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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS AS A MEDIUM FOR TEACHING ABOUT DIVERSITY IN FINNISH UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS: RECENT PRACTICES AND LATEST TRENDS

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Abstract

Apart from facilitating teaching and learning, school textbooks in general convey a great number of both explicit and implicit messages about society at large. In particular, the language teaching textbook can be seen as centred on a regime of representation, including the representation of people and identities relevant to them, that constructs the world of the target language for the learners (Gray, 2013a). Given the widely perceived role of textbooks as carriers of the “official knowledge” (Apple, 1989), representations selected for their content are recognised to have the capacity to render social groups included and relations portrayed in textbooks legitimate and “normal” (Sleeter & Grant, 1991).

This master’s thesis focuses on the study of representations of diversity contained in textbooks used in Finland for teaching the English language at the upper secondary school level. Given the recent curriculum reform, this study aims to examine how the concept of diversity is approached in previously widely used textbooks and also to identify potential directions for further development, as seen from a recently launched textbook series aligned with the renewed curriculum.

The textbook analysis carried out in this study is informed by the current debates in language education, in particular in relation to its intercultural orientation and the teaching of English language (TEL), as well as by the view of the textbook as a selected collection of representations of social reality with a “normalising” potential. Drawing on critical approaches to interculturality, the guiding notion of diversity encompasses a wide range of social categories. Considering the twofold research goal, two samples of textbooks were selected and analysed through a social constructionist thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes discussed in the analysis cover aspects of diversity such as nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, social class, disability, sexual orientation and language (in the sense of linguistic diversity of English speakers). In addition to examining how different social groups are represented, the way the textbooks frame discussion on the issues pertinent to such groups and broader diversity-related issues was looked at separately.

Overall, the way diversity is approached in the textbooks from the older series was found to be clearly in line with the logic of student-centred pedagogy, as great attention is given to the students’ reflection on the relevant issues, which particularly applies to the treatment of traditionally marginalised groups. The newer textbooks appear to go further in “normalising” more “hidden” aspects of diversity, and the underlying understanding of diversity to be moving towards viewing it primarily as a diversity of identities, worldviews and lived experiences. The analysis also suggests a strengthened focus on the idea of agency and on the diversity of speakers and uses of English in the newer textbook series. The interpretation of the findings is offered in view of certain shifts in understanding of the main concepts observed in the renewed curriculum. This study, however, is aimed not at providing conclusive generalisations but rather at contributing to the ongoing discussions on the intercultural content of teaching materials, English language teaching textbooks in particular.

Keywords
Diversity, English language teaching, Finland, interculturality, National Core Curriculum, textbook analysis, thematic analysis
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1. INTRODUCTION

When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.

(Rich, 1986, as cited in Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 2001, p. 201)

Despite the emergence and widespread adoption of new teaching methods based on electronic media, traditional textbooks have generally preserved their role as the main textual material used for instruction in many school subject areas, including language teaching (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015b, pp. xii-xiii). The impact textbooks have on teaching and learning, however, should not be narrowly seen as only facilitating the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge. Generally perceived as carriers of the “official knowledge” (Apple, 1989, p. 284), textbooks convey a great number of both explicit and implicit messages about society at large, and, importantly, teachers and students tend to question these messages to a lesser degree compared to the content of other materials. In fact, for example, by means of offering social behaviour models and representing individual and collective identities, textbooks do not merely reflect social reality but rather structure a representation of the society they legitimise (Brugéilles & Cromer, 2009, p. 42). By “selecting in” some social groups and domains of knowledge and “selecting out” others, textbooks may serve as an “important vehicle of social control” in the sense that they legitimate the status of dominant groups and render socially constructed relations among groups natural (Sleeter & Grant, 1991, p. 99). The fact that the validity of the images conveyed in textbooks may be debatable, and that such images may contribute to the maintenance of socially constructed unequal relationships, tends to be hidden (ibid, p. 79). Thus, this non-neutrality of textbooks mainly explains why representational practices found in textbooks in relation to different socio-cultural groups are a highly relevant object for examination.

The quotation above appears to introduce quite precisely the research problem which has served as a starting point for the present master’s thesis. Proceeding from the assumptions that textbooks are a medium which teachers still rely upon significantly when describing the world
around in their teaching practices, and that textbooks are in fact a non-neutral selection of representations not only reflecting the reality but also to some extent constructing it to be a certain way (Gee, 1999, p. 82), this study is generally aimed at exploring how the idea of diversity inherent in contemporary societies is approached in school textbooks.

This overall research problem has been examined on textbooks from different school subjects and countries as well as with different aspects of diversity as central points of interest. For example, one of the most comprehensive studies on different aspects of diversity in textbooks is the study by Sleeter and Grant (1991), which encompasses US textbooks from a number of subject areas. The findings suggest that the textbooks convey rather a distorted image of the American society, with a wide range of social groups completely disregarded or portrayed in a demeaning way (p. 101). The implications of exclusionary representational practices in textbooks, in particular the systematic writing out of certain social groups from the content, are twofold: miseducation of students by providing them with a skewed view of the society, and a simultaneous betrayal of representatives of the “erased” social group, who are denied recognition as a result (Gray & Block, 2014, pp. 45-46).

As far as foreign language teaching in general and English language teaching (ELT) in particular are concerned, the treatment of diversity in the content of textbooks is also essentially intertwined with the way intercultural aspects of language learning and teaching are taken account of. The research on cultural/intercultural content of textbooks used for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is rather varied due to multiple research foci and guiding theoretical frameworks. Overall, most of these studies point to a remarkable prevalence given to the main English speaking counties (e.g. Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011). Some of the studies examine the way the source culture of the learners is depicted throughout the content, pointing out a tendency to portray it as largely homogenous (e.g. Yamada, 2010). Also, it is worth mentioning that a great deal of research on English textbooks has been done specifically through a gender perspective (e.g. Lee & Collins, 2010), and some studies focus on both gender bias and ethnic diversity (e.g. Otlowski, 2003). However, significantly fewer studies have considered simultaneously other identity markers such as sexuality, disability, etc. (e.g. Hilliard, 2014)

The present master’s thesis research is situated in the Finnish context. There have been a number of studies on cultural representations in the content of English language textbooks published and used in Finland (e.g. Lappalainen, 2011; Lamponen, 2012). Overall, they basically come from the concept of national culture and place the focus on the English-speaking cultures, such as the
UK or the US, without thoroughly addressing the issue of different aspects of diversity within them, and leaving the portrayal of Finnish society out of the scope of analysis. Moreover, starting from August 2016, new local curricular, based on the renewed national core curricular, have been implemented in both comprehensive and general upper secondary schools (lukios). As far as foreign language instruction is concerned, the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools 2015 (NCC 2015) introduces noticeable changes as compared to the previous curriculum (NCC 2003). Now, the English language instruction is specified separately within foreign language instruction, its objectives are discussed at a greater length and it is explicitly acknowledged as the language of international communication. Significantly, the new curriculum goes further in highlighting the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in language teaching, with new accents brought in, as well as in strengthening gender equality and developing competences of global citizenship. For the school year 2016-2017, many lukios all over Finland have included for English courses 1-3 new textbook series, which are aligned with the renewed curriculum and the subsequent courses of which are still being designed.

Thus, considering a certain gap in research on English language textbooks in terms of how the concept of diversity, viewed from an extended perspective, is approached in their content as well as the ongoing changes in the Finnish context, the research aim of the present study is to explore how the concept of diversity is approached in the content of English language textbooks used for an extensive period of time in Finnish upper secondary schools and to identify potential directions for further development, as seen from a recently launched textbook series aligned with the renewed curriculum.

To guide the fulfilment of the research aim, the following research questions have been defined:

— Which aspects of diversity are represented in the content of the textbooks and how, if anyhow, diversity-related issues are directly touched upon and discussed?
— What image of diversity inherent in Finnish society do the textbooks convey?
— How, if anyhow, do the themes identified in the textbooks available from the recently launched series differ from the textbooks from the older series?

Finally, it is necessary to comment briefly on how this master’s thesis proceeds.

The following chapter introduces the main conceptual-theoretical considerations informing this study and consists of four sub-chapters. The first one primarily deals with the current debates in language education regarding its intercultural orientation and also presents critical approaches to
interculturality, which directly guide the understanding of diversity in this study. The second sub-chapter discusses more specifically the view of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and its implications for teaching, mostly in terms of (inter)cultural aspects rather than linguistic. Then, the focus moves to textbook analysis, namely to the view of textbooks as a non-neutral selection of representations of social reality, research foci and latest trends in studies on cultural content of language textbooks and the review of previous research. Finally, the contextualising sub-chapter discusses a more extended perspective on the cultural diversity of Finnish society and presents a comparative overview of the previous and current curricular regarding their provisions for foreign language instruction and, more broadly, underlying concepts of diversity, culture and identity.

Chapter three gives an overview of the methodology used in this study and consists of two sub-chapters. In the first one, critical realism and social constructionism are presented as ontological and epistemological perspectives taken for this research respectively; then, prevailing methods in the given research area are briefly discussed; finally, social constructionist thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is introduced as a distinct method of data analysis and justified as the method appropriately suited for the purposes of this study. The second sub-chapter presents the textbooks chosen for this study and outlines the main stages of the analysis.

Chapter four is basically focused on presenting the findings of the analysis of the two textbook series and therefore divided into two sub-chapters. While in that chapter themes are examined in terms of how they are developed, both explicitly and more latently, in the two textbook series separately, chapter four is centred on the overall discussion of the findings and their relation to the theoretical considerations and research questions guiding the research. In addition, the trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations are discussed.

In the concluding remarks, the scientific and practical relevance of this master’s thesis research is elaborated on and the main directions for further research are outlined.
2. CONCEPTUAL - THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Theoretical references of the present study are rather diverse due to interdisciplinary nature of the issues under examination. Broadly speaking, the study is informed by theoretical underpinnings of two areas: the one is the intercultural dimension of language teaching with a specific interest in the teaching of the English language and its role as a lingua franca, and the other one is textbook analysis in relation to representations of diversity. Additionally, with the aim to get a more contextualised understanding, the cultural diversity inherent in Finnish society is briefly discussed, which is followed by an overview of the previous Finnish national curriculum and the currently implemented one.

2.1. Intercultural orientation in language education: the evolving appreciation of diversity

This sub-chapter sets out to provide an overview of the intercultural dimension of language teaching with an underlying intention to examine how the concept of diversity has been increasingly coming to the fore. It starts with a distinction between modernist and postmodernist perspectives in conceptualising culture for the purposes of language teaching and learning. Then, approaches to the development of intercultural competence in language teaching and globally-oriented goals of language instruction are briefly discussed. Finally, critical approaches to interculturality, going beyond language teaching, are presented.

2.1.1 Approaches to culture in language education: modernist and postmodernist traditions

Along with “language” and “teaching and learning”, “culture” is the most important concept in the field of teaching English as a foreign or second language (TESOL) (Atkinson, 1999, p. 625), which generally holds true for the teaching of all languages. Although the ways in which culture and its place within this field have been understood are many and varied, it is possible to identify two general perspectives from which culture has been approached: the modernist and the postmodernist perspectives (e.g. Kramsch, 2006, 2013; Risager, 2012).

The modernist tradition may be succinctly summarised as associating the term “culture” with “the context in which the language is lived and spoken by its native speakers, themselves seen as a more or less homogenous national community with age-old institutions, customs and way of life” (Kramsch, 2006, p. 276, italics added). Within this overarching perspective, Kramsch (2006) distinguishes a humanistic concept and a sociolinguistic concept of culture, which can
also be referred to as a “big C” culture and a “small c” culture respectively: the former mainly means a general knowledge of literature and the arts, and the latter is focused on communication in social contexts and includes “the native speakers’ ways of behaving, eating, talking and dwelling, as well as their customs, beliefs, and values” (ibid, p.277).

The distinction between these two concepts was quite salient in debates about incorporating culture into the language classroom at the earliest stages of the development of culture pedagogy (Risager, 2007, p. 41). According to Brooks (1968), culture has a range of meanings, but it is patterns of living that is the most useful for language instruction (p. 204). The scholar emphasises the importance of integrating culture into language classes at all levels, saying that “we have not taught even the beginnings of a foreign language unless we have taught what it means to those whose native language it is” (ibid., p. 206, italics added). In a similar vein, Doyé (1966) argues that the subject of foreign language teaching is twofold: “the foreign language and the culture expressed by means of that language (...) any foreign language teaching that is sensibly conducted will eventually inevitably communicate knowledge of the other country and the people that speaks that language” (as cited in Risager, 2007, p. 53, italics added). What may be drawn from these considerations is that early culture pedagogy with respect to the teaching of foreign languages was grounded on the idea of incorporating culture into language teaching, but with culture being viewed as the one of the native speakers. This was a direct implication of the prevailing assumption “one language = one culture”, which was also tied to the ethnolinguistic assumption “one language = one nation”.

A few features pointing to the constraints of this paradigm are worth noting. First, regardless of whether “culture” is referred to valuable artefacts of art or ways of living, it is basically reduced to information composed of concrete facts to be taught. Second, this set of facts is primarily linked to the country where the language is spoken as a first language, which is explained by the tendency to see culture first and foremost as national culture. According to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), such perspective reduces culture to recognisable representations of national attributes and makes reference more to where culture is located, rather than what it is (p. 18). Third, the internal diversity within culture is typically left out of focus. As Kramsh (2006) notices, although sociolinguistic concept of culture acknowledges the variety of native speakers’ uses of language, culture itself is perceived as rather undifferentiated, and so are the native speakers themselves (p. 277). The modernist tradition was predominant till the 1980s (Risager, 2012, p. 6), when postmodernist approaches started to appear first in the teaching of the English language and later also spread on the teaching of other languages (Kramsh, 2006, p. 278).
Among the concepts often put forward in the postmodernist interpretation are identity, hybridity, power, difference, agency and discourse (Atkinson, 1999, p. 627).

One of distinctive features of the postmodernist perspective is that culture is no longer seen as a geographically distinct entity, often tied to the territory of a nation-state, but rather as a process. For example, Holliday (1999) introduces the concept of “small” culture (needs to be distinguished from a “small c” culture) as an alternative to the traditionally dominant concept of “large” culture signifying ethnic, national or international entities: “Small culture is a dynamic, ongoing process which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense and meaningfully operate within those circumstances” (p. 248). The scholar argues that the “small” culture approach overcomes essentialising and culturalist tendencies inherent in the “large culture” approach in the sense that it does not relate to the essential differences between ethnic, national and international entities and does not aim to explain behaviour with reference to such preidentified differences (ibid, p. 240).

Viewing culture as a dynamic process renders the idea of individual identity more important in the understanding of culture (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 23). Atkinson (1999) notes the emerging tendency in TESOL, as well as in anthropology and cultural studies, to use the concepts of identity and difference, among others, in relation to what was previously dealt with under “culture” (p. 625). The scholar introduces a middle-ground approach to culture that acknowledges the importance of shared perspectives and socialised practices and at the same time leaves space for “improvisation, indeterminacy, and change” (ibid, p. 640). Among the underlying principles are “all humans are individuals”, as opposed to the tendency to reduce individuals to their cultural types, and “social group membership and identity are multiple, contradictory, and dynamic” (pp. 641-643). Atkinson (1999) concludes that language learning and teaching are mutually implicated, but with culture being understood as multiple and complex (p. 647).

According to Kramsch (2006), in the postmodernist perspective, culture has become discourse, or to be more precise “Discourse” with a capital “D”, in accordance with the terminology offered by Gee (1999) (p. 278). Whereas “discourses” with a little “d” mean language-in-use, like conversations or stories, “Discourses” with a capital “D” refer to “socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting” which can be used “to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network”” (Gee, 1999, p. 17). Gee (1999) also clarifies that Discourses are limitless and boundaries between them
are always contestable, they can change with time and be hybrids of other Discourses (p. 22). Linking culture with discourse, then, also moves the understanding of culture towards seeing it as not fixed but changing and tightly connected with the multiple identities individuals may have simultaneously.

It can be summarised that the postmodernist tradition encompasses a number of approaches, with each having its own focus. What is important to accentuate for the purposes of this study is that the concept of identity becomes one of central concepts around which culture is thought of. Cultural identities are viewed as multiple and fluid as a result of the individual’s simultaneous participation in a number of social groupings, which, in their turn, can be identified on a variety of constituent elements. The postmodernist focus placed on the variability of culture involves not only moving beyond national affiliations but also, importantly, recognising that culture varies “with time, place and social category, and for age, gender, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality” (Norton, 2000, as cited in Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 23, italics added).

Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention that the boundaries between the modernist and the postmodernist perspectives are not clear-cut. For example, as far as teaching practices are concerned, viewing culture as a body of knowledge or as a process should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Likewise, linking culture to the characteristics of a national group does not have to be necessarily seen as incompatible with postmodernist vision of culture as long as there is space left for other cultural affiliations ascribed to people. Thus, a number of important concepts have been introduced to form a basis for further discussion of the intercultural orientation in language studies in the remainder of this sub-chapter.

2.1.2 From “intercultural competence” to “intercultural citizenship” and “global cultural consciousness”

From the 1990s, an intercultural focus in language education has been increasingly recognised (e.g. Risager, 2007). It may be for the most part seen as a response of language education to the changing cultural-linguistic landscape of society, primarily brought about by globalisation. The development of language proficiency, remaining an important objective, is no longer considered sufficient to ensure successful communication across languages and cultures. The shift from merely “teaching culture” to intercultural language teaching with the ultimate outcome of developing intercultural competence has been widely recognised in the field of foreign language education (e.g. Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 2013).
One of the most influential works on intercultural competence in the language education context is Michael Byram’s (1997) work on teaching and assessing *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC). The central concept is defined rather broadly as “an individual’s ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries” (p. 7), with, importantly, cultures being thought of more as the cultures of nations and in particular of nation states, as Byram clarified in his later work (Byram, 2008, p. 68). The ICC has five dimensions: 1) knowledge 2) attitudes 3) skills of interpreting and relating 4) skills of discovery and interaction and 5) cultural critical awareness. According to this model, learners are expected, for example, to possess knowledge about social groups, their products and practices in both one’s own and the interlocutor’s country, to be curious and open-minded as well as to be able to evaluate critically one’s own and other cultures (p. 34, 48).

Kramsch (2013) views Byram’s ICC model as grounded on the concept of culture tightly linked to “the characteristics of native members of a national community who speak the national language and share in its national culture” (p. 70). Subsequently, the ICC model has been reinterpreted and expanded with new accents placed by other theorists (e.g. Risager, 2007, p. 222-236), as well as by Byram himself in his more recent works.

With references to the initiatives undertaken by the Council of Europe, Byram, Gribkova, Starkey (2002) offer practical guidelines for teachers in approaching the intercultural dimension in language teaching. Like in ICC model, the aim of intercultural dimension is to develop learners as intercultural speakers, however, Byram et al. (2002) argue that the exclusive focus on national identity is fraught with stereotyping and define *intercultural competence* as the “ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (p. 10). However, there is no further elaboration on different facets of social identities, with the only example of professional status.

Although intended not specifically for language education but the education sector in general, “*The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*” (2009), the initiative undertaken by the Council of Europe with the aim to encourage people to learn from intercultural encounters, is relevant to mention since its theoretical underpinnings include the concept of *interculturality*, which is essentially a revision of the ICC model. Interculturality is defined as “capacity to experience cultural otherness, and to use this experience to reflect on matters that are usually
taken for granted within one’s own culture and environment” (Byram, Barett, Ipgrave, Jakson, & Méndez García, 2009, p. 10). The competencies entailed in interculturality are structured along the same five dimensions as in the ICC model, with a number of reformulations, e.g. no references to “countries” (ibid, p. 10).

Returning to the concept of intercultural competence, its capacity to capture the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching has been questioned. In his more recent work, “From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship”, Byram (2008) puts forward the idea that the purpose of foreign language teaching is to encourage learners and prepare them for taking an active part in a globalised world (p. 229). Reviewing the ICC model, the scholar underlines the notion of the intercultural as an activity (p. 68) and concludes that the idea of taking action may serve as a link between the ICC and education for citizenship (p. 222). Byram (2008) highlights the role of foreign language teaching in enhancing “intercultural citizenship”, which is centred on the view of an individual as a member of an international society (p. 229).

A more globally-oriented vision of the goals of foreign language teaching is also presented by Kumaravadivelu (2008). His main argument is that in the era of globalisation, when the construction of individual identity is embedded in a complex interrelationship between global, national, social and individual realities, the ultimate purpose of foreign language teaching is the development of “global cultural consciousness” (p. 3) Transition to the foreign language education with this underlying goal entails abandoning the exclusive focus on the culture associated with the target language community (p. 172). Kumaravadivelu (2008) argues that the overall objective of fostering the learners’ ability to use the target language with the specific aim of empathising and interacting with the native speakers is informed by a narrow view of multiculturalism. Its first significant limitation is that it identifies culture with national identity or linguistic identity, thereby ignoring multicultural and subcultural variations within national and linguistic borders. The second one is that it does not take account of the diversity of the learners’ worldviews. In this sense, even classrooms located in a seemingly homogenous national or linguistic context are “multicultural mosaics” rather than “monocultural cocoons” (p.114).

Similarly, Risager (2007, 2012) introduces a transnational perspective for foreign language teaching as an alternative to the national paradigm grounded on the notion of “one language = one culture = one nation”. One of the central assumptions guiding her argumentation is that due to transnational migration and language spread, it is no longer plausible to see the target
language community as a nationally-defined language area. Languages are spoken not only within the territory termed as “the target language countries”, and the English language is the most prominent example of that. Adopting a transnational perspective, according to Risager (2012), may open up for foreign language teaching new opportunities to “further an awareness of multilingual and multicultural (or transcultural) societies, and to try to develop a sense of world citizenship” (p. 10).

Thus, the intercultural orientation in foreign language teaching points out the goal of preparing learners for successful communication across cultural borders. However, there has been no consensus about what should be seen as cultural borders and what factors influencing an intercultural encounter should be counted in. More recent approaches emphasise the need to move away from associating cultural borders narrowly with linguistic or national borders, and some of them also highlight the role of foreign language education in encouraging and facilitating learners’ active participation in a globalised world. However, it is necessary to take into account that the way the “intercultural” is understood in language education is influenced by theoretical elaborations in other fields. Many scholars speak for integration of work on intercultural communication into language classrooms (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013, p. 4), and there is also a point of view that research into language teaching and learning should be seen as a sub-field of intercultural communication (Risager, 2011, p. 485). To get a more nuanced understanding of how interculturality can be used for thinking of diversity, it is relevant to proceed to critical approaches to interculturality, which have recently gained increasing visibility.

2.1.3 Critical approaches to interculturality

First, it is necessary to clarify the distinction between terms “multicultural” and “intercultural.” Generally, the former describes diversity inherent in the society, and the latter refers to the processes of interaction among diverse groups with emphasis on equitable interaction, dialogue and mutual respect (UNESCO Guide on Intercultural Education, 2006, p. 7). As for intercultural education and multicultural education, despite different naming, they are often used as synonyms and both increasingly refer to social justice (Nieto, 2006, as cited in Itkonen, Talib, Dervin, 2015, p. 399).

The critique from critical approaches to interculturality is primarily focused on the necessity to problematise the “root” concept, i.e. the concept of culture. First, criticism is directed towards
the tendency in intercultural education to view culture as a fixed, static entity, especially in terms of national culture, which results in the simplistic view of interculturality as crossing national boundaries (Dervin, Hahl, Härkönen, & Layne, 2015, p. 150). Lavanchy, Gajardo and Dervin (2011) note that in the European context, the term has been closely associated with migration management (p. 3). Another problem in the prevailing understanding of culture is that it tends to be treated as a thing or even a human being in a sense that it is made to act, behave and think instead of the individuals interacting at the moment of an intercultural encounter (Dervin et al., 2015, p.152). This view of culture is seen as easily leading to abusing culture as an “excuse” for behaviour; as Pillers puts it, “Culture is sometimes nothing more than a convenient and lazy explanation” (as cited in Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013, p. 7).

On the contrary, scholars advocating critical approaches to interculturality speak for a move away from overemphasising national identity and highlight the view of individuals as social enactors of culture. Dervin and Liddicoat (2013) argue that the “intercultural” is “more about constructing a relationship through negotiating images of the self and the other, cultures, languages, etc., rather than using these elements as explanatory static elements” (p. 7). The idea that a number of identity markers have a profound impact on the interaction between individuals is emphasised (Dervin et al., 2015, p. 152).

As an alternative to the concept of diversity, the concept of diverse diversities (Dervin, 2012) has been introduced with the aim to emphasise that individuals hold multiple identities simultaneously. Dervin (2012) clarifies that diversity tends to refer to the “Other”, especially with a reference to (national) culture or ethnicity, while diverse diversities provide a more inclusive notion by encompassing many identities framed around characteristics such as gender, religion, social class, etc. Unlike diversity, diverse diversities imply that every individual is diverse and therefore avoid a politically correct hierarchy between the “diverse” and the rest (p. 1). Holmes and Dervin (2016) describe the concept of intersectionality as “a fruitful path to diverse diversities” because it provides a convenient analytical framework to see how different dimensions such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, disabilities, language, sexuality, interrelate and overlap (p. 10).

Applying the concept of intersectionality to the examination of interculturality implies a more critical stance in a sense that it does not merely shed more light on multiple nature of individual identities but also brings up the issue of unequal power relationships. The concept has been widely used as a way to overcome the constraints of single-focus lenses for examining social
inequality (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2). One of the central arguments is that discrimination and domination occur not only along one dimension, e.g. race, but at multiple levels and often simultaneously, e.g. race and gender. When applied to the analysis of identity, intersectionality helps to bring to the fore the plurality of voices and perspectives of traditionally marginalised groups (Dhamoon, 2011, p. 233, as cited in Svarstad, 2016, p. 32).

Thus, critical understanding of interculturality can be summarised as de-emphasising culture as leading an individual to behave in certain ways and emphasising the role of individuals in reconstructing their identities in interaction with others. The underlying understanding of culture, then, resonates with some of the postmodernist approaches to culture reviewed earlier, e.g. Holliday’s (1999) “small” culture, in their critique towards culturalist and essentialising approaches, reducing an individual to a representative of a particular cultural type.

In this sub-chapter, the overview of the intercultural orientation in language teaching has been done with the aim to highlight the growing awareness of the necessity to problematise the traditional national paradigm grounded on the “one culture = one nation = one language” approach. The exclusive focus on the culture associated with the target language community, often seen as a homogenised nationally-defined language area, has been recognised as obscuring internal diversity and insufficient for preparing learners for an active participation in a globalised world. Intercultural competence, as a goal of language teaching, is understood as not merely the capacity to communicate successfully with representatives of other (national) cultures but rather as the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities. Critical approaches to interculturality have been overviewed with the aim to get a more extended framework for examining the issues of diversity. Thus, although the term is used in its singular form, drawing from the concept of diverse diversities, in this study diversity is seen as related to any individual and encompassing identities framed around such characteristics as gender, ethnicity, class, disabilities, language, sexuality, etc. With a reference to the concept of intersectionality, it is acknowledged that in reality some forms of diversity remain more “desirable”/beneficial and experiences of exclusion and marginalisation may occur at multiple levels simultaneously. The awareness of most of the issues discussed in this sub-chapter becomes even more necessary when it comes to the teaching of the English language due to its increasing role as a lingua franca worldwide.
2.2. Awareness of English as a lingua franca and implications for English language teaching

The role the English language plays nowadays all over the world in various fields, like tourism, international higher education, media, among many others, can hardly be compared to the role of any other language. It has been recognised as today’s most used lingua franca, i.e. a “contact language” for people of different linguistic backgrounds, with 375 million people speaking it as a first language and one in four of the world’s population speaking it as a second or foreign language (Crystal, 2012, as cited in Holmes & Dervin, 2016, p. 2). The peculiarity of English, then, is that second- and foreign-language speakers outnumber native speakers, which has significant implications for English language teaching (ELT). Before moving on to examining the main concerns relevant to ELT in view of an increasing role of English as a lingua franca (ELF), it is necessary to clarify the main terms.

There has been no consensus whether native speakers should be included into the definition. However, a more general tendency recently has been to define ELF in a less strict way, as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages [including English] for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011:7, as cited in Holmes & Dervin, 2016, p. 5). When understood in the broader sense, the term ELF is often used interchangeably with another related term, English as an international language (EIL) (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 9). Despite the “international” in the term, EIL can be used both in a local and global senses, with the former referring to communicative situations between speakers of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds within one country and the latter – to speakers from different countries (McKay, 2002, as cited in Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 8).

One of the most influential models of the spread of English, which is frequently referred to in discussions about ELF or EIL, is Kachru’s three-circle model of World Englishes (Kachru, 1992: 356, as cited in Jenkins, 2003, p. 15). The model is made up of three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle includes countries such as the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with the English spoken there regarded as “norm-providing”. The Outer Circle encompasses many countries in Asia and Africa such as India, Nigeria and Bangladesh, where English was introduced as the language of colonialism and now is used mostly as a second language, with some areas having developed their own institutionalised varieties of English, e.g. Indian English. The English spoken in the Outer Circle is seen as “norm-developing”. Finally, the Expanding Circle includes a growing number of
countries where English does not have a special status and is mainly learnt as a foreign language, with English spoken there viewed as “norm-dependent” (Jenkins, 2003, p. 14-16).

However, a dramatic growth in the number of speakers of English as a foreign language from the Expanding Circle and increasing communication across all Circles have necessitated the reassessment of the concept of the ownership of English as resting primarily with speakers from the “norm-providing” Inner Circle and to some extent from the “norm-developing” Outer Circle. According to Brumfit (2001), the ownership of any language, which includes the power to adapt and change the language, in practice rests with all the people speaking the language in question, regardless of who they are and whether they are multilingual or monolingual (as cited in Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 7). Within this frame of understanding, non-native speakers should not be expected to merely follow the norms and standards imposed by native speakers but adapt their use of English to their own contexts and purposes.

Coming from a recognition that the development of ELF has changed how English is used by its various speakers and how it relates to culture, McKay (2002) suggests renewing the ELT pedagogy. Among the central features of the proposed pedagogy are encompassing the diverse ways in which non-native speakers use English for their specific purposes and de-emphasising the culture of the Inner Circle countries (pp. 18-19). The latter merits a closer look as it directly relates to the content of teaching materials. McKay (2002) refers to the classification suggested by Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 204-5, as cited on p. 10) in relation to the cultural information included in language materials. According to this classification, there are three types of cultural content: 1) source culture materials that are derived from learners’ culture; 2) target culture materials that draw on the culture of the countries where English is spoken as a first language, and 3) international target culture materials that encompass a variety of English- and non-English-speaking countries. McKay (2002) argues for reducing the emphasis which has been traditionally placed on target culture materials and points out a number of advantages of the use of cultural content of the other two types. The incorporation of source culture materials may, for example, contribute to learners’ deeper understanding of their own cultures and their greater capacity to share these insights with people from other countries, while the use of international target culture materials is necessary for getting learners familiar with the diversity of contexts in which English is used.

As an alternative to the paradigm of teaching English as a foreign language, Fay, Sifakis and Lytra (2016) also propose a new pedagogical approach, tailored specifically for the context of
Greece. Coming from the view of ELF worldwide, they suggest that the goals of ELT include the increasing of learners’ language awareness towards a variety of Englishes and the development of learners’ generic cultural awareness instead of focusing solely on native-speaker contexts. The proposed approach also takes account of the increasingly diverse context of Greece and implies the goal of the development of multicultural awareness through English within the country (pp. 60-61). Besides Greece, Finland can be cited as an example of the Expanding Circle countries where English has become an important means of communication. In recent years, English-medium interaction within the country has increased significantly, and in many contexts, English serves as a “contact language” between native Finnish speakers and migrants as well as among migrants of diverse origins.

As regards teaching languages in general, not only English, with a reference to their more or less widespread use as lingua francas, Risager (2016) argues that this is the area where the need for adopting the transnational perspective (Risager, 2007), mentioned earlier in this chapter, becomes more apparent. The aim of preparing learners for participating in lingua franca communication implies a lesser focus on national cultures and institutions, while it is becoming more important to consider the broader goals of developing learners’ awareness of cultural and linguistic complexity inherent in all societies and fostering their understandings of global citizenship (Risager, 2016, pp. 46-47).

Thus, in this sub-chapter the role of English as a lingua franca and its implications for ELT has been briefly examined with more attention paid to (inter)cultural rather than linguistic aspects. Having overviewed some of the major theoretical considerations in relation to intercultural dimension of language teaching and peculiarities of the English language, it is necessary to proceed to the view of the textbook informing this study and the related research agenda in textbook analysis.

2.3. Textbook analysis as uncovering socio-cultural representations

In this sub-chapter, first, the view of textbooks as a non-neutral selection of representations of social reality is introduced. Then, the focus is moved to how the analysis of cultural content of language textbooks has been recently more informed by a broader understanding of culture as well as by the view of textbooks as ideologically biased. Finally, a number of relevant studies carried out on textbooks from Finland and other countries are overviewed.
2.3.1. Textbook as a non-neutral educational medium

As a starting point, it is necessary to acknowledge that despite the proliferation of electronic educational materials, traditional textbooks have preserved to a great extent their role as the main textual material used for instruction in most subject areas, including language teaching (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015b, pp. xii-xiii). However, the significance attached to textbooks may vary across countries and subject areas. As for language teaching in Finland, the most recent statistics, at least found in English, show that language teachers in Finland still rely greatly on textbooks (Luukka et al. 2008, 94, as cited in Lappalainen, 2011, p. 8). In the survey, encompassing over a thousand of mother tongue and foreign language teachers, the overwhelming majority (95%) of the foreign language teachers stated that they often use textbooks.

Among the reasons why textbooks play an important role across different subject areas, one can mention, for example, that textbooks «provide expertise, are timesavers, and provide security for both teachers and students in outlining content, scope and sequence” (Eisner, 1987, p. 12 as cited in Dervin, Hahl, Niemi, & Longfor, 2015, p. 1). Overall, the role of textbooks can be summarised as the one of a tool facilitating teaching and learning. Yet, without belittling the importance of this role, it should be acknowledged that the way this is done can be rather problematic, as textbooks are increasingly viewed as rather a powerful non-neutral educational medium.

Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger (2015a, pp.1-2) point out that in mainstream linguistics and sociolinguistics, as well as in the field of the first and second language education, there has recently been a growing recognition of what Gee (1999) refers to as the “reflexivity” of language. This quality of language means reciprocity between language and reality, i.e. language is viewed not only as reflecting reality (“the way things are”) but simultaneously constructing it to be a certain way (ibid, p. 82). Curdt-Christian and Weninger (2015a) continue, stating that viewing language as tightly linked to the power “to position and to represent, to exclude and to silence; in short, the power to reproduce or alter the political, economic and cultural status quo” has come to underpin all critical approaches in language education (p. 2). Within this frame of understanding, textbooks are viewed as inevitably ideologically constructed since they come through a process of selection, with representations made available to learners being significantly influenced by the political, socio-cultural and pedagogical paradigms prevailing in the given society (ibid, pp. 1-2).
In a similar vein, Apple (1989) states that a text is always a selection of knowledge, and it tends to be the one representing the values of the dominant groups in society (Apple, 1979 as cited on p. 287). The implications of such selective processes are profound, as texts of textbooks, by and large, come to count as legitimate content within a particular subject area that learners are expected to receive as the “official knowledge” (ibid, p. 284). This status of textbooks as carriers of the “official knowledge” explains why teachers and students tend to question their content to a lesser degree compared with other sources of information.

Sleeter and Grant (1991) also argue that textbooks confer legitimacy and dominant status on those groups that get represented in their content and, likewise, relationships represented in textbooks get to be perceived as natural and proper. In such a way, by “selecting in” some groups and domains of knowledge and “selecting out” others, textbooks in fact serve as “an important vehicle of social control” (p. 99). Elaborating on the ideological character of textbooks in their capacity to maintain existing power relations, particularly in relation to race, gender and sexual orientation, Gray (2013a) argues that textbooks at least have the potential to “generate(s) social meanings, restraints, and cultural values which shape students’ roles outside the classroom” (Auerbarch & Burgess, 1985:476, as cited on p. 3). In relation to the impact of textbooks beyond conveying disciplinary knowledge, Curdt-Christianse and Weninger (2015a) also put forward the idea that discourses constructed in textbooks may to a certain extent influence the formation of learners’ identities (p. 4).

Another aspect foregrounded in critical perspectives on textbooks is that they are for the most part products of profit-oriented industries. Commercial considerations often result in the reluctance of publishing companies to cover controversial topics or challenge the mainstream perspectives so as not to take a risk of alienating potential buyers (e.g. Azimova & Johnston, p. 347). For example, when describing the Finnish textbook industry, Mikander (2016) mentions a number of recent mergers of small textbook companies and concludes that the increasing concentration in the textbook publishing business may have important implications for the content of the instructional materials, e.g. a stronger risk-aversion and a reduced plurality of voices (p. 33).

It is also worth mentioning that not only the content of textbooks affects the learning process but also how teachers choose to work with the textbooks they have at their disposal. Even poorly written teaching materials, containing one-sided views, can serve as a basis for thought-
provoking lessons if the teacher is able to reframe the discussion in a way exposing the biases and contributing to the development of the learners’ critical thinking. However, the use of textbooks in teaching practices is left out of focus in this study.

Thus, the main objective of this section was to introduce textbooks not only as a tool facilitating teaching and learning but also as a selected collection of representations of social reality, which are in fact rather powerful in the sense how textbooks may influence learners’ worldviews and contribute to the maintenance of the existing power relations in society at large. Nevertheless, it is necessary to add that the view of textbooks as a non-neutral medium does not necessarily imply seeing them as a product of manipulative intentions of policy-makers and publishers promoting their restrictive agenda. Even textbooks offering a multitude of perspectives may inadvertently convey implicit messages with unintended outcomes. Such a controversial nature of textbooks explains why they have been long and widely recognised as a very topical and rich subject of research across different disciplines. The following section more specifically deals with the current debates on language textbook analysis.

2.3.2. Language textbook analysis: issues of culture and identity

Cultural content of language teaching materials has been extensively analysed throughout the last few decades. As it was examined earlier, there is a variety of approaches to understanding culture; therefore, the analysis of culture in language textbooks constitutes a broad and heterogenous research area. Risager (2014) distinguishes three most commonly used types of approaches to the cultural analysis of language teaching materials: thematic analysis, intercultural analysis and power and empowerment analysis. Each of them is grounded in its own understanding of culture. However, there can be a certain overlap among the types, and they can be to some extent combined in one study.

Thematic analysis, the most commonly used type, is generally aimed at providing an overview of how the target-language country(-ies) is depicted in learning materials (ibid, pp. 3-4). In this type of analysis, “culture” is generally treated as a large number of topics, e.g. in relation to everyday life, education, political structure; in other words, as both a “big C” culture and a “small c” culture. Although this type of analysis is mostly preoccupied with examining factual information, some thematic analyses may be carried out with the aim to check texts for possible demographically skewed representations, e.g. in relation to gender. The underlying understanding of culture in such studies, then, is the modernist one, with culture seen as closely
linked to a nation-state. A note should be made, however, that “thematic analysis” is an umbrella term encompassing a great variety of approaches, which will be discussed in detail in the chapter on methodology.

The second type of analysis suggested by Risager (2014) is *intercultural analysis*, which is interested in uncovering and clarifying various socio-cultural identities and perspectives included in the content of textbooks (pp. 4-6). Thus, culture is understood in a more extended sense, as a diversity of the perspectives of individuals and groups. While most studies of this type are informed by the fundamental assumption of inseparability of national languages and national cultures, some intercultural analyses problematise the traditional national paradigm in language teaching. Within this subtype, the emphasis may be placed not only on exploring the ethno-cultural diversity of the target-language society(-ies) but also transnational themes and incorporating other perspectives, such as religious, age-related, lifestyle-related.

The third type, *power and empowerment analysis*, is generally interested in looking at how textbooks address the need for raising awareness of the underlying reasons for social inequality (Risager, 2014, pp. 6-7). The understanding of culture underpinning studies of this type is linked to power relations and ideology. Among the most widely used approaches applied in such studies is critical discourse analysis, which is aimed at examining how groups traditionally dominating in society tend to be more favoured in textbooks. Thus, compared to the other two types of language teaching materials research, power and empowerment analysis tends more to take account of the ideological nature of textbooks in view of how they can contribute to the dominance of some social groups and marginalisation of others.

Speaking about the prevalence of certain types of approaches, ideological character of the textbook and critical examination of issues around representation and identity have not been taken up extensively in the field of language materials research (Gray, 2013a). To contribute to the development of the field in such direction, Gray (2013a) suggests viewing the language teaching textbook as being centred on “a regime of representation which constructs the world of the target language for the student” (p. 5, italics added), distinguishing the representation of geographical spaces and the representation of people and identities relevant to them. As regards the latter, the issues of representation can be seen through the practices of *erosure* and *misrecognition*, which is of particular relevance for certain categories of people, e.g. women, working class people, ethnic and religious minorities, those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT community). While erasure can be defined as the systematic omission of
certain groups or identities, misrecognition implies that even if certain individuals or groups get represented, their representations are stereotypical or demeaning, e.g. indigenous people represented as lacking in agency.

Referring to UK-produced English language teaching materials, Gray (2013a) notes that the ways women, people of colour, people with disabilities and the elderly are represented have changed significantly in recent years (p. 6). However, representations of previously erased groups may be tokenistic; in other words, such groups are mentioned primarily for the sake of getting a namecheck and creating an appearance of the inclusive coverage, but the issues are not developed in depth (Gray, 2013a, p. 7). In a study on textbooks used in Canada for teaching English as a second language (ESL), Nicholls (1995) also points out that Canadians featured in more recent textbooks are more likely than before to be representatives of minority groups, but the values, manners, religious beliefs, socio-economic statuses such characters embrace happen to be those of the Canadian Anglo majority (as cited in Kumaravidelu, 2008, p. 115). Thus, a comprehensive study of representations in textbooks requires not only examining the visibility of certain groups or phenomena but also, importantly, paying a special attention to how they are portrayed, as well as possibly taking into account what was chosen to be omitted.

At this juncture, it is relevant to summarise the main points made so far. In general, the issue of treatment of diversity in textbooks is highly relevant across various subject areas due to the “normalising” power of textbooks to render groups and relationships, included in their content, legitimate and proper. More specifically, as far as language textbooks are concerned, this issue needs to be also seen in a broader context of the current debates in language education. In this study, the English language textbook analysis is linked to the recognition of the necessity to problematise the national paradigm in language teaching in general and in ELT in particular. With a reference to critical approaches to interculturality, this study can be seen as located within the extended subtype of intercultural analysis offered by Risager (2014) and also adopting a critical stance from power and empowerment analysis. In such a way, the focus is placed on uncovering and interpreting how various socio-cultural groups are represented in the content of the textbooks, without restricting the examination to the target-language society(-ies), with a specific interest lying in how, if anyhow, more “hidden” identities are treated.

In the following, a brief review of previous research relevant to this study is presented.

2.3.3. Previous research on diversity in (language) textbooks worldwide and in Finland
The review of relevant studies starts with a few studies carried out on exploring representations of diversity in textbooks from different subject areas, and then the focus is moved more specifically to foreign language textbooks and English language textbooks.

One of the most widely cited studies on diversity in textbooks is a study by Sleeter and Grant (1991) on textbooks used from grade 1 to 8 in the USA in subjects such as social studies, reading and language arts, science, and mathematics. The analysis revealed the white- and male-dominated orientation, while concerns and achievements of other social groups were found to be downplayed or totally disregarded. The issues of inequality in the society are given scant attention, and the middle-class members and situations referring to them are featured predominantly. Also, even though people with disabilities are visible in the content, few of them are depicted to be involved in an activity, with the overwhelming majority shown facing difficulties or being assisted to learn something. The scholars point out that such an approach to the writing of textbooks may be fraught with alienating from school lower-class children and children of colour and preparing citizens with “a shallow social consciousness and narrow sense of history and culture” (ibid, p. 101). Similar tendencies were revealed in McKinney’s (2005) study on primary school learning materials used in South Africa. The study examines diversity in relation to race, social class, gender, rural/urban location and disability. The findings point to a generally more balanced representation of diversity in science textbooks than language ones. Disabled people virtually do not appear in all 61 textbooks examined. Overall, the analysis revealed the consistent underrepresentation of females, working-class and poor people, particularly from rural areas (p. xi).

The study by Bromley and Mäkinen (2011) on social science textbooks is comprised of a longitudinal analysis of Finnish textbooks and a comparative analysis of textbooks taken from 33 countries. The study showed that civic education in Finland is built upon a greater emphasis on diversity than that in many other countries with higher levels of ethnic and linguistic diversity, thereby suggesting that the importance accorded to diversity in civic education can be only partially explained by the actual diversity of the given country’s population. Learner-centred pedagogical approaches focusing on student agency both nationwide and globally were found to be positively correlated with diversity emphases. However, there are still some minority groups which are scarcely included, despite existing in large numbers in society. For example, only one out of 14 Finnish social science textbooks mentions the Roma, despite the fact that the Roma population in Finland is estimated to be roughly the same as the Sami (Bromley & Mäkinen,
Cross-nationally, for example, gays and lesbians appeared only in a few out of 154 textbooks examined in the study.

A recently published volume “Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks: Finland as an example” (2015) has been of particular importance in reviewing the previous research as well as gaining theoretical insights for this study. The research carried out for that project is premised on critical approaches to interculturality and covers a number of subject areas. For example, in the article by Dervin, Hahl, Härkönen and Layne (2015), two upper secondary school history textbooks specifically designed for teaching about intercultural encounters are examined. The findings suggest that although a critical understanding of interculturality can be occasionally observed, cultures are more conceived as fixed, and foreign cultures are portrayed as distant from the life of local students. As for the ways Finnishness is portrayed, the scholars point out that although nowadays Finnishness can mean being a Muslim or a black person, the textbooks fail to convey such ideas (ibid, p. 169).

In language textbook analysis, the representation of diversity may be more specifically interpreted in terms of how a diversity of the speakers of the language in question is represented. For example, Azimova and Johnston’s (2012) analysis of textbooks used for teaching the Russian language in the USA revealed a considerable misrepresentation of the use of the language, or more precisely, the erasure of a number of groups of people, who are, consequently, not recognised as legitimate owners of the language. In the textbooks examined, the ownership of Russian is not only confined to those living in Russia, but more narrowly to white, middle-class, Orthodox Christian ethnic Russians, for the most part living in big cities (ibid, p. 346). Thus, in addition to obscuring diversity within Russia, the textbooks also ignore the fact that Russian is widely used in many post-Soviet states, both as a first language and a lingua franca.

As for textbooks used for teaching English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL), they have been examined widely from different angles across the world. A number of studies have been carried out in view of the role of English as an international language. For example, the study by Shin, Eslami and Chen (2011), focused on cultural perspectives in internationally distributed textbooks, revealed a remarkable domination of the Inner Circle cultural content. The authors conclude that the textbooks largely fail to take account of the EIL paradigm, and suggest, among other aspects, incorporating a variety of Englishes into teaching materials and reducing emphasis on the target-language culture by including also native cultural elements (ibid, pp. 265-266). Also, a great deal of research into English language textbooks has been done with the focus
placed on certain types of diversity. For example, in a study on EFL textbooks from Japan, Yamada (2010) examines the variety of countries represented as well as the racial and ethnical diversity within Japan. Unlike the study mentioned before, this one revealed that uses and users of English in the Inner- and Expanding Circle countries are given almost equal space, and the coverage of Japan exceeds the coverage of the second most featured country, the USA, in the most recent editions (p. 499). As for the internal diversity, it is mostly presented by the Japanese and the citizens of the Inner Circle countries, while Japanese ethnic minorities are completely omitted in the social interactions portrayed in the reviewed textbooks. Otolowski’s (2003) study of EFL textbooks, also used in Japan, examined gender representations and ethnic diversity of the target-language societies, and showed a tendency to reinforce the image of women as housewives and mothers as well as a clearly observable racial bias against non-white peoples in illustrations, with generally scant attention given to ethnic minorities (pp. 11-12).

It should be noted that gender representations have been examined rather extensively in EFL/ESL textbook studies from a great variety of countries (e.g. Lee & Collins, 2010). Many of such studies are longitudinal, examining developments in the treatment of gender issues over the last decades, and also include the examination for possible sexist connotations in the language used. Overall, the studies suggest that there has been a shift from previously pervasive male-dominated representational practices to more balanced representations, with the portrayals of women more closely reflecting a great variety of roles they may hold in society (e.g. Hilliard, 2014, pp. 242-243).

As for diversity in relation to sexuality, Gray (2013b) argues that while the regime of inclusivity guiding the writing of textbooks has concerned many of previously largely underrepresented or erased groups, it has not been extended to sexual minorities (p. 42). Gray’s (2013b) study revealed that “in the treatment of the family and in content on ideal partners, internet dating and relationship, socializing, travelling and meeting new people, there is a blanket avoidance of any representation of clearly identified LGBT” (p. 49). Primarily connecting such avoidance with commercial concerns of the publishers due to a global-market orientation of the reviewed materials, Gray (2013b) examines also context-specific materials and notes that despite a certain visibility of LGBT, those materials at times frame the discussion on LGBT-related issues in deeply problematic ways (p. 53).

Significantly fewer studies on EFL/ESL textbooks include the examination of different types of diversity simultaneously. For example, Hilliard’s (2014) analysis of four textbooks widely used
around the world revealed a clearly unbalanced representation of ethnical diversity, with Caucasians featured the most prominently. The examination of images proved a generally observable trend towards “feminising the content”, but showed that only one textbook includes a clear image of people with disabilities and none of the textbooks make any reference to LGBT (ibid, pp. 242-243). Diversity on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, social class and sexuality is examined in Huber’s (2015) study of EFL textbooks used in Germany; however, the focus is rather specific – the citizens of London. The analysis showed that social class category is not explicitly treated with some occurrences mostly linked to the middle class, sexuality-related diversity is completely omitted; however, national and ethnic diversity are to some extent made visible by including characters of minority origin (p.102).

Finally, a few related studies on EFL textbooks from Finland carried out at the MA level and focused on cultural information about the target-language societies were found (e.g. Pohjanen, 2007; Lappalainen, 2011; Lamponen, 2012). Although the present study is grounded in a broader understanding of culture and the focus goes beyond the target-language societies, a number of valuable insights were gained from Lamponen’s (2012) comparative study on English and Swedish language textbooks. For the sample of English language textbooks, Lamponen (2012) chose the textbook series *Open Road*, which was also chosen for this study as a sample of the older series. In the category “Population”, Lamponen (2012) summarises that different national-, social-, occupational- and age-groups appear in the texts and illustrations, with the British and Americans mentioned the most often among other nationalities (pp. 46-49). Lamponen (2012) also notes that there are certain references to the multicultural nature of the societies in the UK and the USA, for example, when covering the topic of immigration. Another relevant for this study observation made by Lamponen (2012) is that only once the learners’ attention is directly drawn to different varieties of English (p. 47).

Although none of the studies reviewed has direct references to the concept of intersectionality, it appears to be rather a convenient tool for observing which social groups tend more to be systematically underrepresented or erased in the content of textbooks. Those who happen to belong to disadvantaged groups along different inequality axes, e.g. ethnicity, gender and social class, simultaneously are more susceptible to biased representational practices. As some of the studies revealed, the preferences are given not only to certain ethnical groups but more specifically to certain social-class, religion and gender groups within them.
The review of previous research has been done with the aim, first, to identify the main lines of critique towards the treatment of diversity in textbooks in general, and, second, to demonstrate the relevance of the present study, which is located in a relatively poorly explored area of EFL textbook research, considering its simultaneous interest in various types of diversity and de-emphasising the focus on national cultures traditionally associated with the English language. In the remainder of this chapter, the context of the research will be briefly introduced.

2.4. Contextualising research

This sub-chapter is aimed at building a more contextualised framework for the textbook analysis. First, a more extended perspective on looking at the cultural make-up of Finnish society is presented. Second, the main observations about the changes brought about by the new curriculum in relation to the key concepts of this study and the foreign language instruction are summarised.

2.4.1. Cultural diversity in Finland

The recent influx of migrants to Finland arguably features the most prominently in the current discussions about the cultural diversity, which is often used interchangeably with ethnic diversity in Finland (Holm & Londen, 2010, p. 108). Compared to many other European countries, immigration in Finland is a relatively new phenomenon, which started on a larger scale in the 1990s and has intensified more recently (e.g. Pöyhtäri, 2014, p. 45). As of the end of 2015, one in 10 persons aged 25-44 living permanently in Finland was of foreign background, while in Greater Helsinki, this indicator for this age category was higher - one out of five persons. In total figures, persons of foreign origin living permanently in Finland accounted for 6.2 per cent of the country’s population (Statistics Finland: One in ten..., 2016), while, for example, in the early 1990s, people of foreign origin made up only 0.5 per cent of the total population (Pöyhtäri, 2014, p. 44). A more specific aspect of the increased immigration in recent years has been a significant increase in the arrival of asylum-seekers in Finland: from year 2014 to 2015 their number increased by nearly 10 times (Statistics Finland: Asylum-seekers..., 2016).

In general, but especially until the recent increase in the arrival of immigrants, the image of Finland conveyed both domestically and internationally has been the one of an ethnically and culturally homogenous country (e.g. Saukkonen & Pyykkönen, 2008, p. 52). However, Finland in fact has never been as monocultural as it has been portrayed taking into consideration a
variety of ethnic, linguistic, religious, political and other minorities traditionally living in the country (Räsänen, 2005, p. 18). Finland has strong traditional minorities such as the Swedish-speaking Finns and the Sami people, who have the official status of an indigenous people. The Swedish language, along with Finnish, is the official language, and the Sami language has the status of the official language within the Sami domicile area (Cultural diversity and..., n.d.). Other minorities include the Roma people and small ethnic groups such as Jews, Tatars and the Russians, who arrived in the period of Finland’s autonomy within the Russian Empire (Holm & Londen, 2010, p. 108). Besides, it is worth noting that the description of cultural minorities in Finland, as it is presented on the web page of the Ministry of Education and Culture, also includes the mention of various disability groups, religious groups, sexual minorities and various age groups, especially young people, as having their own cultural distinctive features (Cultural diversity and...n.d.).

Thus, it is necessary to conclude that the understanding of the diversity of the contemporary Finnish society should not be confined to the recently increased migration-related diversity but also include the recognition of the minorities historically residing in Finland. Furthermore, in the continuation of what has been brought up repeatedly earlier in this chapter, it is also necessary to recognise diversity on the basis of social categories such as gender, disability, sexuality, etc.

It would be beyond the scope of this study to delve into multicultural education in Finland. Yet, since this study draws largely upon critical approaches to interculturality foregrounding an extended view of cultural diversity, it is relevant to mention that the underlying definition of cultural diversity has been rather a topical issue in the discussions of multicultural education in Finland. For example, certain critique has been voiced in relation to the fact that Finnish education policies on the “multicultural” are exclusively focused on immigration issues and international cooperation (Dervin, Paatela-Nieminen, Kuoppala, Riitaoja, 2012, p. 4). In a similar vein, Holm and Londen (2010), argue that multicultural education in Finland is based on a narrow definition of cultural diversity, encompassing only ethnicity, religion and language, while gender, social class, race, sexual orientation or disability are usually not part of the discussion (p. 117). Nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned that in the past few years Finland has been going through the curriculum reform, which has inevitably brought in new accents in the conceptualisation of many major issues.

In the following, a shift in focus brought about by the new curriculum in relation to the key concepts and the subject area of this study is discussed.
2.4.2. Comparative overview of the national curricular (2003, 2015)

The national core curriculum is an education policy document drawn up by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) and defining the objectives and the core contents of school subjects. It leaves certain flexibility to education providers responsible for adopting, within its framework, local curricular. There is a national core curriculum for each school level. In this study, the interest lies in general upper secondary education.

The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools 2003, hereinafter referred to as the NCC 2003, was renewed in 2015, and the local curricular based on the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools 2015, hereinafter referred to as the NCC 2015, came into effect in August 2016 (“General upper secondary… n.d.). Based on the assumption that a curriculum provides guidelines for textbook writers, the overview of the two curricular is considered instructive to do prior to the actual analysis of textbooks. In this respect, however, it should be noted that there is currently no state-regulated revision of textbooks in Finland. The responsibilities and authority previously held by the FNBE were transferred to publishing companies in the early 90s, and teachers are also free to choose among different textbooks (Mikander, 2016, p. 34). Although some experts admit the possibility that textbooks do not always reflect the principles set forth in the curriculum (e.g. Atjonen et al., 2008 as cited in ibid, p.34), textbook authors are often teachers or university lecturers themselves, and textbooks users generally tend to trust that textbooks are aligned with the curriculum (Dervin, Hahl, Niemi, & Johnson Longfor, 2015, p. 4).

Before looking closely at the provisions regarding the teaching of foreign languages, it is necessary to examine briefly how the key concepts of this study, namely diversity, culture and identity, are taken up in the sections on the underlying values of education, the general objectives of education and cross-curricular themes in both documents.

In the NCC 2003, one of the cross-curricular themes is defined as “Cultural identity and knowledge of cultures”, within which emphasis is placed on the role of upper secondary education in the reinforcement of students’ positive cultural identity and knowledge of cultures (p. 29). Although no definition of culture is provided, it is indicated that teaching and learning are to be underpinned by different interpretations of the concept of culture. Among the objectives are the appreciation of cultural diversity “as part of the richness of life and as a source of creativity”, the development of the students’ ability to “communicate diversely with people from
different cultural backgrounds”, and contributing to “the construction of a multicultural society based on mutual respect” (p. 30). Although this is the only part, at least in the generic content of the curriculum overviewed, where the term diversity is explicitly used, the issues around cultural and linguistic diversity are also brought up in the section on the provision of education for particular language and cultural groups, i.e. Sami, Roma, Finnish Sign Language and foreign-language students (pp. 20-23).

In the NCC 2015, the view of diversity as an integral part of the society and the school environment is significantly strengthened. From the outset, in the outline of the underlying values, an upper secondary school is described as “a community allowing people with diverse linguistic, worldview and religious backgrounds to recognise mutual values and principles for good life” (p. 13, italics added). The idea of diversity of languages, religions and worldviews is reinforced in the description of the themes guiding the development of the school culture (p. 17). Further, the diverse world of the experience of upper secondary school students, in which “different identities, languages, religions, and worldviews coexist and interact” (p. 38, italics added) is taken as a point of departure in approaching the cross-curricular theme “Knowledge of cultures and internationality”.

In general, it can be observed that while cultural and linguistic diversity are appreciated in both curricular, the new one appears to place a stronger emphasis on the individual in the understanding of diversity. Following the NCC 2003, yet with an important new detail, the NCC 2015 states that “human and cultural diversity are considered as a richness and a source of creativity” (NCC, 2015, p.13, italics added). As it was drawn attention to through citing the wording from the new curriculum, diversity there tends to be broken down into more aspects, encompassing also worldviews and identities. Furthermore, in the outline of the general objectives of education, gender and sexual diversity are for the first time brought up and seen as crucial to achieving instruction that is equality-conscious (NCC, 2015, p. 35).

One more aspect worth mentioning is that while both curricular attach a great deal of importance to taking action, the new curriculum foregrounds the agency across the local, national and global levels, and the concepts of global citizenship and global responsibility are introduced and referred to repeatedly. As for the provisions regulating the instruction in foreign languages, it is convenient first to go through the previous curriculum and then take a look at the changes and new emphases brought in by the new curriculum.
In the NCC 2003, the description of the general goal of the teaching of foreign languages starts with the development of *intercultural communication skills*, which includes the development of students’ “awareness, understanding and appreciation of *the culture within the area or community where the language in spoken*” (NCC, 2003, p. 102, italics added). As a subject area, foreign language teaching is recognised as practical, theoretical and cultural, and European identity, European multilingualism and multiculturalism are specifically mentioned (ibid, p. 102). The cultural component is further elaborated on in the outline of the objectives, one of which is learning “how to communicate in a manner characteristic of the target language and *its culture*” (ibid, p.12, italics added). Then, in the description of the courses, focus areas include increasing students’ awareness about cultural factors affecting communication as well as providing them with the opportunities to make comparisons by dealing with the main topics from “the perspective of Finland, *the cultural area of the language being studied* and, depending on the language and theme, also from *a broader perspective*” (ibid, pp. 102-103, italics added).

The curriculum also outlines syllabuses at different levels, depending on the length of the previous studies. The A syllabus, starting in grades 1-6 of basic education, includes six compulsory and two optional courses. Accordingly, a textbook series consists of eight textbooks, with each textbook intended for a particular course. Each course is built around one broad theme. Among the compulsory courses are, for example, “*Society and the surrounding world*”, dealing with topics related to societies in Finland and the target countries, and “*Culture*”, in which a broad perspective on culture is taken and cross-curricular themes “cultural identity and knowledge of cultures” and “active citizenship and entrepreneurship” are emphasised. One of the optional courses deals with topics related to different worldviews in a broader context of globalisation and internationalisation (pp. 104-105).

Moving on to the overview of how the teaching of foreign languages is envisaged in the new curriculum, first, it needs to be mentioned that overall, the goals and objectives of the instruction are discussed at a considerably greater length and, importantly, the instruction of the English language is specified separately. In the introductory part, there are no references to “intercultural communicative skills”, “target language and its culture” or “cultural area”. Instead, a number of new concepts are brought in: “multiliteracy”, “global citizenship”, “gender equality”, to name but a few. It is stated that the instruction is supposed to “strengthen the students’ desire and ability *to act in culturally, internationally and linguistically diverse* environments and contexts” (p. 114, italics added). This idea is repeated in the section on the objectives of instruction in foreign languages in general, one of which is to develop a student as “a user of the target
language and an *actor* in the culturally diverse world in *national, European, and global communities*” (p.119, italics added). From these excerpts, a few significant changes in focus can be noticed: first, unlike previously, the language being studied is not seen as linked to one particular culture, but as used in the context of cultural diversity; second, instead of communicating in the language, the notion of taking action is given preference, which implies a stronger idea of agency; finally, the global perspective becomes more visible in the instruction.

As for the provisions specifically relating to the teaching of English, the new curriculum recognises English as “the language of international communication” (NCC, 2015, p. 117). The same objective cited above regarding foreign languages in general applies also to the English instruction, but with adding the level of local communities. The structure of English syllabus (A) is almost identical to that for foreign languages in general, except for the aspects referring to the English language as such, and carries some similarities with the structure in the NCC 2003, however, with a number of notable differences. Given the focus of this study, it is important to note that in the NCC 2015, the first course, entitled “English and my world”, includes encouraging students “to reflect on the linguistic diversity of the world, English as a global phenomenon as well as language proficiency as a tool for increasing cultural competence” (NCC, 2015, p.117). Besides, in the outline of the course “Society and the surrounding world”, unlike previously, the generic term “societal phenomena” is used without mentioning Finland or the target countries.

At this juncture, it is necessary to summarise the main observations and link them up with the current debates in the field of language teaching examined earlier. As it is stipulated in the NCC 2003, the foreign language teaching has a strong intercultural component and is clearly positioned within the intercultural language teaching paradigm, with intercultural communicative competence foregrounded. Global-oriented perspectives and topics are given certain attention; however, the principal focus is placed on the so-called target countries. The new curriculum goes further, and its provisions essentially resonate with the ideas put forward by Byram (2008) regarding the role of foreign language teaching in encouraging students and preparing them for taking an active part in a globalised world. The new curriculum sets forth the objectives of the foreign language instruction in connection with fostering students’ understanding and competencies of global citizenship.

Overall, the comparative overview of the two curricular points to a significant shift in focus: the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching is no longer understood as preparing students for
successful communication with the native speakers seen as carriers of a particular culture associated with this language, but acting across the local, national and global levels through the medium of this language. The problematic concept of the target language culture is not any more explicitly used. Instead, the idea of cultural and linguistic diversity as an integral part of society is brought to the fore, which, in combination with references to global citizenship, allows to conclude that within the currently implemented curriculum frameworks, the foreign language teaching in Finland appears to adopt what Risager (2007, 2016) refers to as a *transnational perspective in language teaching*. As far as the teaching of the English language is concerned, the transnational perspective is in particular visible in recognising English as the language of international communication.

The discussion in this chapter has been first and foremost built with the aim to position this research within the current debates about the understanding of culture, and consequently cultural diversity, and the overarching goals of foreign language teaching as well as to demonstrate the importance of the inclusive treatment of diversity in language textbooks. Conceptual and theoretical standpoints have been presented considering also their strong bearing on methodology, and some of the epistemological assumptions have been implicitly touched upon. Overall, although in this chapter the language textbook analysis has been discussed, it was done mostly in view of its research focus. In the following chapter, it is directly dealt with as a process, and methodological aspects of the study are in detail presented.
3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology adopted in this study. It consists of two sub-chapters: the first one discusses the main methodological decisions as being influenced by the stances taken on ontology and epistemology, prevailing methods in the given research area as well as the understanding of the research problem; the second one presents the textbooks chosen for this study and outlines that main stages of the analysis.

3.1. Research approach: philosophical underpinnings and methodological issues

This sub-chapter starts with the outline of the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions. Then, both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches in textbook research are briefly presented with a specific interest in prevailing methods in foreign language textbook analysis. Finally, a social constructionist thematic analysis is presented and justified as the method of analysis chosen for this study.

3.1.1. Ontological and epistemological assumptions

In the process of textbook analysis, researchers are faced with a number of questions such as what is to be considered important in and across texts, whether the wider socio-cultural context is to be included in the interpretation of the findings and, on the whole, how they as researchers are related to the textbooks being studied. The answers to these questions are largely influenced by ontological and epistemological perspectives that researchers bring to their studies (Nicholls, 2005, p. 24). It is necessary to clarify the difference: while ontology is the study of being and existence in the world, epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge (Burr, 2015, p. 104). Consequently, ontological assumptions refer to the nature of social reality – what kinds of things exist or can exist, the conditions of their existence and the relationships among these things, - and on the level of epistemology, the assumptions are made about what kinds of knowledge are possible and what are the criteria for the justification of knowledge (Blaikie, 2009, p. 92).

As far as ontological assumptions are concerned, this study takes a critical realist ontological perspective. The two main points need to be discussed. First, critical realists retain a realist ontological stance, i.e. there is an external reality that exists regardless of observers’ beliefs and understanding about it (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 11). Second, however, the crucial point
distinguishing critical realism from other threads of realism is its criticality, which is succinctly summarised by Scott (2005):

Critical realism is critical then because any attempts at describing and explaining the world are bound to be fallible, and also because those ways of ordering the world, its categorisations and the relationships between them, cannot be justified in any absolute sense, and are always open to critique and their replacement by a different set of categories and relationships. (p. 635)

What can be drawn from this excerpt, then, is that the critical dimension of this ontological framework moves the discussion to the epistemological level: while holding a belief that some objects, including social objects, can exist independently of people’s understanding about them, critical realists make no claims to uncovering an absolute knowledge of the reality, arguing instead that multiple interpretations of the reality are possible, with any of them left open to refutation. In other words, along with ontological realism, the core principles of critical realism include *epistemological relativism*, which implies that there cannot be an absolute knowledge and all knowledge is humanly produced (Moore, 2013, p. 344).

The principle of epistemological relativism provides a certain intersection between critical realism and *social constructionism*. The compatibility of the two may raise certain questions as social constructionism has more often been associated with an anti-realist ontology (Elder-Vass, 2012, p. 9). In this study, the understanding of social constructionism has two crucial points: first, it is distinguished from *constructivism*, which has a more individual focus and is more interested in cognitive processes (Andrews, 2012, p. 39); second, crucially, it is seen as providing an epistemological not an ontological perspective. Andrews (2012) argues that social constructionism, as discussed in the foundational work by Berger and Luckman (1966), confines itself to the social construction of knowledge and does not make ontological claims (p. 42). It would be more appropriate, then, to state that social constructionism, at least some of its varieties, accepts that there is an objective reality; being a realist is therefore not inconsistent with being a constructionist (ibid, p. 44).

Describing the *social constructionist epistemology* underpinning this study, a list of key assumptions suggested by Burr (2015) is taken as a point of departure. Burr (2015) states that, loosely speaking, taking a social constructionist approach implies grounding on one or more of the following assumptions:
1) A critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge;
2) Historical and cultural specificity;
3) Knowledge is sustained by social processes;
4) Knowledge and social action go together. (Burr, 2015, pp. 2-5)

First, social constructionism challenges the view that knowledge is a product of unbiased observation of the world and instead brings to the fore the idea that concepts and categories by means of which people build their understanding of the world do not necessarily correspond to real divisions, thereby justifying the multiplicity of possible accounts of social phenomena (ibid, p. 3). Second, one needs to see those concepts and categories as historically and culturally specific and dependent on the socio-economic conditions found in particular cultures at a particular time. Importantly, the forms of knowledge prevailing in some cultures are not seen as “better” than those from other cultures in terms of being closer to the reality (ibid, p. 4). Bearing these two assumptions in mind, it is necessary to explicitly acknowledge that the interpretation of representations in textbooks offered in this study is only one of many possible interpretations, and also that its findings are influenced by the value-laden assumptions the researcher inevitably brings to the analysis due to her worldview/cultural background.

Elaborating on the third assumption, Burr (2015) highlights the importance social constructionists attach to social interaction of all kinds, particularly language (p. 4). Berger and Luckman (1966) argue that “symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of everyday life and of the common-sense apprehension of this reality” (p. 55). Overall, language, discourse and/or culture are attributed a crucial role in the construction of knowledge (Elder-Vass, 2012, p. 10). In other words, the “reflexivity” of language (Gee, 1999, p.82), meaning the quality of language to both reflect and contribute to the construction of reality, which was referred to when discussing the view of the textbook as a non-neutral medium in section 2.3.1, can be seen as one of the central aspects of the social constructionist epistemology. Therefore, within the social constructionist framework, an individual’s identity is seen as stemming from the social realm rather than from the individual, as it is constructed out of the discourses which the individual is exposed to (Burr, 2015, p. 123). Burr (2015) specifies that a person’s identity is in fact constituted “by a subtle interweaving of many different threads” (ibid, p. 123). What is meant here by “threads” was previously referred to as various social categories around which identity is framed, such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. For each of these components there is a certain number of discourses operating in the given society
and, as Burr (2015) concludes, people are “the end product, the combination, of the particular
versions of these things [discourses] that are available to us” (p. 124).

Finally, social constructionism acknowledges that different social constructions may bring with
them different kinds of action and therefore sees such constructions as inextricably linked with
power relations in society (ibid, p. 5). In viewing knowledge as a means by which power is
exercised, social constructionism draws on postmodernism (Potter, 2006, p. 81).

The postmodernist perspective, presented in section 2.1.1, guides the understanding of the key
concepts in this study. Postmodernism as such, according to one of the widely-shared
interpretations, can be defined as “a broad program of questioning received knowledge, or
naturalized discursive formations and ideologies, particularly where they can be seen as working
to create and maintain unequal access to social goods in and across societies” (Lyotard, 1977;
Pennycook, 1998 as cited in Atkinson, 1999, p. 631). In other words, postmodernism is primarily
cconcerned with the legitimation of knowledge and sees it in a context of unequal power relations.
Discussing the implications of various philosophical orientations for textbook research, Nicholls
(2005) argues that within the postmodernist framework, emphasis tends to be placed on the
differences that have been largely unrecognised and the multiplicity of voices and identities
comprising the reality expressed in the textbook (p. 28). “Postmodernist” textbook researchers
are likely to argue that diversity and difference need to be appreciated in textbooks as well as
emphasise the unlimited number of possible interpretations (ibid, p. 28). This statement
essentially summarises the main rationale behind this study. However, Nicholls (2005) also
points out that this philosophical perspective is fraught with certain problems: an overemphasis
on difference entails that everything is located relatively, and consequently it becomes
impossible to identify “sophisticated analysis from vulgar, or the difference between various
perspectives if the only means of differentiation is the concept of ‘difference’” (p.29).

At this juncture, it is necessary to discuss further the integration of the social constructionist
epistemological perspective with the critical realist ontological perspective. Elder-Vass (2012)
argues not only for the compatibility of the two but claims that the so-called “realist social
constructionism” is more coherent and potentially more valuable than the constructionism
underpinned by an anti-realist ontology (p. 20). It is argued that the latter essentially undermines
the critical potential of constructionism by failing to provide grounds for making judgements
between alternative constructions (Elder-Vass, 2012, p. 9).
Conversely, within the critical realist frame of understanding, “the undeniable subjectivity of vision does not preclude objective standards of representational accuracy” (Hassan, 2003, p. 6 as cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 56). This statement appears to capture quite precisely the logic behind the proceeding of the analysis in this study: exploring representations of diversity in textbooks is seen as inevitably entailing an element of judgement allowing to conclude that some representations are considered as more or less “accurate”, while others are demeaning those represented, or rather, misrepresented. In such a way, the problematic implications of the postmodernist framework, mentioned earlier, seem to be less relevant for this study.

Having discussed the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this study, it is necessary to proceed to the methodological approach chosen.

3.1.2. Methodological approaches in (foreign language) textbook research

The studies included into the review of previous research employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. Pingel (2010) outlines the main strengths of these two generic approaches in textbook research: quantitative techniques are highly valuable for understanding where the focus is placed in the textbook content and what may be the selection criteria, while qualitative techniques reveal the underlying assumptions that cannot be measured and rely more on the researcher’s values and interpretations. Whereas being more suited for different research purposes, quantitative and qualitative methods should be seen not as mutually exclusive but rather as complementing each other (pp. 67-68).

The choice of methodological approach is influenced by the philosophical worldview and the research problem, among other aspects (Creswell, 2009, p. 18). Returning to the philosophical underpinnings discussed earlier, it is necessary to point out that the adoption of a constructionist epistemology tends to entail choosing a qualitative methodological approach (Creswell, 2009, p. 16). A critical realist perspective, however, with varieties in interpretations, is not seen as linked to any specific method (Mueller, 2014, p. 148), and some scholars regard it as the positioning providing the rationale for the use of mixed methods (Scott, 2007, p. 3). In this study, with the recognition that quantitative techniques could have given some additional insights, the research problem is mainly understood in such a way that a qualitative methodological approach is considered to be more appropriately suited. As it was emphasised earlier, the analysis of representations of diversity in textbooks is understood not only as checking for the “visibility” of certain groups but also looking at the details of their portrayal. Also, to examine how diversity-
related issues may be explicitly covered and what other implicit messages in relation to diversity may textbooks contain, qualitative techniques are arguably more suited.

There is a large number of qualitative methods employed in studies on textbooks from different subject areas (Pingel, 2010). Overall, from the methodological point of view, textbook research is quite a fragmented field, and many researchers develop their own analytical instruments. Getting back to Sleeter and Grant’s (1991) study, it is interesting to note that their analytical framework consists of six different analyses encompassing both quantitative and qualitative techniques: picture analyses, anthology analysis, “people to study” analysis, language analysis, story-line analysis, and miscellaneous. For example, the story-line analysis, applied primarily to the social studies textbooks, focuses on identifying which groups tend to receive the most sustained attention, which groups are portrayed as solving and, on the opposite, causing problems, while the “people to study” analysis, applied to the textbooks from different subject areas, is quantitative and entails tallying the race and the sex of each individual mentioned in the text (Sleeter & Grant, 1991, p. 82).

It is important to take a look specifically at the methods used in language textbook analysis. To do so, the article by Weninger and Kiss (2015) is very insightful since the scholars provide a critical overview of methods and trends in the analysis of cultural content of foreign/second language textbooks. Importantly, the definition of culture underpinning their overview is taken broadly. Weninger and Kiss (2015) argue that despite the “methodological eclecticism” characterising research in this area, three general methodological approaches can be identified: content analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and semiotic analysis (p. 53). For the purposes of this study, the first two merit a closer look.

Content analysis is quite a generic method, and there are varieties in the ways it has been used in studies on foreign language textbooks. Based on how the textual and visual content is unitised and coded, Weninger and Kiss (2015) identify a number of sub-types within the studies claiming to employ content analysis. First, some studies rely on existing categories, e.g. nationality, in approaching the coding: all the identified references are counted and based on the relative frequency, conclusions are made about over-representation or under-representation of certain national groups. Second, some researchers utilise a combination of categories and themes. The study on EFL textbooks in Finland, referred to earlier, appears to fall within this subtype. Lamponen (2012) claims to use “theoretically directed content analysis”, as she uses a combined version of criteria for evaluating cultural content of language textbooks offered by prominent
scho
lars in the field (p. 42). Third, Weninger and Kiss (2015) give an example of studies in
which, first, the text was coded based on the category of nationality and then all the identified
references were approached with theme analysis so that emerging patterns were grouped into
descriptive thematic categories (pp. 54-55).

Criticality is a common feature for content analysis and CDA, however, the latter takes it as an
overarching framework (ibid, p. 58). The rationale behind CDA studies tends to be linked with a
certain social issue, e.g. marginalisation of socio-cultural groups, and the need to understand the
role of discourses in creating, maintaining and potentially resolving this issue. The underlying
definition of discourse is typically as follows: “language use that shapes and is shaped by social
practices and larger political and ideological structures within it operates” (ibid, p. 56). Weninger
and Kiss (2015) point out that the explicit-CDA orientation may benefit studies on second
language textbooks more than studies on foreign language textbooks due to the immediate
exposure of second language learners to the reality expressed in the materials (ibid, p. 58).

Finally, it is concluded that foreign language textbook analysis is quite a fragmented area, mostly
due to multiple research foci and the influence of various academic fields; therefore, many
researchers tend to design their own categories, themes and procedures (ibid, p. 61). Another
concluding remark made, which basically relates to the idea running throughout this study, is the
necessity to revisit the underlying definition of culture. Weninger and Kiss (2015) note that the
coding of textbook content based on representations of particular countries reinforces the narrow
view of culture primarily as “national culture” and therefore leaves many other representations
with cultural connotations out of focus (p. 62). It is argued that textbook studies should take up
more widely a trend already visible in the field of language education in relation to the
broadening of the concept of culture. Recognising the continuing importance of ethno-national
understandings of culture, Weninger and Kiss (2015) question the capacity of ethno-national
categories alone to capture “the multifaceted nature of global, local and hybrid cultural flows”
(p. 62).

Both qualitative content analysis and non-linguistic types of discourse analysis have been
considered as possible methods for this study. However, considering all the factors influencing
the choice of the method, a social constructionist thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and
Clarke (2006), which has a lot of overlaps with the two aforementioned methods, was eventually
chosen. In the following section, the method will be presented and justified as appropriately
suited for the purposes of this study.
3.1.3. Social constructionist thematic analysis

Thematic analysis can be defined as a “method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”, which also often involves interpreting various aspects of the research problem (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that it is a vastly unrecognised, “very poorly ‘branded’”, method (p. 6), as it is often not explicitly claimed as the method of analysis; however, a lot of analysis is essentially thematic, even though being claimed as something else. Proceeding from the central argument that thematic analysis should be regarded as a method on its own, the scholars try to demarcate it from closely related methods involving coding and themes development. It should be noted that when proposing the method, Braun and Clarke (2006) primarily refer to interview data in psychologist research, but they also point out that thematic analysis can be applied to any qualitative data and used in fields other than psychology.

The core characteristic of this method is its flexibility, which enables its use across a range of theoretical and epistemological positions (ibid, p. 5). However, this flexibility requires researchers claiming to use thematic analysis to be clear about the decisions made and procedures undertaken. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that “thematic analysis” in fact refers to a range of analyses, depending on how researchers position themselves in relation to a number of methodological decisions.

First, as this method can be applied in studies underpinned by different epistemological assumptions, it is necessary to distinguish between realist/essentialist and constructionist thematic analyses (p. 15). Epistemologically, the present study takes a social constructionist perspective. Therefore, the method chosen is to be specified more appropriately as a social constructionist thematic analysis. Consequently, the meanings and “realities” examined are regarded as being shaped by discourses operating in society (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 9).

Second, thematic analysis can be used to arrive at either an overall description of the entire data set or a more detailed account of one or a number of particular themes within the data collected. The analysis of textbooks in this research is carried out with an eye to a particular area of interest, hence detailed thematic analysis (ibid, p.11).

Third, a decision needs to be made concerning the level at which themes are to be identified: at a semantic or more explicit, or at a latent or more interpretative level (ibid, p. 13). In this study,
the analytical process includes themes identified at an explicit level but also involves further moving to a latent level in examining the underlying ideas that may inform what is observed at the explicit level. In such a way, the development of themes involves interpretative work and goes further than a description. It is worth mentioning that constructionist thematic analysis carried out at this level essentially overlaps with some forms of discourse analysis (ibid, p.13).

Finally, *inductive* and *deductive/theoretical* thematic analyses can be distinguished. The former implies that the researcher does not have any pre-existing coding frame and a specific research question can evolve during the coding process; the latter, on the opposite, is driven by the researcher’s theoretical interest in the area and the coding is carried out purposefully for quite a specific research question (ibid, p.12). Discussing the logic of enquiry specifically in relation to textbook analysis, Pingel (2010) points out that a deductive approach presupposes establishing a certain set of external categories, often derived from the academic understanding of the topic, and to which the textbook content is expected to respond. Conversely, an inductive approach is used for uncovering patterns of understanding or worldviews underlying the selection of the contents, among other aspects (ibid, p.70). In this study, the two approaches are not regarded as mutually exclusive and their certain combination is seen to be more appropriately suited to achieve the research aim. While the researcher has certain theoretical preconceptions and pre-identified categories sharpening the coding, the development of themes and generally the understanding of what is relevant to answering the research questions was kept open and largely data-driven from the first stages of the analysis. The analytical process in this study will be discussed at a greater length in the concluding section of this chapter, with a direct reference to a six-phase guide to doing thematic analysis offered by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Having presented thematic analysis as a distinct method of analysis, it is necessary to explain why this particular method was chosen for this study. First, thematic analysis, or to be more precise, a social constructionist thematic analysis, is consistent with the epistemological perspective taken in this research and the way the research problem is understood. It is a qualitative method which, on the one hand, enables a well-organised presentation of easily observed trends in the textbook content and, on the other hand, can be also used for uncovering implicit messages and reflecting on potential underlying values. Social constructionist thematic analysis recognises the constitutive role of language, however, unlike textually-oriented types of discourse analysis, it does not involve the examination of the language use, which is not considered central to answering the research questions of this study. Second, as it was mentioned in the previous section, textbook analysts often need to tailor methods to their research
questions and often develop their own analytical instruments. In this respect, thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), appears to provide well-defined, albeit flexible, methodological frameworks, which enable looking at a number of specific research questions but in a “broader picture”. Third, this method is considered to be a more accessible method for novice researchers, as it provides a well-defined set of analytical procedures (this will be discussed at a later point in this chapter). Finally, given quite a large amount of data, 11 textbooks, thematic analysis was taken as a more feasible method of analysis.

To summarise, this study is underpinned by a critical realist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology. The methodological approach chosen is the qualitative one, as it is considered to be more consistent with the ontological and epistemological premises as well as the understanding of the research problem. The concrete method of data analysis is a social constructionist thematic analysis.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

In this sub-chapter, two textbook series chosen for the analysis are presented and the main stages of the analytical process are outlined.

3.2.1. Textbooks chosen for the study

Given the two-fold research aim, the data collected for this study consists of two samples of textbooks that are currently used in Finnish general upper secondary schools (lukios) for teaching the English language. Textbook series Open Road and Insights were chosen as representing textbooks that have been used for an extensive period of time and textbooks that were recently introduced in view of the renewed curriculum respectively. Both textbook series are published by the same publishing house, and their author teams have two authors in common.

As it was already mentioned, the English language syllabus consists of eight courses and a textbook series consists of eight textbooks accordingly, with each textbook intended for a particular course. In this study, all the eight textbooks of the series Open Road (1-8) are included in the analysis. In accordance with the national curriculum guidelines, each course is built upon a number of topics: for example, Open Road 1 discusses young people’s identities, family and relationships; Open Road 4’s main topics include active citizenship, human rights, migration, equality, religion and society from the Finnish perspective; Open Road 5 mainly addresses topics
of culture, communication and media in a versatile manner; Open Road 7 presents current global phenomena and sustainable development from multiple perspectives (Open Road, n.d.). Apart from the textbooks, audio recordings intended for the student’s use and available for download are also included in the study.

As for the structure of each textbook, all the textbooks generally consist of nine main texts accompanied by a number of various exercises and activities. The main chapters are followed by three specific sections: the Travel Guide section gives students numerous tips on how to succeed in learning and communicating in different situations; the Highway Code section contains the grammar part of each course and pronunciation exercises; the Service station offers extra exercises to practice the vocabulary from the main chapters. In this study, the main chapters, including exercises and activities, both in English and Finnish, and Travel Guides are included in the analysis as well as the illustrations in the selected sections.

The series Open Road was chosen for this study mainly because it is one of the most widely used English language textbook series in Finland. However, as the search through the websites of numerous lukios all over Finland showed, only the textbooks intended for courses 4-8 appeared to be included in the lists of textbooks recommended for the school year 2016/2017. Open Road, like other series developed under the previous curriculum, are being gradually replaced by textbook series recently launched in view of the renewed curriculum, and it is recommended courses 1-3 be based on the new textbooks already available.

The series Insights is one of the recently launched textbook series. As of December 2016, only the first three textbooks of the series have been published, and all of them are included in the analysis. Like the Open Road series, the Insights series is built upon a specific set of themes: Insights 1 introduces the main topics such as young people’s life, studies, family, Finnishness and localities, English as a global language; Insights 2 discusses primarily hobbies and free time, interaction online, physical and psychological wellbeing and life management; Insights 3 is centred on different cultural phenomena: in the literature, theatrical plays, poetry, visual arts, music, local and international traditions (Insights ja Opetussuunnitelman perusteet, n.d.). The textbook structure is generally made up of eight main texts, which are also accompanied by a number of activities and exercises. It should be noted that like in the Open Road textbooks, the main texts are authentic texts, e.g. abridged magazine and newspaper articles, excerpts from novels, interviews, etc. The subsequent sections are Vocabulary Revision and A/B Activities for B, which offer extra exercises to revise the content of the main chapters, Learning to learn,
essentially resembling the Travel Guide section from the Open Road series, and Grammar. For the analysis, the main chapters, the Learning to Learn sections, their illustrative content as well as audio recordings were chosen.

In the following section, the main stages in the proceeding of the analysis are presented.

3.2.2. Data analysis: stages

Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise that the guidelines they provide for conducting a thematic analysis need to be followed flexibly, depending on the research questions and data. Accordingly, the given guidelines have been to a certain extent modified in this study. The scholars summarise six main stages, however, drawing attention to the fact that the analytical process is more recursive than linear (p.16).

First, it is necessary to clarify the following terms: data corpus, data set, data item and data excerpt (ibid, pp. 5-6). Data corpus is all the data collected for a particular study. Accordingly, data corpus of this research is 11 textbooks from the two series Open Road (1-8) and Insights (1-3) and audio recordings intended for the students’ use from both series. Data set means all the data from the corpus that is being used for a particular analysis. Accordingly, there are two data sets in this study, with each comprised of data items such as the main texts, accompanied activities, exercises, including some of them on listening, pictures and the subsequent selected sections, as clarified earlier. Finally, data excerpt refers to an individual coded piece of data, which has been identified and extracted from a data item.

In the first phase, the familiarisation with the data, researchers “immerse” themselves in the data in a sense that they actively read through the entire data set, seeking for meanings and observing noticeable patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 16.). In this analysis, when reading through the main texts, a particular attention, where applicable, was paid to the individuals portrayed, and their identifiable socio-cultural identities were jotted down. Also, excerpts in which issues relevant to the research focus, e.g. immigration, are explicitly touched upon were marked. Vocabulary and grammar exercises, representing miniature stories, were read through likewise. However, from the beginning, it was noticed that textbooks from both series are structured in the way that a great importance is attached to active learning of the students. This could be observed through numerous questions for discussions, topics for written tasks, projects, games, role-plays and other activities. Therefore, it appeared to be relevant for further interpretative analysis to
divide data items roughly into two groups: textual content as narratives and representations, and activities and tasks as guiding or framing the discussion and learning about diversity. Following the structure of the textbooks, audio recordings were listened to, with snippets appearing relevant transcribed and notes made about accents. Pictures were also checked for the possible related messages contained.

The second stage involves generating initial codes to identify important features of the data set found to be relevant to the research question(s). Coming from theoretical understanding of the key concepts, a number of pre-selected categories, e.g. disability, sexuality, immigrant background, were used; however, the coding was not fitted into a completely pre-figured set of categories. References to the Finnish context, implying its diversity, were coded separately. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that an individual extract can be seen as relating to different potential themes (p. 19). Similarly, in this analysis, a great number of passages were coded with more than one categorisation.

In the subsequent stages of searching for themes and reviewing themes, the analysis moves to a broader level and the relevant coded extracts are collated within the identified themes (ibid, p. 19). The guiding principles at these stages include internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity, which imply that data within themes coheres together in a meaningful way, while themes are clearly distinct from each other (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 20). In this analysis, it came rather challenging to avoid excessive overlapping among the themes since many extracts appeared to illustrate different tentative themes, depending on the angle taken. Considering the extended view of the concept of diversity, guiding this research, and a number of specific research questions, a relatively large number of themes were identified.

At the stage of defining and naming themes, a detailed analysis is carried out for each individual theme, with a specific interest in the “story” the theme tells as well as how it fits into the broader overall “story” told by the entire data set in relation to the research question(s) (ibid, p. 22). In order to capture both explicit and implicit perspectives included in the textbook content, the themes, in their final form, were mostly identified at a semantic level; however, defining the essence of each theme involved moving to a more latent level and reflecting on the possible underlying assumptions and implications for learning.
Finally, *producing the report*, involves a write-up of the analysis: themes identified need to be sufficiently substantiated by data extracts and the analytical narrative generally should go beyond the level of description (ibid, p. 22).

The following two chapters essentially represent this final stage of the analysis.
4. TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS: FINDINGS

This chapter introduces a summary of the themes identified in Open Road and Insights textbook series and accordingly consists of two sub-chapters.

4.1. Textbook series Open Road (1-8)

The themes cover a wide range of aspects of diversity, namely nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, social class, disability and sexual orientation. References pointing to diversity in Finnish society are treated as a distinct theme. The theme of varieties of English and, more broadly, diversity of English speakers, informed by the view of English as an international language, concludes this sub-chapter.

4.1.1. Internationalisation of everyday life and migration-related diversity

Immigration as such is mentioned as one of the course themes in Open Road 4. In the introductory activity, it is stated that today “many people move from one country to another because of studies, work, a relationship or because they find themselves in dire straits” (Open Road 4, p. 8). However, a broader theme of diversity brought about by international flows of migration was found to be one of the running themes throughout the entire series. The theme revolves around the idea that as a result of increased migration across national borders people, even those staying in their countries, are significantly more exposed to international experiences and get continuously into contact with people from foreign cultures in different aspects of everyday life. To see the development of this rather broad theme, its underlying assumptions and possible implications for learning, it is convenient to look separately at the sub-themes of internationalisation of everyday life and experiences of migrants.

4.1.1.1. Internationalisation of everyday life

Going abroad during studies as a valuable experience is repeatedly touched upon in some of the textbooks. In Open Road 1, for example, one of the main texts, titled “So Much to Gain”, is based on stories of American young adults about their exchange studies. One of the central ideas around which the discussion is going on is understanding and learning from other cultures. While being on exchange, one of the students came to understand how much there is to learn from visiting different places and from “simple conversation or interaction with someone with
different views and cultural norms” and developed a great interest in “studying people and
different cultures” (Open Road 1, p. 15). A similar idea is brought up in the interview with a
Finnish teen, who is a member of the Finnish national wushu squad. He describes his experience
in China as eye-opening and concludes that “it’s fantastic to be in a culture where everything is
so new and different” (Open Road 2, p. 63). A number of other texts also show young people
during their studies abroad or short-term overseas work experience, e.g. an Australian student on
exchange at a Finnish school (Open Road 3, pp. 30-31) or a student during her gap year in China,
where she along with studying Mandarin at a university with a great number of other
international students, also gives private English lessons to local Chinese children (Open Road 3,
p. 65-66). Besides, the textbooks offer a number of activities in which the students are supposed
to act out or write about certain situations, for example, during their imaginary exchange studies
in Britain (Open Road 8, p. 72) or everyday life situations involving a visit from exchange
students and foreign friends (e.g. Open Road 2, p. 101). Also, they are asked if they have ever
considered studying or working abroad (Open Road 3, p. 53).

Thus, it can be noticed that one of the central assumptions upon which this theme appears to be
developed is the idea of learning from cultural differences. The students are implicitly
encouraged to appreciate cultural differences and think of them more as a great source for
learning rather than a barrier to communication. By portraying the educational context and
personal networks as significantly influenced by the processes of internationalisation, foreign
cultures are to a certain extent made as an integral part of the students’ everyday life. This also
can be seen as having certain implications for the language learning since the students are
encouraged to use the language in different situations. It also should be noted that within this
theme, “culture” is primarily understood as national culture.

4.1.1.2. Experiences of migrants

The main reading passage introducing the course theme immigration in Open Road 4 is based on
an interview with Wilson Kirwa, a Finnish athlete of Kenyan origin (pp. 9-11). Apart from the
sporting career, he is known for his children’s books, in which he modified the stories of his
childhood to suit Finnish children. When asked about why he decided to get involved in local
politics, Kirwa points out: “I wish to have the chance to take a more public stand for the things I
believe in and things that are important to me, like tolerance of other people and different
cultures” (Open Road 4, p. 10). It is also mentioned in the text that the athlete visits schools and
kindergartens, where he tells African stories, while in his speeches for the adult audiences, he
talks about his life as an immigrant. Thus, Kirwa’s experiences as an immigrant in Finland can be on the whole viewed as an example of successful integration: he is an active member of society, aspiring to contribute to the prosperous development of the country, and also sharing his cultural background within the local communities.

The challenges and alienation which immigrants may face in a new country are also touched upon. One of the questions suggested for discussion in relation to migration brings up the issue of “fitting in”: the students are invited to think of how they can help those who feel like outsiders and also of what people in such situations can do themselves (Open Road 4, p. 8). The immigration on the grounds of seeking asylum and the hardships facing many immigrants of this category are also presented. In Open Road 6, there is an excerpt from a story about a sixteen-year-old Nigerian girl seeking asylum in the UK (pp. 9-10). The girl is locked up at an immigration detention centre and waiting for the permission to enter the country. The overall situation makes her wish that she was a British pound coin rather than an African girl: “A pound is free to travel to safety…A girl like me gets stopped at immigration” (p. 10). In Open Road 8, another excerpt from the same story is included: the girl is shown in her first minutes in freedom after she has been granted the permission. She is overwhelmed by the fresh air, somewhat paralysed and scared; she is feeling like “neither a woman nor a girl, a creature who had forgotten her language and learned yours, whose past had crumbed to dust” (p. 95). After the text, the students are offered to take on the roles of this girl and another refugee girl and make a dialogue in which they discuss their lives in a while afterwards. The points to cover in the conversation mostly refer to positive experiences, but sharing some negative experiences and minor drawbacks is also suggested (p. 97).

Another text, lyrics “England, half English” (Open Road 4, p. 18), although not clearly portraying any individual of immigrant background, is also worth mentioning. The main idea conveyed in the lyrics is that the things traditionally associated with English culture have been in fact developed under the influence of the processes of immigration over centuries. The author points out that he is, in essence, “a great big bundle of culture tied up in the red, white and blue”; he is half-English and so is his mother, his neighbours and Britannia itself (Open Road 4, p. 18). Also, a note should be made the picture accompanying the text shows a non-white man lying on the grass.

In a number of activities, the students are asked to reflect on the issues relating to immigration; for example, to describe the immigration policy they would implement (Open Road 6, p. 15), or
to express their opinions on statements such as “It is perfectly okay for Africans to immigrate to Europe in search of a better life” or “Immigrants should be taught in their own language”. (Open Road 8, p. 99). One of the suggested written tasks, “The Best of Both Worlds”, concerns the fact that many people nowadays have parents that are of different nationalities, and the students are offered to write about how people can benefit from that and what is life in general like for someone who has had to move to a new country (Open Road 4, p. 122).

It needs to be noted, however, that migration-related diversity will be further discussed again more specifically in relation to the Finnish context. Yet, one excerpt relating to Finland has been included in this, broader, theme and looked at more in terms of how it conveys a general image of an immigrant constructed in the textbooks. The selection of the text depicting an immigrant as actively contributing to the society and the text and questions for discussion offering certain rethinking of the boundaries often perceived to exist between the majority society and immigrants clearly contribute to the overall positive narrative on immigration. Despite a greater emphasis on the positive examples of immigration, challenges inherent in moving to a new country, especially affecting certain categories of immigrants, are not completely neglected. Through some of the activities, the discussion on immigration is framed in such a way that the students are given a chance to put themselves in immigrants’ shoes and also express their views on some debatable issues regarding immigration.

4.1.2. Ethnic groups and racial diversity

While in the previous theme the focus is on the diversity caused by cross-national mobility and primarily understood in terms of nationality, this theme is centred on ethnic groups, including indigenous population, and also, more broadly, on how racial diversity is presented in illustrations.

The distinction between nationality and ethnicity is directly mentioned in one of the textbooks: in recommendations on the language use, the students are warned against the wrong assumption that all the people living in one country belong to one ethnic group (Open Road 4, p. 117). Then, in another textbook, there is activity “Ethnicity as a Positive Force”, where the students are asked to prepare a presentation on one of the topics from the list, including various types of ethnic music, dishes, sport events, clothing from different parts of the world. Furthermore, among the options there is a search on the Internet for ethnic and minority writers (Open Road 8, p. 100). References to indigenous groups were found in an excerpt about Australia: the influence of
Aboriginal languages on English is mentioned, and it is also pointed out that although bilingual education has helped to preserve Aboriginal languages in some communities, in most cases people have come to terms with teaching provided at schools only in English (Open Road 3, p. 30). Among the tasks following the text, there is an option to search the Internet for the words “Aboriginal culture” and present some of the findings in the class. Also, in the recommendations on the language use, Native Americans are mentioned; in particular, it is noted that the term “Indians” have become outdated and more specific terms like “Hopi” or “Navajo” are more preferable (Open Road 4, p. 117).

The idea of multiracial make-up of the society is directly brought up in the exercise about the population structure in one of the counties in New York State: the proportions of racial groups such as non-Hispanic white, African-Americans, Asians and Hispanic are given (Open Road 4, p. 48). However, it appeared to be of greater importance to examine the illustrations in terms of how they may reinforce or, on the opposite, fail to convey the idea of racial diversity. It needs to be clarified that the focus of the examination of the illustrations was narrowed down: the intention was to see whether the representatives of various racial groups, are visible in the illustrations, in particular, those that accompany texts on everyday life topics, e.g. family, education, rather than texts directly referring to certain countries or international topics. A few notes can be made. First, multiracial educational settings can be noticed at times. For example, in one of the illustrations put next to a text on education in the UK, there are black schoolgirls sitting at a desk and also two brown-skinned girls in hijabs can be spotted in the background (Open Road 7, p. 56). Second, some of the texts and exercises relating to everyday life situations, e.g. applying for a job or looking for a flat, are accompanied with multiracial illustrations. For example, in the exercise where the students are playing a role of a landlord, among the potential tenants there are clearly representatives of different racial groups (Open Road 1, p. 52). Third, a few illustrations were found to point to multiracial families and friendship (e.g. Open Road 4, p. 35).

Thus, it can be summarised that some ethnic minorities are mentioned in the texts as well as the students are encouraged to get to know about a wide range of ethnic groups through independent learning. The idea of multiracial society as such can be seen as one of the underlying ideas in the selection of the illustrative content of the textbooks; however, the extent to which different racial groups are represented is open for discussion.

4.1.3. Diversity in gender representations
During the analysis, it was found to be relevant to narrow down the examination of gender representations in the textbooks to the following two aspects: a variety of socio-economic activities in which women are portrayed in texts, and tasks and activities in which the students’ attention is directly drawn to gender equality-related issues.

First, it can be summarised that the portrayal of women is not confined to the areas that are often traditionally labelled as “female”, e.g. domestic area. There are, for example, women who are shown to be bad housekeepers focused more on career (Open Road 1, p. 65) and women taking a strong stance on acute social issues and involved in politics (e.g. Open Road 4, p. 30). In the text about human trafficking, the main individual shown to be fighting against it is a young woman from Moldova, who works in an international organisation and helps other women to escape from sex slavery (Open Road 4, pp. 98-99). Among public figures speaking on topical issues, a Zambian-born economic specialist, Dombisa Moyo, known for her critical stance on the development aid, is taken as an example (Open Road 8, p. 108). (Open Road 8, p. 108). Another illustrative example of the portrayal of women in different social-economic conditions is an exercise in which the students are asked to decide who out of four candidates should be granted a microloan (Open Road 8, p. 113). Apart from one married couple, all the candidates are women: a middle-aged married woman in need of financial assistance to keep her small business running after the robbery; a Malawian woman, from a remote area, living on reselling tobacco and dried fish, who could spend the loan on purchasing a bicycle; a Bangladeshi mother, who after her husband got addicted to drugs, came to the idea to start a women’s group in her village to support women in poverty.

Second, a few exercises directly raise the problem of potentially biased attitudes towards women and other issues affecting women first of all. For example, in one of the suggested written tasks, the students are asked to discuss “the lot of the female population in the majority world” and cover such topics as girls’ education, women’s dress code, marriage arrangements, equal opportunity, choice of career and personal freedom in general (Open Road 4, p. 123). Some of those topics, e.g. forced and early marriages (Open Road 4, p. 82), are touched upon in the main reading passages, and some are included in groupwork activities; for example, “Women’s education should be the number one priority in the world” (Open Road 4, p. 33) is one of the statements suggested for practising argumentative speech.

Besides, the role of men in the areas which are traditionally associated more with women is also touched upon. Among the topics suggested for an essay, there is topic “Fathers are as important
as mothers” (Open course 4, p. 121). In relation to this, it is also worth noting that in one text a family with a single father is mentioned (Open Road 2, p. 7). There are also exercises connected with the topic of male fashion (Open Road 1, p. 44) and questions about how boys take care of their looks and whether nowadays they pay more attention to their looks than in the past (Open Road 1, p. 41).

More broadly, gender roles, namely how they are presented in the media, are suggested as one of the topics for a media research project (Open Road 6, pp. 45-47). The main task is to examine different English-language romantic comedies and make observations about what those films can tell about what it means to be male and female. Before working on the project, the students are invited to brainstorm on the patterns of behaviour that people are traditionally expected to follow in order to gain respect as either a man or a woman. Then, they are asked to think of the examples of characters from TV shows and films that can be regarded as stereotypically male and female and some non-stereotypical examples. Finally, one of the suggested questions is about benefits and potential problems of the use of stereotypes in the mass media. Also, in another activity, one of the questions asked is “At what age is it ok for boys and girls to start wearing makeup (Open Road 1, p. 41); therefore, it is implied here that wearing makeup should not be regarded as something typical only of girls.

Illustrations were also examined for the messages they may contain in relation to gender representations. In a few pictures, girls are shown in the contexts traditionally more associated with boys: for example, the illustration opening the topic of different career paths shows a girl dressed in working clothes and measuring something with a tool in a workshop (Open Road 3, p. 75). Some pictures falling within stereotypical visions were, however, also found: e.g. a picture accompanying a text on advice how to be a mindful consumer shows a woman among many pairs of colourful shoes (Open Road 7, p. 74).

Overall, diversity in gender representations, understood as a move away from portraying men and women in the roles and activities traditionally labelled as male and female respectively, can be clearly observed. The blurring of traditional gender boundaries is suggested both implicitly, through the portrayals of individuals in texts and illustrations, and directly, through exercises and activities in which the students are guided to reflect on gender roles and stereotypes.

4.1.4. Social class diversity
First, it needs to be noted that the individuals whose stories are at the centre of the main texts introducing the course themes for the most part can be arguably identified as middle class, although references to social class are generally unclear. Yet, social class diversity, understood as inclusion of individuals of low socio-economic background or issues related to them, can be observed in some short texts, vocabulary exercises and activities. For example, in the activity on granting a microloan, most of the candidates are from impoverished areas (Open Road 8, p. 113). The slums and squatter cities are mentioned in one of the textbooks and, importantly, looked at from a less widely shared perspective – as the world’s solution to poverty. From this perspective, people living in slums are seen as able to “do urban stuff in new and amazing ways” (Open Road 8, p. 109). The idea of being resourceful in a difficult economic situation is also touched upon in an excerpt about a Mexican schoolteacher, who became a successful entrepreneur in the conditions of a nationwide economic crisis; when most of the population was sliding into poverty, she came up with a few income-generating ideas, one of which in the long run turned into an established business (Open Road 4, p. 113). Another text tells about a training programme organised for poor and illiterate villagers in one Indian state with the aim to enable them to become their communities’ own solar engineers. This initiative participated in World challenge competition, bringing together cases of local inventive solutions in addressing global problems (Open Road 7, p. 124).

The problem of unemployment is also given attention. In the lyrics “A Job of Work to Do”, opening the theme “Work and Play”, the main character dreads being unemployed; he says that he cannot stand to raise his children on charity, neither can he join free food lines – “a job of work to do” is all he wants (Open Road, p. 63). Related issues are touched upon in some of the statements suggested for a dice game: depending on how the dice lands, the students are asked to speak for or against the following issues: “Unemployed people should be made to work for their unemployment benefit” and “Street begging ought to be banned (Open Road 4, p. 33). Among translation exercises, there is one, entitled “Laying claim to a new life”, in which most of the sentences in one way or another refer to individuals experiencing financial difficulties (Open Road 4, p. 48).

Thus, what is important to conclude is that social issues such as unemployment and poverty are to a certain extent discussed, and people with a low socio-economic status are not completely erased from the content of the textbooks. Essentially, the underlying idea appears to be the one pointing to the individual’s capacity to stay active and capable of changing difficult life circumstances.
4.1.5. People with disabilities

In Open Road 1, the topic of student exchanges, which was briefly discussed earlier under the theme of internationalisation of education, is introduced through the experiences of American young adults with disabilities: a young deaf woman, studying in college; a young visually impaired man, applying for graduate school; another young woman, who has ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and works as a social worker (p. 15). In the description of their experiences abroad, there is no mention of the difficulties they encountered or the assistance they needed. On the opposite, one of the young women points out that after her exchange experience in Finland, she gained more self-independence and confidence. The other woman believes that her overseas experience helped her to apply for an internship, in which she got trained to work with kids and adults from minority groups. It is worth noting that in the warm-up activity preceding the text, the students are asked how their normal daily routine and life in general would change if they suddenly lost hearing or sight and what they would miss the most (Open Road 1, p. 14).

In the same chapter, one of the exercises is based on an email written by another American student, who is visually impaired and currently in law school, during his exchange in Paris (Open Road 1, p. 19). This is the first time he left his home: “I’m still kinda lost here, but coping way better than I thought”. He also mentions that local teens, unlike American teens, do not drive much but use public transport instead, and points out that he would like to find a college in the States with a good public transport connection around: “I’m actually starting to feel now for the first time in my life that I really can do my own thing”.

In addition, in one vocabulary exercise, which is based on a fictional story about a socially active woman, one of the sentences is: “Since her own daughter was born visually impaired, she understands the problems of erityistä tukea tarvitsevat [those with special needs] “(Open Road 4, p. 41). Also, in Open Road 5, the list of recommended readings includes a book summarised as follows: “Reading this book will open your eyes. The world looks very different if you have Asperger’s syndrome” (p. 133). As for illustrations, no clear visual image of a person with a disability was found.

Thus, it can be concluded that people with disabilities are represented in the textbooks, and the way they are represented can be overall seen as empowering. The focus is placed on people with disabilities as individuals first of all, having an active occupational status, rather than on the
disability defining and restricting their lives. The problems and special needs a person with a disability may have are also mentioned, and the idea that people with some physical disabilities and a certain mental health condition may experience and perceive the world differently than the students is suggested for individual reflection.

4.1.6. Sexual orientation diversity

From the outset, it needs to be noted that none of the individuals portrayed in the texts clearly identify as representatives of sexual minorities. However, the issues around sexual orientation diversity were found to be repeatedly touched upon. Under the theme “Film”, there is an exercise on filling in missing letters, and the text is about the depiction of homosexuality in cinematography (Open Road 5, p. 17). The main idea is that homosexuality has been rarely shown on the screen, and when it was shown, “it was there as something to laugh at, or something to pity, or even something to fear”. Then, it is pointed out that such images had a great impact on what straight people think about gay people, and what gay people think about themselves. Finally, it is concluded that films are in fact storytelling which reflects the everyday life experiences all people share, but “when you’re gay, and don’t see that reflection, ever in the movies, you begin to feel like something is wrong” (p.17).

A few references to sexual orientation were also found in activities where the students are asked to discuss a suggested statement, question or situation. For example, sexual orientation is included in the list of aspects, possibly covered in a census questionnaire, and the students are asked which of those aspects they would not like to reveal (Open Road 8, p. 52). In activity “Moral Dilemmas”, the students are asked to discuss a number of situations and tell if they consider the cases as an example of any of the seven deadly sins. One of the situations is: “Ron bullies Jason because Jason is openly gay” (Open Road 4, p. 68). In the list of questions for discussion about marriage, the last one is: “What do you think of same-sex marriages?” (Open Road 4, p. 76). Also, the adoption of children by gay couples is offered for discussion twice: first, “Gay couples should be allowed to adopt children” is one of the 20 statements offered for a dice game, in which, depending on how the dice lands, the students need to speak for or against the issue (Open Road 4, p. 33); second, “There are many reasons why gays should not be allowed to adopt children” is one of the topics suggested for practising giving examples and arguments (Open Road 4, p. 121).
Thus, it needs to be concluded that people clearly identifiable as LGBT, e.g. direct references to their sexual identities are made, are not represented in the textbooks in the sense that their portrayals as individuals are not included in reading passages. Yet, in this respect, it is worth mentioning that the topic of poetry is introduced through an excerpt from the book of Stephen Fry, who may be known for some as a representative of LGBT community. However, in the section about him, there is no mention of his personal identity or his activity in the field of LGBT rights (Open Road 5, pp. 66-67). Nevertheless, diversity in sexual orientation is touched upon explicitly, in particular by raising the issues of the underrepresentation and distorted portrayals of sexual minorities in one form of the media as well as their mistreatment in everyday life. Moreover, topics relating to sexual minorities are included in discussion activities.

The implications of such an approach to making diversity in sexual orientation “visible” in the content of the textbooks can be seen as rather controversial: on the one hand, this type of diversity as such is recognised, and the students are expected to reflect on the related topics and express their views; on the other hand, considering the “normalising” potential of textbooks in representing socio-cultural minorities, this approach is also problematic since sexuality-related diversity is mostly left at the level of “the issue to discuss” and, consequently, possibly allowing for vastly different perspectives.

4.1.7. Issues of discrimination, stereotyping and biased language

Despite a certain degree of overlap between this theme and some of the themes described earlier, it was found relevant to discuss separately how the textbooks directly raise the students’ awareness of discrimination, stereotyping and biased language in relation to different aspects of diversity.

In Open Road 4, the theme “New World” is centred on the issue of discrimination, primarily racial discrimination. The verse opening the theme is about an eight-year-old boy, whose memories from long holidays were completely blocked out by one incident: he came across another boy of the same age and smiled at him, but in response that boy stuck out his tongue and shouted out “Nigger” (Open Road 4, p. 26). It is followed by the main reading passage, which is an excerpt from Barack Obama’s autobiography. The text is about the rally he and his fellow students organised in support for the activists fighting at that time against apartheid in South Africa (pp. 29-30). In his speech, Barack Obama emphasises that the struggle going on in South Africa touches everyone, and it is not simply a struggle between black and white or between rich and poor - it demands making a choice between “fairness and injustice”, “commitment and
indifference”, “right and wrong” (Open Road 4, p. 29). Another text included in the chapter is an excerpt from Martin Luther King’s famous speech, “I Have a Dream” (Open Road 4, p. 38), and among the topics suggested for written tasks at the end of the textbook there is “On African American”, in which the students are asked whether Martin Luther King’s dream has come true (ibid, p. 122). Hate crimes and racial discrimination are also brought up in one discussion activity (ibid, p. 33).

Although a primary attention is given to racial discrimination, other types of discrimination are occasionally discussed. In one vocabulary exercise, creed and sexual orientation are mentioned as grounds for discrimination that the main character of the story cannot tolerate (Open Road 4, p. 41). More directly, in one group activity, the students are asked to express their opinion whether skin is not the only cause of discrimination (Open Road 8, p. 99). What is also important to note is that while most of the references about racism and discrimination are made to either abstract contexts or the contexts of other countries, a few questions relating to the students’ own experiences are suggested for discussion: they are asked, for example, if they have ever experienced or witnessed any kind of discrimination themselves and if there is racism in Finland (Open Road 4, p. 36).

One more text developing this theme, though from a different angle, needs to be mentioned. As “warm-up” in the chapter on development aid, the lyrics “One Tribe” are included. The central idea put forward is the unity of people, regardless of race or any other category of social division: “One Tribe, one time, one planet, one race <…> I’m thinking that we can change this bad condition <…> We are one, we’re all just people” (Open Road 8, p. 106).

In addition to gender stereotypes, discussed earlier, national stereotypes are mentioned. In the introduction to a linguistic test on idioms, it is clearly recognised that people tend to stereotype people from other countries, in particular from neighbouring countries (Open Road 3, p. 73). In another textbook, the students are asked to think of concrete examples of national stereotypes and express their opinion: “What ridiculous stereotypical ideas have some people got of other cultures (for example, of Americans, Swedes, Russians, Germans, Scotsmen, Japanese etc.). In your experience, are these cultures really like that?” (Open Road 2, p. 86). The possibility of generalisation and biases towards other national cultures is briefly brought up in the interview with one English trainer from Britain who works in Finland. When asked about cultural differences between the ways Finnish people and English speakers present information, he shares some of his observations but points out: “I don’t know if I’m correct to generalise <…> But it’s
just my experience, and as I’m British, I’m probably biased or perhaps missing something about Finnish culture” (Open Road 2, p. 47).

The issues of biased language, although directly brought up only once, were considered to be worth taking a closer look. In one of the Travel Guides, there is the section “On Inclusive Language” (Open Road 4, p. 117), advising how not to be insensitive and offensive when interacting with other people. The guidelines cover a wide range of social categories, namely race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability. First, it is pointed out that it may be unnecessary to refer to ethnicity, race and religion when addressing a person and, importantly, those are not good aspects to joke about, even if the joke is meant in a friendly way. Then, the students are reminded that religious, linguistic and ethnic groups are not homogenous. Also, it is recommended not to draw attention to a person’s disabilities and avoid such terms as “handicapped”, “invalid” and “disabled”. The terms like “Negro” and “coloured” are also mentioned as outdated and replaced with “African American”, “African Caribbean” and “black”. In addition, the students are warned against sexist language and advised to use, for example, the term “firefighter” instead of “fireman”.

Thus, the issues of discrimination, stereotyping and biased language relating to various aspects of diversity are given certain attention in the textbooks. It is also important to note that these issues are discussed in the way that the students are encouraged to see discrimination as not something concerning other people, in particular from minority groups, but also as an integral part of their own lives, where they can be both the actors and victims of the exclusionary treatment.

4.1.8. Diversity in Finland

The idea of diversity in Finnish society was found to be running throughout a number of reading passages, exercises and activities.

The excerpt from an interview with a Finnish athlete of Kenyan origin has already been discussed in terms of how it conveys the image of an immigrant successfully integrated in and contributing to the society. A few more details need to be added to see how this passage, more specifically, develops the theme of diversity in Finland. The title of the text is “A Finn from Afar”; therefore, the athlete is, first of all, positioned as a Finnish person. In the introduction, it is mentioned that he was voted Finland’s most positive person. Then, when explaining his decision
to start a political career, he says that it is his way “to give something back” to Finland and the Finnish people who have been good to him (Open Road 4, p. 10).

The idea of diversity in Finnish society caused by cross-national mobility is also subtly suggested in another reading passage. It is, as stated in the introduction, about a Finnish teenager, Jelena, talking on the phone with a friend from London about her upcoming job interview in English. There are two points worth a closer look. First, already at the beginning, considering the girl’s name, a preliminary assumption could be made about her family’s origin possibly connected to Russia. Further in the text, this assumption gets proved, when her friend, trying to cheer her up, says: “Just turn on that Finno-Russian charm of yours, you can’t go wrong” (Open Road 3, p. 53). There are no any other related references, but it is plausible to assume that the girl has parents of different nationalities, Finnish and Russian. Another interesting detail is that she is applying for a job at a Finnish company, but the working language there is English and therefore the job interview is in English. As regards the increasing role of English in the working environment in Finland, the same idea is suggested in the listening exercises based on an interview with a British trainer who works in Finland and helps Finns to use English more effectively in their work (Open Road 2, p. 45).

The topic of immigration to Finland is repeatedly touched upon in exercises and activities. In the exercise “Finnish Welcome”, the students are given a list of Finnish political parties and asked to describe or make guesses about the stances these parties take on immigration and ethnic minorities (Open Road 8, p. 97). Also, in the statements included in a dice game, there is “Finland needs more immigrants” (Open Road 4, p. 33). Although the game includes speaking both for and against, the position of this statement is such that if it gets to be discussed, the students need to give arguments for the issue in the statement. Furthermore, immigration and its impact is suggested for discussion in pairs (Open Road 8, p. 98). While some of the questions relate more to factual information, e.g. if there are many immigrants in the local community and how the community is incorporating the immigrants into its life, most of the questions are about the students’ personal views. They are asked, for example, what else needs to be done or needs to be done differently in the community’s practices on immigrants’ integration and how immigration affects them on a personal level. More specifically, they are asked what advantages they get, how immigrants enrich the community and how the whole country may benefit from immigration (Open Road 8, p. 98). They are also asked to share their views on whether Finland is a good place to live in for foreigners and if moving to Finland for asylum seekers may be
different from the experiences of those who move for other reasons in the optional essay “Welcome to Finland” (Open Road 4, p. 122).

As for ethnic minorities traditionally residing in Finland, factual information about the Sami people is included in one listening exercise (Open Road 4, p. 16), and “Lapland – our very own winter wonderland?” is suggested as a topic for essay (ibid, p. 122). Along with the significance of Lapland for Finnish culture, economy and traditions, the students are supposed to discuss in the essay whether the Sami people have been “exploited by Finns over the centuries” or “given a fair deal” (p. 122). The issues relating to the Saami people are also brought up in one class activity, where among the statements on which the students need to express their opinions is “Sami children should be taught Sami at school” (Open Road 8, p. 99). Moreover, in this activity there are statements relating to other ethnic minorities: the students are asked whether Finns are prejudiced against the Romany culture, if the Swedish-speaking minority and the Russian-speaking minority are valuable cultural assets. Also, religious diversity in Finland is subtly touched upon by posing a question whether all kinds of temples of worship should be allowed in Finland.

The issue of poverty in Finland is once brought up in the vocabulary exercise that says: “Finland is supposed to be a welfare state, but there is still poverty in this country: witness the long lines of people queuing for food parcels given out by the churches” (Open Road 4, p. 40). Besides, the number of people living below poverty is among the aspects which the students need to cover when discussing their home towns (Open Road 4, p. 49). Ethnic minorities and the number of single-parent families are also included in the task.

Thus, a few observations need to be discussed. Finnish society is portrayed as diverse, first of all, as a result of increased immigration. Introducing the course theme of immigration through a text relating to the Finnish context accentuates the relevance of the phenomenon of immigration for the students’ everyday life. This is further developed through numerous questions offered for discussion and pointing to diversity at local level. Remarkably, the way the discussion on the impact of immigration is framed subtly encourages the students to concentrate on its positive sides. Although the focus appears to be placed on successful integration, the students are also given an idea that people moving to Finland for different reasons may have varied experiences. Then, non-migration related diversity, in particular ethnic minorities traditionally residing in the county, is also “visible” in the textbooks, mostly in the form of the issues offered for individual reflection or group discussion. It is necessary to note that among the questions suggested for
activities and tasks are some that encourage the students to think of the power relations historically existing between the majority population and some of the minorities as well as possible biased attitudes towards the latter.

4.1.9. Varieties of English and diversity of English speakers

The idea of English as a global language with many different varieties is directly brought up in one listening exercise: the students are asked to listen to jokes, each spoken with a certain regional or social accent, namely Australian English, African-American, Indian, Jamaican, Nigerian, Queen’s English and Scottish accents (Open Road 8, p. 93). The fact that Australian English constitutes a distinct variety of English is suggested also in one vocabulary exercise (Open Road 3, p. 37), and the role of English as a lingua franca in a linguistically diverse context of India, where English is only one of the official languages, is mentioned in the information section on India (Open Road 1, p. 10).

It was also more specifically looked at whether in addition to individuals from the Inner Circle countries, according to Kachru’s model, the main reading passages show individuals from the Outer and the Expanding Circle countries speaking English, thereby implicitly suggesting the idea of diversity of English speakers. As it was mentioned earlier, people from Finland are portrayed speaking English, and there are also two texts about a Nigerian asylum-seeker in the UK. In one of them, the girl notices that even though English is the official language of her country, the way it is spoken there is much more beautiful that the Queen’s English, which she was forced to learn by the circumstances (Open Road 6, p. 10). Besides, the very first text in the series is about an Indian boy going to the best private English-medium school in one big Indian city (Open Road 1, pp. 8-9), and there is also an excerpt about kite-flying in Afghanistan, which is narrated by a person with a specific accent, as it can be judged from the corresponding audio recording (Open Road 2, p. 10). In general, audio recordings for all textbooks from the series contain a few accents distinguishable from those typically associated with the main English-speaking countries.

To conclude, the view of English as an international language is to a certain extent incorporated into the content of the textbook series. However, the attention given to the varieties of English and the role it plays in non-native speaker contexts is only rather passing.
Thus, the themes found in the Open Road textbook series have been discussed, both descriptively and with certain interpretative observations. The following sub-chapter discusses the themes found in the three textbooks from the newer series, Insights.

4.2. The textbook series Insights (1-3)

Presumably, due to the limited number of textbooks included in the analysis, some of the themes identified in the textbook series Open Road were found to be developed scarcely or not touched upon at all. Thus, this sub-chapter discusses the themes relating to the aspects of diversity such as nationality, race, gender, social class, disability, sexual orientation and race, as well as the role of English as an international language.

4.2.1. Internationalisation of everyday life and migration-related diversity

The idea of increased international exposure in everyday life was found to be a point of departure in a number of activities suggested for the students. Although quantitatively not so many, they were treated as a distinct subtheme contributing to the broader theme of diversity brought about by cross-national mobility. In addition, more specifically, stories of migrants in a new country were also found to be placed at the centre of a few reading passages and considered as comprising another related subtheme.

4.2.1.1. Internationalisation of everyday life

The most illustrative example of the activities aimed at practising encounters across cultures of different countries is a board game entitled “Trek around the world”. The students are given more than 20 situations located in different parts of the world and asked to comment on how they would behave in such situations. Most of the situations are rather troublesome or delicate, due to differences in common practices and lifestyles in different countries, and also involve language barriers. For example, the students are asked how they would respond to being offered whale to eat in Reykjavik, or say “no” politely to the suggestion to take a swim in the Ganges in Delhi, because the water seems to be polluted, or what they would do in Auckland in response to a Maori pressing his nose and forehead to theirs (Insights 2, pp. 6-9). Then, in the introduction to the unit in which the students focus on practising talking about “[their] life, country and the Finnish way of living”, school visits abroad, hosting a foreign guest in a local school or
exchange studies are mentioned as contexts where it may be necessary to give presentations about Finland in English (Insights 1, p. 10). Also, there are exercises where the students are supposed to act out in pairs situations abroad, like looking for a flat in England for the time of summer work there (Insights 1, p. 24).

It is necessary to note, however, that presumably, due to the limited number of textbooks available for the analysis, it is not possible to conclude how comprehensively the idea of international encounters is taken up in the series. Yet, given the examples above, it is plausible to assume that the way it is done implies encouraging students, through active learning, to be ready for the use of the language in situations involving people from non-English-speaking countries and for communicative problems arising from differences in ways of living and customs.

4.2.1.2. Experiences of migrants

In Insights 1, in the topic “Experiences from Earlier Schools”, there is an extract from Stephen Kelman’s novel “Pigeon English”, which tells a story of an immigrant boy living in London about his race for the title of the best runner of Year 7 (pp. 11-12). The boy says that “he was running for his life”, and having come first, even earlier than his main rival in better training shoes, he feels like he was the king, and wishes his every day was like that. After the text, as well as after all other main reading passages in the textbooks, there is brief information about the author and the book, which is a new feature of the Insights series compared to Open Road. Importantly, it is noted there that the novel was written in response to the idea increasingly conveyed by the media about the hopelessness of life facing Britain and children there, both native and immigrant. The author wanted to draw attention to the positive sides of living in a multicultural and vibrant residential area (p. 12).

In the same textbook, the main text introducing the topic “Moving into a New Country” is an extract from the novel “Refugee Boy” by Benjamin Zephaniah (Insights 1, pp. 36-39). It is about an African boy, half Ethiopian, half Eritrean, who together with his father just arrived in London, thinking that they are on a short holiday. In fact, his father brought the boy with the aim to leave him there as a war refugee. In the subsequent vocabulary exercises, the story continues saying that the boy was placed by the Refugee Council and Social Services with a caring foster family (Insights 1, p. 42). Then, the students are given a task to write a letter either on behalf of the boy telling his father about the foster family and the new country or on behalf of the father explaining his son why he left him (p. 44). In the information section, the novel is described as “a story
about courage, the capacity of the young to overcome hardship <…> of hope and of the power of friendship and community” (p. 39). It is also mentioned there that Zephaniah is the people’s poet and an author who appeals to a wide audience, although his background is unusual for a writer: he was dyslexic and left school at the age of 14, while in his teenage years he ended up in prison. The listening exercise in this unit is about another immigrant child, from Trinidad, talking about her first experiences with the English weather (p. 43).

Furthermore, in the section “Engage”, preceding the main reading passage, there are the lyrics “Prayer of the Refugee”, which are narrated in a form of a conversation between a refugee and his son (p. 36). He talks about the good life they used to have in the past and the necessity of self-reliance now since those who have offered help before have, in fact, let him down. The refugee says that “[they] are the ones who kept quiet, and always did what [they] were told” and encourages his son to “sing through the day” and continue their way on reclaiming the lives they have once lost (p. 36). A few questions are given for discussion: for example, about the feelings of the refugee about those who have tried to help. At the end of the unit, the students are given a task to find, study and bring to the next lesson a short story, blog, video clip, etc. in which immigrants or refugees reflect on their lives (p. 45).

Worth noting that in the unit aimed at practising talking about Finland, the topic of migration is introduced from the perspective of leaving the country. Among the suggested discussion questions are, for example, possible reasons why some people leave Finland and in which cases the students would be willing to leave their home country. The subsequent listening exercise is based on a story of a Finnish teen who has moved to the USA (Insights 1, p. 51).

Thus, life stories of immigrants and more specifically refugees are included into the content of the textbooks, importantly, not only in generic topics directly relating to migration. The extracts selected appear to highlight the idea of the individual’s strong will in overcoming hardships, including those associated with moving to a new country. The stories are narrated from the first-person perspective, which, along with the task to find more reflective accounts of immigrants about their lives, encourages the students to broaden their perspective and see how varied lived experiences of people in a new country can be.

4.2.2. Racial diversity in illustrations
Like previously, during the analysis, the examination of diversity in relation to race was narrowed down to the illustrative content. Overall, the idea of racial diversity as an integral part of the society was found to be running throughout all the three textbooks. A few observations are worth making. First, the image of school environments as multiracial is conveyed at a few occurrences. For instance, a photo from a graduation ceremony shows young people representing different racial groups (Insights 3, p. 107), or a task about the students’ memories from their comprehensive school is accompanied by pictures depicting boys and girls of various racial backgrounds together (Insights 1, p. 14). Second, pictures and drawings showing a great variety of everyday life situations mentioned in the main reading passages also include both white and non-white individuals involved in common activities. For example, drawings depicting a scene on the plane shows both white and non-white flight attendants (Insights 2, p. 76, p.78), or drawings accompanying a reading passage taken from the context of South Africa, shows both white and non-white individuals at a hairdresser’s (Insights 3, p. 73). Besides, a few written tasks are based on the photos or drawings depicting a pair or a group of people belonging to different races. For instance, one of the topics suggested for essay is based on a photo showing five people, both women and men, of at least three different races, standing in a row one after another, resting their arms on the shoulders of the one standing in front, and the students are asked to choose one person and write what could happen in their lives after the photo was taken (Insights 3, p. 119).

4.2.3. Diversity in gender representations

Like in the analysis of the older series, the examination of gender representations was narrowed down to looking at whether or not women are portrayed within the roles traditionally labelled as more “female” and whether the textbooks directly touch upon gender equality-related issues.

In the topic “Visual Arts”, the listening exercise is based on the stories of three female artists, their paintings and their ailments that have significantly affected their lives (Insights 3, pp. 56-57). Importantly, next to the illustrations there is a note saying that up to the end of the 20th century, the world of art used to be a man’s world, and even though by now the situation has changed, there have always been talented female artists unknown to the wide audiences. Then, a few times women are portrayed in physically demanding areas. In Insights 2, in the theme “Active Life”, one of the reading passages shows a female cyclist shortly before she starts her race for the Olympic golden medal (Insights 2, pp. 29-31). In the information section about the novel, from where the text is taken, it is noted that the book is, among other aspects, about
human endurance and perseverance in achieving dreams. In the same theme, under the title “Challenging Your Body and Mind”, there is a text about a teen girl going skydiving with her mum (p. 40), and further, the illustrations accompanying a passage, where dance is described as a physically demanding kind of sport, show female dancers (pp. 44-45). Also, in contrast to the more widely spread view that girls tend to do better and be more disciplined at school than boys, there is one reading passage about a delinquent schoolgirl, who has transformed “her squeaky-clean, straight-A life into that of a hooligan”, who swears “like a drunken pirate” and punches all kinds of students she runs into: “Nerds, jocks, cheerleaders, goths, gays, straights, blacks, whites, that kid in a wheelchair – no one was safe” (Insights 2, p. 12). As far as activities are concerned, in a dice game one of the questions implies that there are some hobbies which are considered to be more feminine and those considered more masculine, and the students are asked to give examples and explain the reasons for such views (Insights 2, p. 50).

To conclude, issues related to gender equality are to a certain extent touched upon, particularly by drawing attention to the fact that women may be underrated in some, male-dominated, areas, despite being equally skilful. The portrayal of women in general cannot be seen as confined within the areas, roles and traits of character traditionally recognised as typically “female”. In addition, the students are encouraged to see the division feminine/masculine in widespread perceptions and think of the underlying reasons.

4.2.4. Social class diversity

Although only one reading passage was found to have at its centre a story of an individual clearly identifiable as of low socio-economic background, the depiction merits a closer look. The passage, entitled “From the Shacks to the Prom”, is given in the theme “Cultural Phenomena” and follows a discussion about “coming of age” in different cultures and young people’s life in Finland (Insights 3, p. 69). It tells about a high school girl from an impoverished neighbourhood in Cape Town and her efforts to make the big day happen (pp. 70-71). In the beginning, there seemed to be no chance for her to be able to afford to attend the prom, but she came up with the plan to raise the money, which took her several months to carry out. The glamorous dress she managed to buy in the end stood in a sharp contrast to the condition of the shack her single-parent family had to live in. The girl did not regret, however, any effort and emotion she had invested because on that day she understood what she wanted her future to be like. The reporter, the author of the passage, also mentions that she was going to be the first in her family to finish high school. After the text, one of the tasks suggested for the students is to
discuss in pairs similarities and differences between their lives and the life of the girl, and the subsequent vocabulary exercise is based on a text about the project carried out by students with the aim to raise money to help students from impoverished countries (p. 74).

Thus, representatives of low social-economic class get represented in the textbooks, and the depiction accentuates, once again, human traits such as determination and perseverance in achieving personal goals whatever the circumstances. The way discussion based on the text is guided does not focus exclusively on the hardships inherent in living in a very poor community but also draws attention to what young people from different countries and different social classes may have in common.

4.2.5. People with disabilities

In Insights 3, one of the reading passages introducing the theme “Music” is a newspaper article entitled “When You Beat the Odds” (pp. 19-20). The introduction says: “Nicholas McCarthy made something that seemed like an impossible dream a reality”. As the passage goes on, it turns out that when a teen, he fell in love with music and decided to become a concert pianist, despite the fact that he had only one hand. His way to the dream was far from easy: after he had not been accepted for an audition at one musical school, he felt depressed for weeks. Then, having regained belief in himself, he managed to get accepted to even a more renowned school. Now McCarthy is a rising classical star, who was also the first only left-hand-alone pianist to graduate from one of the world’s leading art/music educational institutions. The pianist also points out that he hears all the time: “you’re such an inspiration <...> and blah blah blah – I don’t set out to inspire people but if I do that makes me a very happy man” (p. 20). The questions offered for discussion based on the text, apart from those relating to music, touch upon the students’ feelings about the pianist’s story and their own experiences: whether they have ever had a dream that has felt impossible and whether any inspirational story has helped them in facing their own challenges. Then, one of the vocabulary exercises is based on a text about the biography of Stevie Wonder, a musician, singer and songwriter, who has been blind since not long after birth and whose songs have become hits for decades (p. 22).

First of all, it is necessary to conclude that people with disabilities are represented in the textbooks; however, the details of their portrayal may be seen as debatable. On the one hand, disability is not presented as an aspect of life posing insurmountable barriers to an individual’s
dreams and aspirations, which reinforces the idea of agency for individuals with different physical abilities. On the other hand, in the reading passage cited above, its title and subsequent questions, the image of a person with a disability as inspirational, more specifically for non-disabled people, is implicitly suggested. In terms of normalising disability and equality, this image, at least when it is the exclusive focus, may be seen as rather problematic since the underlying attitude still retains attention on “the odds” and adds to the perceived division.

4.2.6. Sexual orientation diversity

After the main reading passage in the topic “Family”, one of the tasks begins saying: “Families are changing and so is the vocabulary relating to families” (Insights 1, p. 31). Then, the students are given a list of terms and asked to go online and find their meanings. One of the terms given is “same-sex relationship/marriage” and, importantly, the illustration accompanying the task shows a young girl sitting on a man’s shoulders and holding the rainbow flag, which is widely known as a symbol of the LGBT community.

The pressure to fit in, belong and be popular, which many high school students may experience, is the main issue raised in the reading passage “Nobody Should Have to Sit Alone”, given in the topic “Accepting Others, Bullying” (Insights 1, pp. 63-64). One of the problems directly touched upon in the text is homophobia. The passage is taken from a blog entry written by a researcher, whose study is focused on the impact of decreasing homophobia in British and American cultures on the gendered behaviours and sexual identities of straight and LGBT young people. The entry is based on interviews with British high school students about their views on what it takes to be popular among peers at school. The extract starts with a scene on a school bus where an openly gay student is sat on his own at the back and a group of popular, athletic boys are getting on the bus. Contrary to the most common expectations, the boys sit down next to the student at the back and start a casual talk with him. The text goes on further about the main aspects constituting popularity at school and concludes with the observation that young men are increasingly “rejecting bullying and marginalisation as ways of feeling good about themselves” (p. 64); instead, such traits as charisma, authenticity, emotional support and inclusivity come to be viewed as the most valuable.

What is necessary to summarise is that the way the textbooks take up the idea of sexual orientation diversity has important implications in terms of the “normalisation” of sexual minorities. As seen in the first passage, same-sex relationship/marriage is mentioned not as
something provoking debates but as an ordinary, “normal”, matter of fact, as one type out of the variety of modern family types. Although it is mentioned amongst other relatively new phenomena in society, the accompanying illustration draws attention to this particular phenomenon, thereby adding to the “normalisation”. In the second instance, although the issues of marginalisation and biased attitudes towards representatives of sexual minorities are touched upon, the passage mostly points to the rising trend towards inclusivity in relation to sexual minorities, more specifically in the school context.

4.2.7. Issues of discrimination and stereotyping

In the topic “Standing up for Yourself”, the main text is an extract from some novel and as the introduction says, the main characters featured in it are a Social Studies teacher, who happens to be a racist, and a student willing to stand up for what is right (Insights 1, pp. 53-55). The teacher starts the class saying that his family has lived in the USA for over two hundred years, paid taxes, fought in all the wars and voted, and now his son cannot get a job because of what he believes to be “some kind of reverse discrimination”. Then, he concludes that the country should close its borders so that “real Americans can get the job they deserve” and gives that as a topic for the classroom debate. However, once one of the students expresses his opinion that maybe the teacher’s son did not get the job because he was not good enough and the other person, regardless of skin colour, was simply better, the teacher cuts him off and excludes from the debate. Then, another student stands up and referring to the Constitution points out that all the citizens have the same rights, no matter the time spent living in the country, and finishes saying: “As a citizen, and as a student, I am protesting the tone of this lesson as racist, intolerant, and xenophobic” (p. 55).

In terms of the main ideas conveyed in this passage in relation to discrimination, there are a few points of interest necessary to mention. First, this text explicitly touches upon the issue of anti-immigrant prejudices and discriminatory rhetoric emphasising the division between the natives and those who or whose families have arrived from abroad. Second, however, it is implied that the term “discrimination”, in particular that on the grounds of origin, can be misused to justify certain undesirable personal qualities, like in this example, the lack of competence. Finally, importantly, this text highlights the importance of taking an active stance towards such exclusionary rhetoric and speaking for the rights inherent in all people regardless of the country of origin.
The problem of stereotyping other people is mentioned once. In the theme “Active Life”, one of the discussions suggested is based on a short verse, “Sporty People”, which tells that sometimes it can be hard to come to understand that “sporty people can be OK” and poets can play football too (Insights 2, p.38). After the verse, the students are asked to discuss, among other questions, whether people tend to have stereotypical ideas of people with different interests. Thus, what is interesting to underline here is that the students’ attention is directly drawn to the aspect of stereotyping which is often left out of focus compared to other grounds for stereotypical attitudes.

4.2.8. Varieties of English and diversity of English speakers

One of the main topics which Insights 1 is structured on is English as a global language. The opening activity in the textbook is entitled “My English, Your English, Our English”. The main idea conveyed in the introductory text is a great variety of English and its continuously changing nature (Insights 1, p. 6). It is pointed out that English is studied as the first foreign language all over the globe; however, the kind of English pupils in other parts of the world learn might be different from the one pupils in Finland learn. Interestingly, one of the questions the authors pose at the end is “What is correct English and who’s to decide?”, thereby touching upon, although implicitly, the issues around the ownership of the English language. Then, the students are asked to take a quiz to “learn more about English(es)” (pp. 7-9). The questions give examples of Indian English, Nigerian English and Australian English words. It is followed by two listening exercises: the first one is based on different dialects and accents spoken in the UK, and the other one includes statements read by English speakers from different parts of the world. The latter is accompanied by a world map showing the countries where English is the official language or one of the official languages. Moreover, one of the reading passages in the same textbook, which has been discussed in the theme relating to immigrants, is an extract from the book “Pigeon English”; it is clarified there that the title of the book is a word play referring to Pidgin English, which is “a simplified English used between people who do not share a common language” (Insights 1, p. 11). After the passage, there is a set of questions relating to the phenomenon of Pidgin English and a task to find extra information on Pidgin English and videos featuring people speaking different versions of Pidgin English (Insights 1, p. 17). Another activity, which has been mentioned earlier, “Trek around the world”, also includes situations based on the idea that different English(es) are spoken around the world (Insights 2, pp. 6-9).
Most of the individuals whose stories are at the centre of the main reading passages are native speakers from either Britain or the USA. As it has been pointed out, there are also stories of non-native speakers living in Britain, as well as stories told by people from other English-speaking countries, such as New Zealand (Insights 2, pp. 68-69), Canada (Insights 3, p. 80) and South Africa (Insights 2, pp. 70-71). Accordingly, a variety of accents can be recognised in the respective audio recordings. In addition, in the recordings relating to general topics, like classes at school, a variety of accents could be identified (e.g. Insights 1, p. 60).

To sum up, the textbooks appear to pay a considerable attention to the notion of English as a global phenomenon and convey the idea that English may be learnt and spoken differently in different parts of the world. The role it plays as a lingua franca worldwide is explicitly touched upon, and the idea of linguistic diversity of English users is implied in a number of reading passages and activities.

In this chapter, themes, encompassing a number of aspects of diversity, were examined in terms of how they are developed, both explicitly and more latently, in the two textbook series separately. The data excerpts illustrating the main arguments were cited and, where relevant, underpinning assumptions and implications of each theme were discussed. The following chapter focuses on general observations across the themes and their relation to the overall theoretical considerations and research questions guiding this study.
5. **DISCUSSION**

The discussion in this chapter revolves around the twofold aim set out for the research, which is followed by addressing the questions of trustworthiness and ethics. In the first section, general conclusions are made about how the concept of diversity is approached in the textbook series Open Road, representing English language textbooks used for an extensive period of time in Finland. The second section discusses the way diversity is approached in the three textbooks from the recently launched series Insights, with conclusions made about discernible differences and assumptions regarding possible further development. Finally, the trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations are discussed.

5.1. **Recent practices: approaching diversity in the textbook series Open Road**

The overall purpose of this study has been broken down into three research questions, two of which directly relate to the analysis of the older textbook series, Open Road. To see how the first question, *Which aspects of diversity are represented in the content of the textbooks and how, if anyhow, diversity-related issues are directly touched upon and discussed*, has been on the whole answered, it is convenient first to return to some of the theoretical considerations guiding this study.

Drawing on critical approaches to interculturality, the underpinning concept of diversity is viewed more broadly than “crossing national borders” and encompasses a range of social categories. Taking that into consideration, an attempt was made in the analysis to draw a clear distinction between how the textbooks take up the idea of migration-related diversity and how other, non-migration-related, aspects of diversity are treated as well. Then, the view of the textbook as a non-neutral selection of representations has also had important implications for the interpretation of the findings. In such a way, the “normalising” role of textbooks - rendering social groups and practices that get included in the content “normal”, - has been taken into account. In addition to examining the *individuals whose stories get told* in the textbooks, the way the textbooks bring up issues related to diversity and frame the discussion was regarded as an integral part of addressing diversity, however, with somewhat different “normalising” implications. Finally, although it has not been the primary focus of this study to examine to what extent the textbooks take account of the EIL teaching paradigm, the view of English as a lingua franca or an international language is seen as tightly intertwined with approaching diversity, in particular in terms of conveying the idea of the linguistic diversity of English speakers.
The theme “Internationalisation of everyday life and migration-related diversity” was examined at a considerable length in section 4.1.1. Overall, the “imagining” society found in the textbooks can be to a great extent seen as multicultural, in a narrow sense, as a result of the continuous cross-national mobility. People are portrayed as increasingly exposed to encounters with representatives of foreign cultures, whether it is due to a short-term mobility on the grounds of studies, work, travelling, etc. or long-term immigration for different reasons. The underlying idea around which this theme was found to be developed is understanding and learning from cultural differences. It can be concluded, then, that this theme falls essentially in line with the guidelines of NCC 2003 with respect to the development of the students’ ability to communicate successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds. Also, an intercultural perspective in language education, as opposed to a cultural perspective, restricted to merely developing knowledge about other cultures seen as external to learners (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), appears to be taken up extensively in the textbook series.

However, the focus of examination in this study has been more sharpened towards looking at how non-migration-related diversity, often left out in the dominant perspective on the intercultural, is presented. Returning to the research question, in the corresponding sections of the preceding chapter it was discussed which aspects of diversity are represented in the textbooks, as well as, where relevant, the underlying assumptions and possible implications for learning. Here, it is important to draw conclusions about the overall approach in treating diversity. To do so, it is instructive to see the treatment of diversity in textbooks in a broader context of the pedagogical methods prevailing in Finland. The argument put forward by Bromley and Mäkinen (2011), who examined diversity in civic education, that learner-centred pedagogical approaches focusing on student agency positively correlate with diversity emphases generally holds true also for the findings of this study. Although some social groups, e.g. LGBT and people of low socio-economic background, are not represented, in a strict sense, in the main reading passages, the issues relating to such groups are included in discussion activities or suggested for written assignments. Such an approach to addressing diversity, in particular to including traditionally marginalised social groups, can be seen, on the one hand, as problematic, as it was directly discussed in relation to sexual orientation diversity; however, on the other hand, it needs to be recognised as a move away from practices of complete “erasure” and silencing issues concerning particular social groups. In addition to sexual minorities and people of low socio-economic background, people with disabilities are another social group which tends to be “erased” or “misrepresented” in teaching materials, as it was noted in the review of
previous research. However, in the textbooks examined, the way people with disabilities are represented can be seen as generally inclusive. The circumstances in which these people are portrayed do not accentuate any striking restrictions and differences in their lifestyle compared to that of the majority population. Yet, in a few occurrences, including discussion questions, the idea that people with disabilities may experience and perceive the world differently is suggested.

Separately, it was discussed how the textbooks explicitly address the issues of discrimination, stereotyping and biased language (4.1.7). This is once again in line with the overall logic of student-centred approaches. The way these diversity-related issues are incorporated into the tasks and how the discussion on them is framed encourages the students to reflect on their own everyday life experiences. Racial discrimination is given most of the attention, although other, more hidden, grounds of discrimination and prejudices, e.g. sexual orientation, are not completely neglected and are mentioned in the exercises. Gender stereotypes were found to be explicitly addressed and suggested for groupwork. The non-neutrality of language, although without detailed elaboration, was also found to be explicitly raised once through drawing the students’ attention to the use of insensitive language when addressing other people and providing them with basic guidelines on inclusive language. Overall, in addition to including the portrayal of representatives of certain social groups, exposing discriminatory practices and stereotyping, as well as recognising biases inherent in seemingly neutral language aspects, need to be seen as an integral part of the approach to addressing diversity in the content of the textbook series.

Moving on to the second research question, this study has been to a great extent informed by the current debates in language education, which has started to influence the area of language textbook research, particularly in relation to the necessity to problematise the previously exclusive focus on cultures traditionally associated with the English language. The analysis, therefore, has not been confined to the so-called target-language countries. More specifically, the way the view of English as an international language is taken up in the textbooks was, although briefly, discussed in section 4.1.9. Coming from the idea that EFL textbooks, along with target culture- and international target culture-, include source culture materials (McKay, 2002), at the very first stages of this research it appeared relevant to take a separate look at the references the textbooks under examination make to the Finnish context. The second research question, What image of diversity inherent in Finnish society do the textbooks convey, has been basically answered in section 4.1.8. Here, it is important to elaborate further on the observations made earlier taking into consideration the understanding of the cultural diversity in Finland underpinning this study and previous research.
As it was pointed out in section 2.4.1., traditional ethnic minorities, although in the dominant discourse often overshadowed by the recent influx of immigrants, constitute an important element of the diversity of Finnish society. In the analysis, it was observed that the Finnish society found in the textbooks can be seen generally as diverse, primarily as a result of increased immigration, albeit not exclusively. The phenomenon of immigration as such and its impact at both national and local levels are touched upon in texts as well as included into discussion activities. Although the textbooks had been published before the recent dramatic increase in the arrival of asylum-seekers in Finland, this particular group of migrants is mentioned once among the topics for essays, with the idea implied that their experiences in Finland might be different from those of other migrants. The ethnic minorities, or more precisely, the issues around their status and attitudes to them are brought up in discussion activities and written tasks, with the Sami people given more attention. This is another illustrative example of how the textbooks treat “more hidden” aspects of diversity by incorporating the relevant issues into activities and tasks. Returning to the previous research, it is relevant to note that the findings of this study do not go completely in line with the findings of the study by Dervin, Hahl, Härkönen and Layne (2015), who examined the understanding of interculturality contained in two specifically designed history textbooks. Unlike their research, the present analysis suggests that foreign cultures are at times portrayed as an integral part of the life of local students, primarily through guiding the discussion on immigration in a way that the students are expected to reflect on its impact at local level as well as on their personal lives. Also, the aforementioned research revealed that the textbooks fail to convey the idea of compatibility between Finnishness and, for example, being black, whereas one of the textbooks examined in this study, in the text entitled “A Finn from afar”, conveys a more inclusive notion of Finnishness (4.1.8).

At this juncture, it is important to return to another theoretical-methodological aspect underpinning this study. The social constructionist thematic analysis chosen for the textbook analysis in this study implies that the way the themes are developed in the textbooks is seen as being greatly shaped by the broader discourses operating in society. Although exploring discourses as such contained in the textbooks was not defined as the aim of this study, it is important to summarise that the overall textbook discourse generally encompasses a number of aspects of diversity, foregrounding migration-related diversity, and goes in line with the logic of student-centred pedagogy. The discourses contained in the textbooks, therefore, should not be characterised as completely rigid as a result of considerable attention allocated to activities and tasks, where space is left for the students’ individual perspectives. Also, given the view of the
textbook as a non-neutral selection of representations of social reality, the process of the writing of textbooks is understood in this study as inevitably involving a great number of decisions on inclusion and exclusion on the part of the authors. Although, the rationale behind this study is premised on the importance of the inclusive treatment of diversity in the content of teaching materials, it is at the same time recognised that it is not plausible to write textbooks that could convey the entire richness of diversity of contemporary societies. In this respect, Canale (2016) points out that pedagogical discourse is in general associated with simplification strategies, which are also present in textbook discourse. Simplification is inevitably fraught with homogenisation, and the exclusion of certain aspects of diversity, therefore, should not necessarily be seen as ideologically driven but also as an attempt to reduce the information load. However, the problematic implications of such “compact” narratives need to be also recognised in terms of mis- and underrepresentation (p. 232). This essentially moves discussion closer to the use of textbooks, which is not within the scope of this study.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasise that this study is, roughly speaking, aimed at answering three questions – what aspects of diversity, how, and what is going on in the approaching of diversity in the content of the textbooks. While the first two questions have been considered, the third research question is the focus of the following section.

5.2. Latest trends: approaching diversity in the textbook series Insights

As a starting point, it is necessary to point out that conclusions about how diversity is approached in the newer textbook series can be made only with significant reservations, as only three out of the eight textbooks comprising the series were available for analysis. However, what is of primary interest in this study is not so much concentrate on the newer series as such separately but rather focus on new patterns and features in approaching diversity in the series in comparison with the older one. Therefore, the third research question was formulated as follows: How, if anyhow, do the themes identified in the textbooks available from the recently launched series differ from textbooks from the older one?

Before moving on to the themes, it is relevant to take a closer look at the titles of the two series as well as the forewords and the summaries on the back covers of the textbooks. This appears to provide illuminating details for observing some differences between the two series concerning their approaches to addressing diversity. The title “Open Road” can be seen as a central metaphor which the textbook series is built upon – learning English is like a journey, travelling
along a road with a great number of destinations. In the foreword for Open Road 1, it is mentioned: “As you travel down that road you’ll get to meet people from English-speaking cultures all over the world: from India to America, from Australia to the UK” (p. 3, italics added). Noticeably different ideas constituting the very logic of the entire series appear to underpin the Insights series. The summary on the back cover of Insights 1 says: “Everyone, including you, has a story to tell: their own experiences, their own perspectives and their own insights <...> And you will add your own insights into what it means to be you…”. Going further through the summaries of individual textbooks from each series, it is interesting to accentuate a noticeable shift in the underlying understanding of culture. The summary of Insights 3, which centres on the topic of culture, provides the following definition: “culture is how we live and express ourselves in our own unique situations” (italics added). Then, the description mentions examples of activities offered for the students in the course, covering different kinds of high culture, and concludes with: “throughout all of it, [you will have a chance to] share your own insights about your life and your world”. As for the Open Road series, the course focusing on the topic of culture, Open Road 5, is summarised as being made up of four themes that correlate with “four of the most important forms of cultural expression in the English-speaking world” (p. 3).

Thus, two valuable observations can be drawn from these excerpts: first, the newer textbook series appears to be premised on a strengthened focus on the idea of identity in understanding culture, and, second, the traditional in ELT primary focus on the English-speaking countries and their cultures is noticeably reduced in the newer textbooks. At this point, it is important to expand on these observations bringing in the findings of the analysis of the textbooks from both series, as well as returning to some of the guidelines given in the NCC 2015 (examined in section 2.4.2.).

The increased focus on the multiplicity of individual perspectives and varied life experiences explains presumably the fact that most of the reading passages introducing the main course themes and topics in the newer series are extracts from novels, where a certain life story is told. As the analysis showed, the stories of people from different walks of society are presented. Then, although the newer textbooks also allocate a considerable space to various activities where the students are expected to express their views, in comparison with the older textbooks, they offer remarkably fewer discussion activities or written assignments where diversity-related issues are explicitly brought up. Therefore, it is plausible to discern a new pattern in the approaching of diversity found in the newer series - social groups tend to be more represented in the main
This can be seen as having important implications in terms of the treatment of diversity, in particular in relation to the inclusion of traditionally marginalised groups. The way sexual orientation diversity is taken up in the newer textbooks is the most illustrative example of how the newer textbook series goes further in “normalising” more “hidden” aspects of diversity (section 4.2.6.). As it was pointed out earlier in the analysis, clearly identifiable LGBT do not appear in the main reading passages in the Open Road textbook series, although sexual orientation diversity as such is recognised by touching upon repeatedly biased attitudes and prejudices towards this social group in activities and exercises. Conversely, although the textbooks from the newer series also bring up the issue of homophobia when discussing the importance of inclusivity, they simultaneously present same-sex relationship as an ordinary phenomenon of today’s society rather than refer to it as an issue to discuss.

Another important detail which can be possibly regarded as indicative of a new emerging trend in addressing diversity in the textbooks is that stories of immigrants are also incorporated into the course topics which are not explicitly related to immigration. This approach to representing immigrants, as compared to treating the topic of immigration solely as a distinct, separately situated, theme, may arguably contribute to the “weakening”, to some extent, of the perceived divisions between the native population and immigrants.

One more feature worth pointing out is that the focus on the notion of agency, which is also at times visible in the textbooks from the older series, appears to be significantly strengthened in the newer textbooks. The idea of an individual’s perseverance in achieving goals and resilience was found running across a few themes, namely in gender representations, portraying people with disabilities, migrants and people of low socio-economic background. Also, with similar underlying ideas, the issue of discrimination is introduced in one of the main reading passages in a way that central attention is paid to an individual’s capacity to make one’s own judgements based on equality principles and stand for such beliefs even when the circumstances may be rather challenging.

Also, the view of English as an international language is allocated considerably more attention in the newer series than in the older one. The idea that English is learnt and spoken differently in different parts of the world is more explicitly introduced, and many more tasks and exercises
involve examples of vocabulary typical of different varieties of English. This feature of the newer textbooks goes essentially in line with the guidelines envisaged by the NCC 2015; as it was summarised in the comparative overview of the two curricular in section 2.4.2., the current curriculum recognises English as the language of international communication and, more specifically, defines the first course in the English syllabus as “English and my world”.

At this point, it is relevant to return to the strengthened focus on the idea of identity, pointed out earlier in this section, and look at it against the background of the curriculum provisions. In the comparative overview of the curricular, it was noted that the current curriculum places a stronger emphasis on an individual in the understanding of diversity, as it mentions, along with “cultural diversity”, “human diversity”, and “identities” and “worldviews” are implicitly suggested as distinct aspects of diversity. Taking this into consideration, it is necessary to conclude that the new features and patterns in approaching diversity in the newer textbook series, for the most part, can be seen as directly linked to the new accents brought in by the renewed curriculum.

To summarise the discussion in this section, it is instructive to return to the twofold aim of this study, in particular its second part, relating to the potential directions for further development in approaching diversity in Finnish textbooks for teaching English. Thus, two major directions can be pointed out. First, the underlying understanding of diversity appears to be moving towards viewing it, first of all, as a diversity of identities, worldviews and lived experiences rather than cultural diversity, in its narrow sense. Second, considering that the approaching of diversity in foreign language textbooks is significantly influenced by what is understood by the ultimate goal of the teaching and learning of languages in general and the English language in particular, it is possible to assume that the adoption of the view of English as an international language will further lead to a greater emphasis on the diversity of speakers and uses of English, and consequently on the diversity caused by cross-national mobility.

Having discussed how the main research questions have been answered, it is necessary to proceed to discussing the value of the findings of this research in terms of how its trustworthiness may be assessed as well as of the underlying ethical considerations.

5.3. Trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations

Coming from the assumption that criteria for the assessment of an inquiry stem from the underlying paradigm (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007, p. 18), the discussion of the overall
quality of the findings of this research is centred on the concept of trustworthiness rather than the concepts of validity and reliability. As it was discussed in detail earlier (section 3.1.1.), this study is qualitative and underpinned by a social constructionist epistemology. Burr (2015) points out that the concepts of validity and reliability, understood as the requirements that the scientist’s description of the reality matches what is really out there and that the research findings are repeatable respectively, are not appropriate for judging the quality of social constructionist work (pp. 177-178).

The criteria of trustworthiness suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981) and elaborated on subsequently by other scholars were chosen as the basis for discussion of the overall “soundness” of the present study (as cited in Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). The scholars point out that these criteria are parallel in the sense that they have been devised to correspond to those from the conventional paradigm, but to be more appropriate for evaluating research within the naturalistic paradigm (p. 18). Although the present study does not represent an example of naturalistic studies, as it does not involve the examination of people in societal contexts, the epistemological underpinnings, drawn from social constructionism, appear to be common; therefore, the criteria, although in part, are seen as appropriately suited. The suggested criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which are analogues to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity respectively (ibid, p. 18).

Credibility is suggested as an equivalent to internal validity, which refers to the idea that the explanation of the issue under examination can actually be sustained by the data, and the findings accurately describe the phenomena being studied (Cohen, 2000, p. 107). Overall, it is necessary to point out that in presenting the findings of the analysis, considerable amount of data was cited with a view to making the drawing of inferences more transparent for the readers, and in the subsequent discussion, an attempt was made to clearly demonstrate a fit between the findings and the phenomenon under examination as captured by the research questions. More specifically, it is relevant to discuss some of the techniques considered to be increasing the probability that the criterion of credibility is met.

One of such techniques, applicable to this study, can be summarised as observing the principle of reflexivity, which refers to assessment of the impact of the researcher’s background, perceptions and interests on the research process (Ruby, 1980, as cited in Krefting, 1991, p. 218). Stated differently, it is necessary to acknowledge the biases a researcher unavoidably brings to the study. Applying this principle to the present study, it is important to explicitly acknowledge that
decisions on what in the content of the textbooks counts as a reference to diversity and interpretation of the meanings of particular phrases, excerpts and illustrations have been greatly shaped by the researcher’s background, such as gender, education, socio-economic status and worldviews, to name but a few. An explicit outline of the investigator’s background, qualifications and experience is, therefore, considered as one of the provisions enhancing credibility (Shenton, 2004, p. 68). In this regard, two aspects concerning the background of this study’s author appear to be the most relevant to mention. First, the writing of this study is the researcher’s first in-depth familiarisation with theoretical perspectives in the related fields as she does not have an extensive practical experience or a strong academic background relating to the teaching of the English language or multicultural education. Second, the knowledge of the sociocultural context of the research can be overall seen as essential, considering the experience of living and studying in Finland, but not equivalent to that of the “native”.

Another strategy enhancing credibility of research is triangulation, i.e. cross-checking of data by means of different sources, methods or investigators (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007, p. 18). It is premised on the idea of combination of multiple perspectives for mutual confirmation of data to ensure that all aspects of a phenomenon have been examined (Knafl & Breitmayez, 1989, as cited in Krefting, 1991, p. 219). In this study, apart from textual content, illustrations and audio materials have been included and, moreover, activities involving students’ reflection were looked at separately. Such convergence of different types of data, therefore, may be seen as contributing to the completeness with which the phenomenon under scrutiny, i.e. the treatment of diversity in the content of textbooks, has been addressed, thereby adding to the credibility of the study.

The criterion of transferability is an analogue to external validity, referring to the degree to which the findings of one study can be generalised to the wider population, cases or situations (Cohen, 2000, p. 109). In this regard, it is necessary to underline that the transferability of this study is, strictly speaking, limited to the textbooks under examination. The findings of this research cannot be generalised to the same extent to all textbooks used in Finland for teaching English. However, especially because the curriculum frameworks were also considered, general trends identified in the examined textbooks may, with reservations, be regarded as relevant to the textbooks used at this school level in Finland in general.

The criterion of dependability, corresponding to reliability, relates to the idea of consistency of findings (Guba, 1981, as cited in Krefting, 1991, p. 221). Addressing the dependability issue, therefore, implies describing explicitly the concrete methods of data collection, analysis and
interpretation (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). In this study, this issue has been addressed by the detailed presentation and justification of the exact method adopted for the data analysis (3.1.3) as well as by providing an outline of the main steps in the analytical process (3.2.2).

Finally, confirmability, based on the idea that research is never objective, directly deals with the issue that “findings should represent, as far as is (humanly) possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher” (Gasson, 2004, p. 93, as cited in Morrow, 2005, p. 252). In other words, the principle of reflexivity, brought up earlier, comes to the fore. Morrow (2005) also points out that this criterion implies that researchers need to link up the data, analytical processes and findings in the way enabling the readers to confirm the adequacy of the findings (p. 252). Thus, the attempts to make the logic behind the analysis in this study transparent for the readers, arguably, contribute to the confirmability of the present research.

In summary, the trustworthiness of this study has been first and foremost addressed by continuously ensuring consistency between the underlying philosophical assumptions, research questions, methodology adopted and treating the data. A great deal of importance has been accorded to explaining the main methodological decisions, clarifying the stages of the analysis and substantiating the inferences made by the excerpts from the data. Also, the main research limitations, namely restricted generalisability and the researcher's role, are acknowledged. In addition, it is worth pointing out that the very concept of diversity is a contestable one, with a great number of ways of looking at it. This study represents only one out of many other possible ways of understanding diversity and examining it in the content of English language textbooks.

As far as research ethics is concerned, considering that this study is based on the analysis of textbooks and does not involve human participants, the issues of procedural and relational ethics, as they are understood in social research (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009, p. 61), are not directly relevant to this study. However, ethical considerations need to be seen as lying at the core of this research since the very rationale behind this study and the understanding of the research problem are inherently ethical. This research is premised on the idea of inclusivity in teaching materials, which implies foregrounding principles of social justice and equity. Besides, self-reflexivity of the researcher in discussing the themes is tightly intertwined with the underlying ethical beliefs.

The following section concludes the thesis by discussing the relevance of the study both from a scientific and practical points of view and the main directions for further research.
6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As concluding remarks, it appears important to elaborate on what was briefly touched upon in the introduction - how this study has to a certain extent contributed to the given research area, - as well as what practical relevance it may have. It is also necessary to outline how this study may be developed further within the field of textbook analysis and beyond it.

The primary focus of this study, i.e. the way diversity is approached in the content of textbooks, is a relevant research topic across different school subject areas. Given the chosen subject area, the textbook analysis carried out within this research work has been greatly informed by the current trends in language education in general and in ELT in particular. This may be seen as something still overlooked in much of research carried out on foreign language textbooks; some researchers from the field have pointed out that discussions in language education, in particular regarding the understanding of the concept of culture, need to be taken up more extensively in foreign language textbook studies (e.g. Weninger & Kiss, 2015, p. 62). In the theoretical chapter, it was suggested that the way diversity may be approached in foreign language textbooks is to some extent reliant on what is understood by the ultimate goal of language learning and teaching and how intercultural aspects are conceptualised. Considering the interdisciplinary nature of the central concepts, the way diversity is understood in this study was primarily drawn from critical approaches to interculturality, which have recently gained increasing visibility mostly in the field of multicultural education. Hence, the focus of the examination was placed on a number of aspects of diversity, with an underlying intention to see whether traditionally marginalised groups and how get represented in the content of the textbooks. As it was pointed out in the review of previous research (section 2.3.3.), this is a relatively poorly explored area in foreign language textbook studies. Also, methodologically, the examination of the content of the textbooks was split into textual/illustrative content, providing representations and narratives, and activities/tasks, guiding the discussion relating to certain social groups or broader diversity-related issues. Overall, throughout the research process, a considerable volume of pertaining research literature was examined and synthesised. Thus, this study might provide some valuable insights, theoretical and methodological, for researchers interested in related topics, such as EFL textbook research or, more broadly, intercultural content of teaching materials.

Besides, the research novelty of this study may be seen in the context it is situated in and its attempt to capture the very latest trends. Initially, this research was planned to be based on one textbook series, but eventually it was significantly redesigned with the view of taking account of
the implementation of the new curriculum and the subsequent gradual replacement of the previously widely used textbooks with the newer ones. In particular, the comparative overview of the NCC 2003 and the NCC 2015, with the focus on the regulations for the instruction in foreign languages as well as the concepts of culture, diversity and identity, might be of some interest to the researchers carrying out various studies relating to the Finnish educational context at the given school level.

From a practical point of view, this study may also be seen as relevant primarily for foreign language teachers. Overall, this study was carried out with the intention to draw attention to the importance of inclusive content of teaching materials as well as of the goals of language teaching, going beyond the development of linguistic competence and even intercultural competence understood in the narrow sense. The themes were presented in detail with a considerable number of citations from the textbooks and accompanied by the analyst's interpretations, which might give interesting insights for practitioners both in Finland and other contexts, where the prevailing materials and approaches may be somewhat different.

As far as further research is concerned, there are basically two main directions in which the present study can be used as a point of departure. The first suggestion, which appears to be a logical continuation of the analysis started here, is to continue this research once all the textbooks from the series Insights have been published. The analysis of the entire series would enable more comprehensive observations concerning the way diversity is approached in the most recently published English language textbooks from Finland. In such a case, the research may adopt a more explicitly comparative perspective. The other direction, which goes beyond the conventional understanding of textbook analysis, has to do with complementing the analysis of textbooks with observations of how the textbooks are used in the classroom. Textbook analysis is all about the researcher's interpretations of the content of textbooks, which may or may not be similar to those of teachers and students using the same textbooks. Therefore, for example, further research may take a more student-oriented approach and include the examination of how students make sense of the textual/illustrative content, as well as engage in the activities, by means of observing the classes as well as possibly conducting interviews. In such a case, the research focus may be moved towards the role textbooks play in the development of students’ critical thinking and agency in relation to diversity.

Thus, this master’s thesis has been generally aimed at contributing to the ongoing discussions about the intercultural content of teaching materials and, more specifically, intercultural aspects
of language learning and teaching. This research work has proved to be a meaningful learning journey for the researcher, and it is hoped that this study may offer something of interest for everyone who gets to read it.
7. REFERENCES

Primary sources


Secondary sources


