagerly with their mouths open.

Milne, A. A. (1926), pp. 92-93

The characters with the higher social statuses seem to be dominating and telling the other characters what to do more often than the characters with lower social statuses. This can be seen for example in the extract 10 above, when Rabbit is telling Pooh and Piglet what they are supposed to do and assigning them tasks. Like it has been mentioned earlier, Christopher Robin also has higher social status than the other characters. This seems to allow him to tell the other characters what to do and control them. This can be seen in the extract 11 below. Again, it could be argued that this is because he is a human whereas the other characters are either animals or stuffed toys. However, it is evident that he is dominating the other characters quite often throughout the book.

Extract 11.

“We must rescue him at once! I thought he was with *you*, Pooh. Owl, could you rescue him on your back?”

“I don’t think so,” said Owl, after grave thought. “It is doubtful if the necessary dorsal muscles—”

“Then would you fly to him at *once* and say that Rescue is Coming? And Pooh and I will think of a Rescue and come as quick as ever we can. Oh, don’t *talk*, Owl, go on quick!” And, still thinking of something to say, Owl flew off.

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 141

4.1.2 Active boys

Almost every tale in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) is telling about the characters’ adventures or other things that they have done. Most of the male characters are described as adventurous, brave and heroic. There are a couple of exceptions, such as Owl and Eeyore, but even though they have not been described to be as adventurous, they are still often taking part in the adventures of the other characters. Eeyore is the only character who is often moaning about the things he or the others are doing but he is still sometimes following the other characters in their adventures. In addition to this, Piglet is not necessarily described as brave, but he is described to enjoy adventures and e.g. wanting to hunt heffalumps.

The adjectives and verbs used for describing the characters are often highlighting the adventurous and boyish side of them. The extract 12 is describing Winnie the Pooh walking in the forest. The verb “marched” gives the image of a determined and brave Bear, just like the words used for describing where he is walking, such as “gorse and heather” and “rocky beads of streams”. The extract 13 again shows how Pooh is interested about the new adventure to come.

Extract 12.

Through copse and spinney marched Bear; down open slopes of gorse and heather, over rocky beds of streams, up steep banks of sandstone into the heather again; ---

Milne, A.A. (1926), p. 46

Extract 13.

Christopher Robin was sitting outside his door, putting on his Big Boots. As soon as he saw the Big Boots, Pooh knew that an Adventure was going to happen, and he brushed the honey off his nose with the back of his paw, and spruced himself up as well as he could, so as to look Ready for Anything.

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 109

Like mentioned earlier, many of the characters are also described as brave, heroic and helpful. This can be seen in the way the characters act and in the way they talk. They often offer themselves to help the others without questions and they are always ready to help. The extract 14 is from the fourth tale, "*Eeyore Loses a Tail and Pooh Finds One*", in which Eeyore loses his tail and Pooh offers to find it for him. The adverb "solemnly" that is used to describe the way Pooh promises Eeyore to find the tail gives the impression that again he is determined and seriously going to help his friend. The extract 15, on the other hand, shows how Christopher Robin rushes "down to the rescue" when Roo has fallen in the stream in the eight tale of *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). The word choices show that Christopher Robin is hurrying to get to save baby Roo, making him seem brave and heroic.

Extract 14.

"Eeyore," he said solemnly, "I, Winnie-the-Pooh, will find your tail for you."

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 45

Extract 15.

"Roo's fallen in!" cried Rabbit, and he and Christopher Robin came rushing down to the rescue.

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 122

4.2 Femininity

Like it was mentioned in the previous section, in the data corpus there is only one female character, Kanga. She is not present in every chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926), which again supports the idea that male is seen as norm in the data corpus. Having only one female character in the whole data corpus also causes the image of what it is to be a woman and feminine to be distorted. *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) only provides one sided picture of femininity and women in general, and this picture could be seen to be very stereotypical. The only aspect in Kanga that does not

necessarily fit the stereotype of women and mothers is that she is a single mother. However, she still is a mother and her behaviour could be seen to be heteronormative, according to the theories mentioned earlier in this thesis.

Femininity is not constructed in the data corpus as actively as masculinity is. However, Kanga as the only female character is constantly building her identity as a mother, and this can be seen in every scene in which Kanga takes part, even if she would not say anything. The way femininity is constructed through Kanga's character can be divided into two main themes – being a mother and passive – and these are further discussed in the following two sections.

4.2.1 Kanga as a mother

Kanga's character differs from the other characters so that she does not really talk or do much in the book: the only thing she seems to do is care about her baby Roo's wealth. There are not too many situations when she says something to the other characters and when she does, it is almost always to baby Roo, when she is asking him to be careful. It seems like Roo is the only thing she cares about; she is almost constantly worried about Roo and telling him what he should and should not do. Examples of this are shown in the extracts 16 and 17. In addition to describing and defining Kanga as a mother, these extracts also show the social hierarchy between a mother and a child. In the book Kanga does not seem to have that high social status but being baby Roo's mother, she has the right to tell Roo what to do.

Extract 16.

--- and Kanga was fidgeting about and saying "Just one more jump, dear, and then we must go home."

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 96

Extract 17.

--- and Kanga said to Roo, "Drink up your milk first, dear, and talk afterwards."

Milne, A.A. (1926) p. 152

Like it was mentioned earlier in this section, Kanga does not really talk to other characters except Roo. If she does, however, she is only talking about Roo and is not interested in anything else, like the extract 18 shows. This again supports the claim that Kanga is described to only care about baby Roo and her only purpose in life seems to be being a mother and making sure that her child is alright.

Extract 18.

Roo was washing his face and paws in the stream, while Kanga explained to everybody proudly that this was the first time he had ever washed his face himself, and Owl was telling Kanga an Interesting Anecdote full of long words like Encyclopædia and Rhododendron to which Kanga wasn't listening.

Milne, A.A. (1926) p. 121

4.2.2 Passive and stupid women

Like it was already mentioned a couple of times in the previous section, Kanga does not really talk much compared to the other characters. She is mainly quietly at the background only talking to her child Roo and she only seems to speak when someone is speaking to her, and if not, she is talking about her child. This gives the impression that Kanga and women in general are meant to stay at the background, be seen but not heard. Comparing this image to the idea of the active boys gives the impression of Kanga being quite passive.

In addition to Kanga's quiet behaviour, also the adjectives used for describing Kanga or her actions give the impression of a calm, quiet and passive person, like the extract 19 shows. The words describing Kanga differ from the words used for describing the male characters in the book. This can be because Kanga is a mother whereas the other characters are not. However, being a mother is described in the book in a certain way, and it is giving the impression that this is what mothers are like.

Extract 19.

Kanga and Roo were spending a quiet afternoon in a sandy part of the Forest.

Milne, A.A. (1926) p. 95

All of the characters in the book are also assuming that Kanga is stupid and simple, even before they have ever met her, like the extract 20 shows. This is interesting, because it is shown in the book that Kanga is not actually as simple and stupid as everyone thinks she is. In the seventh tale, in which Kanga and Roo are introduced for the first time, Pooh, Piglet and Rabbit are planning to kidnap baby Roo from Kanga. Kanga actually is aware of their plan, but she decides to play along to make herself seem stupid in their eyes and teach them a lesson. Still the other characters keep thinking that she is less intelligent than any of the other characters. The extract 21 is from Piglet's monologue from the 9th tale, *"Piglet Is Entirely Surrounded by Water"*, in which he is wondering how the other characters will survive from the flood that has taken over the forest. It is obvious that he thinks that Kanga is less intelligent compared to the other characters.

Extract 20.

[A step from Rabbit's plan of how to kidnap Roo]

4. *A Thought*. If Roo had jumped out of Kanga's pocket and Piglet had jumped in, Kanga wouldn't know the difference, because Piglet is a Very Small Animal.

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 93

Extract 21.

"There's Pooh," he thought to himself. "Pooh hasn't much Brain, but he never comes to any harm. He does silly things and they turn out right. There's Owl. Owl hasn't exactly got Brain, but he Knows Things. He would know the Right Thing to Do when Surrounded by Water. There's Rabbit. He hasn't Learnt in Books, but he can always Think of a Clever Plan. There's Kanga. She isn't Clever, Kanga isn't, but she would be so anxious about Roo that she would do a Good Thing to Do without thinking about it. And then there's Eeyore. And Eeyore is so miserable anyhow that he wouldn't mind about this. But I wonder what Christopher Robin would do?"

Milne, A. A. (1926), p. 129-131

In addition to being passive and stupid, Kanga is described of being the opposite of the other characters, who are independent: she is described as helpless, needing the other characters help. An example of this can be found from the eighth tale, "*Christopher Robin Leads and Expedition to the North Pole*", in which Roo falls into stream. Kanga is described to shout for Roo "anxiously". In addition to this, when describing what the other characters are doing for trying to help Roo, the extract 22 shows Kanga's response. After this Pooh gets an idea of how to get Roo out of the stream and then Kanga helps him with holding the other end of a "long pole" (p. 123). However, she is more or less described to just wait that the others are saving baby Roo and just jumping along the bank whilst being anxious and helpless, not knowing what to do.

Extract 22.

Everybody was doing something to help. --- Kanga was jumping along the bank, saying "Are you *sure* you're all right, Roo dear?" ---

Milne, A.A. (1926) p. 122

5 Discussion

In order to find the answer to the question “To what extent is A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) portraying heterosexuality as norm?” it is necessary to link the findings together with the theoretical background presented earlier in this thesis. In the section 2.1 it was mentioned that according to Harley (2008) it is possible, that the language can have an impact on children’s identities and possibly even the ways they think about sexuality and genders. Cameron and Kulick (2003) also support the idea that the language and the culture the language possibly portrays can affect children’s identities.

Cameron and Kulick (2003) claim that if heterosexuality is the norm in the culture, the language used within that culture is heteronormative as well. It is important to remember the time when *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) was written and based on that, it has been assumed in this thesis that the culture in which *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) was written was most likely heteronormative. According to Cameron and Kulick (2003), this would make the language used in the book heteronormative as well. It is also worth recognising that A. A. Milne wrote the book originally for his son. This might be one of the reasons why the language in the book can be heteronormative and especially concentrated on the male characters.

Many of the sources used for the theoretical background seem to quote Judith Butler and her theories about the heterosexual matrix. According to the heterosexual matrix, heterosexuality requires two different genders, male and female, which are opposite from each other. She claims that when heterosexuality is seen as norm, it leads people to behave based on what is seen appropriate for men and women. Butler believes that heterosexuality provides laws that define what it is to be a man or a woman. One of the core aspects of heterosexuality are the opposite gender roles and that is why both, gender and sexuality, have been taken into account in this thesis, even though it mostly seems to be analysis of just gender roles.

None of the theories above give any concrete ideas what is a part of a heterosexual man’s or woman’s behaviour. However, these opposite gender roles can be seen clearly in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). Most of the male characters are seen to be smart and active, whereas Kanga as the only female character is described as a passive mother, who everyone thinks is less intelligent than the other characters. This is a clear difference between the characters and based on this opposition and the theories mentioned above, *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) is promoting the idea of heterosexuality as norm, which requires two opposites, men and women.

Tannen's (1991) theories give some examples of how heterosexual men and women communicate and many of these aspects can be seen especially in the way the male characters communicate in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926). Most of the male characters are described as trying to be independent and especially trying to maintain their social statuses by trying to be braver and smarter than the other characters and refusing to show if they do not happen to be as brave or smart as the other characters. Kanga is not too visible in the book, she does not talk as much as the other characters do, and therefore it is difficult to try to apply Tannen's (1991) theories to Kanga's behaviour. However, Tannen (1991) claims that women care about intimacy, they are supportive and they care about the community. Kanga is described as a caring mother, so it could possibly be seen that Tannen's (1991) theories also support the idea that Kanga behaves like a stereotypical, heterosexual woman. Therefore based on Tannen's (1991) theories, the way the characters are behaving and communicating with each other could be seen as heteronormative.

Motschenbacher (2011) claims that heteronormativity and the opposite gender roles it requires can sometimes be problematic for heterosexual men and women. This can also be seen in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) It could be said that heterosexual men are required to be brave and independent, but it is clearly showed that Piglet is not. He is often described of being afraid of things but at the same time, he is afraid to show this to others. This can possibly be because he does not want to show the other characters how he is "less masculine" than the others. Motschenbacher (2011) says that some men or women might feel like the heterosexual "laws" of how they are supposed to act are restricting them from showing their real personalities. This could be seen in the way Piglet behaves. Otherwise he behaves more of less like most of the male characters, he likes adventures and so-called "boyish" things and he is aware of the social hierarchy between the characters.

Eeyore is one of the characters who has barely been mentioned in this thesis. The reason for this is that even though the personal pronoun "he" is used for describing him, his behaviour does not seem to be either masculine or feminine. He is described as passive and depressed. He is not active like the other male characters and he does not seem to care about the social hierarchy. However, even though he is passive, he is not as passive as Kanga, because Eeyore still talks. Neither is he described as caring or independent/helpless. Because of this, it could be said that *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) does not overly aggressively promote heteronormativity. However, Eeyore's behaviour can also be caused because of suffering from depression, which would explain his behaviour.

6 Conclusion

It has been suggested in this thesis that based on the theories about heteronormativity and the way the characters have been described in A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), that the language in the children's book *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 1926) is describing genders as opposites and therefore portraying heterosexuality as norm. There is a clear difference between the male and female characters, which supports e.g. Judith Butler's and Cameron and Kulick's (2003) theories about language and sexuality, as well as genders and heteronormativity: male characters are often described as adventurous and aware of the social hierarchy between the characters, whereas the only female character, Kanga, is mostly defined as a passive person and a mother. The way the characters are described to behave in the data corpus follows Deborah Tannen's (1991) theories about how heterosexual men and women stereotypically communicate and behave. However, there are still a couple of characters, who may follow the theories only partly, or not at all. Therefore the answer to the research question "To what extent is A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) portraying heterosexuality as norm?" is that A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) portrays heterosexuality as norm for the most part.

Winnie-the-Pooh (Milne, 1926) is an old classic, so this thesis will not provide any suggestions, how the original book could be made less heteronormative. However, in order to make the future children's literature less heteronormative, there are a few things that could be changed based on the research done for this thesis. Most importantly, the gender division between the characters could be more equal and less obvious. Naturally the gendered personal pronouns in English make this harder, but there are ways to get around this. In addition to this, even if there were obvious male and female characters, their personal traits and the way they behave could be made less stereotypical. Not all the male characters needed to enjoy adventures and not all female characters need to be weak and motherly caring. Having many different kinds of characters has the chance of showing children that not all the people are different and allows them to implement their very own personalities, rather than giving them examples of how they should be thinking and behaving. This could be seen to be the main idea behind the queer linguistics and the reason why it is important to do further research on children's literature and other discourses: rather than giving people models what they should ideally follow, they should be given the freedom to pursue themselves, without hurting other people or living creatures.

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