

# CENSORSHIP IN EFL TEXTBOOKS

## INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHER ATTITUDES

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## 1. Introduction

English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks and other teaching materials have been widely researched. Earlier research has focused on, for example, socialization (Lesikin, 2001) and the way textbooks are used in class (Gray, 2000). The current study will focus on teachers' attitudes towards censorship in EFL textbooks. Sälpäkivi (2014, unpublished pro gradu thesis) has found out that EFL textbooks avoid and even censor subjects which are considered inflammable. The cases of censorship occur most often in situations where another text (for example, a novel extract) is imported into the textbook. In the process of recontextualisation the text goes through changes because its audience and communicative purpose change. In these situations the textbooks writers employ the so-called PARSNIP principle. The acronym stands for politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms and pork. According to Gray (2010: 120), PARSNIP is an acronym that contains the subjects which should be avoided in textbooks since they might cause offence. By presenting examples of censored texts, the study aims to find out what are the teachers' attitudes towards these kinds of procedures. Furthermore, the study endeavours to discover how the interviewed teachers would have dealt with the issues in their classrooms had they come up.

The PARSNIP guidelines are not present in the current National Curriculum from 2003, but they have been developed by professional who have learnt from practice which issues are best avoided. The curriculum is mostly concerned with the ideals of education; the goals are very ambitious in places, but often fail to take into consideration the reality of schools.

Authenticity of texts is a significant selling point in the EFL textbook market. Since the early 1980's, the communicative paradigm in language teaching has increased the need for authentic materials. The focus of communicative language teaching is interaction, which is seen not just as a means of study but the result. By choosing authentic genres and by trying to emulate their structures, appearance and content, textbook writers are trying to make their product more appealing to their target audience. Lähdesmäki (2007: 55) states that authentic materials are often used when developing a new textbook, but they are not used in an unchanged form because of copyright and cost issues. One textbook writer Lähdesmäki interviewed says that it is easier "to steal the idea" and write the text in another form.

The aim of this study is to find out what kinds of attitudes teachers have towards censorship of EFL textbooks and how they themselves would deal with controversial material in class. The teachers will be interviewed about their own experiences, and they will also be shown examples of censored texts.

## 2. Theoretical Background

The central concepts of this study are recontextualisation and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and they will be examined in this section. In addition, this section will deal with the EFL textbook as a genre and its use in classrooms. The results of the Master's thesis will also be summarised.

### 2.1 Recontextualisation

When a genre is embedded into another, it is recontextualised in the process. Linell's (1998: 144) definition of recontextualisation is "the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context to another." This implies that the embedded genre changes in the process and loses some of its original features.

Basil Bernstein has dealt with the concept of recontextualisation within the discipline of educational research. Bernstein (1990: 47) says that "pedagogic discourse is constructed by a recontextualising principle which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourse to constitute its own order". Bernstein (1990: 60) argues that when a text is appropriated by recontextualising agents, the text changes before it is relocated. Bernstein continues that the transformation is regulated by "a principle of decontextualizing". According to Bernstein (1990: 60), this principle "refers to the change in the text as it is first delocated and then relocated." He states that this process guarantees that the text is no longer the same text.

Bernstein (1990: 61) lists three things that happen to a text when it is recontextualised:

1. The text has changed its position in relation to other texts, practices, and positions.
2. The text itself has been modified by selection, simplification, condensation, and elaboration.
3. The text has been repositioned and refocused.

What follows from Linell's and Bernstein's arguments is that no text is immune to the process recontextualisation. All of the texts, discourses and genres chosen for EFL textbooks go through changes, some most likely more than others. Bernstein (1996: 47) underlines the fact that upon relocation the nature of an embedded genre changes from real and unmediated to "imaginary".

Lähdesmäki (2009: 379) argues that recontextualisation is a process that affects both the genre that is embedded and the textbook as genre. She points out (Lähdesmäki 2009: 80) that from the point of view of recontextualisation, it is important to pay attention to how a genre is transformed, but also on what kind of impact the imported elements of a given genre have on the textbook.

With regard to the present study, two different contexts are at play: linguistic context and social context. Genre embedding is a phenomenon which affects both of these contexts, because as Fetzer (2004: 6) points out "linguistic context is intrinsically linked to social context". In genre embedding, the social context of society in general and the social context of the school in particular affect the linguistic features of the embedded text. What follows is that the recontextualised texts in the textbook need a frame of reference so that they can be interpreted in the context of the educational situation.

## 2.2. The EFL Textbook as Genre

According to Lähdesmäki (2007: 54) foreign language textbooks fit well into Bakhtin's (1986) definition of complex (secondary) genres. According to Bakhtin (1986: 62), complex genres, such as novels and scientific research, incorporate into themselves simple (primary) genres. Bakhtin continues that primary genres can be, for example, rejoinders of everyday dialogue or letters, which when absorbed into a novel retain their form and significance only as parts of the novel. He goes on to say that "The very interrelations between primary and secondary genres and the

process of the historical formation of the latter shed light on the nature of the utterance (and above all on the complex problem of the interrelations between language, ideology, and world view)."

Lähdesmäki (2007: 54) states that since the Second World War, there has been a diversification of genres in Finnish EFL textbooks. Lähdesmäki (2009) says that textbooks now use genres that presumably represent the world of the teenager and hence increase motivation in the target audience. According to her, this may be because language teaching emphasises the communicative paradigm which gives preference to authentic materials. The communicative paradigm does prevail, but its goal of getting the students to communicate does not always have a clear link to the (supposedly) authentic texts used. The key is how the textbook texts are used; if the teacher is able to engage the students enough to have a discussion or even a debate by using the textbook text as a starting point, then the goal of communication might actually be reached.

### 2.3. Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) was developed in the 1970's and early 1980's. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 153), its roots lie in the changes made in British language teaching. The paradigm of Situational Language Teaching (SLT) began to lose ground as applied linguists started questioning its validity. In SLT language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 153) state that British scholars started arguing for the teaching of communicative proficiency instead of the mastery of structures.

The 1970's and 1980's were a time of curriculum modernisation, and during those decades studying foreign languages became available to a larger number of people. There was also a need for foreign language teaching for adults who needed language training for work purposes. Because of these developments, there was a demand to modernise also the teaching methods used in schools. Real life language use was not a priority at the time, but it started moving into focus.

One of the core principles of CLT is the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 170) say that many teachers advocate the use of, for example, magazines, advertisements and newspapers.

## 2.4. The Use of Textbooks in Class

Gray (2000) has studied how teachers adapt and censor cultural content they come across in EFL textbooks. Gray devised a questionnaire for 20 teachers at International House in Barcelona in 1997. Gray (2000: 275) states that his intention is not to make generalisations about his survey because of its limited scope. He is of the opinion that this area of teacher action merits further study and that textbooks should indeed be looked at with a critical eye.

The results of Gray's study (2000: 277) showed that of the twelve teachers interviewed, six dropped textbook material they were uncomfortable with. Five of the teachers said they had adapted material or would do so in the future. One teacher left the question unanswered. Adaptation took many forms. One teacher, for example, adapted material that mentioned alcohol. The teacher changed the situation from a pub to a cafeteria but retained the linguistic element that the students were meant to be learning. Some teachers faced problematic cultural content with humour and engaged the students into a conversation about the issue at hand.

As the results of Gray's study suggest, teachers have a sort of filter when it comes to dealing with sensitive issues in class. According to Gray (2000: 280) some topics will remain taboos which cannot be discussed in a language classroom. Whether it is called PARSNIP or something else, censorship happens by explicit and implicit means. The teacher can gauge the atmosphere of the classroom and adapt and adapt or censor their material accordingly. The significant point here is the fact that the teacher is the one who makes the decision, not some outside party. The teacher usually knows his or her students best and can judge what is appropriate and what is not.

## 2.5. Summary of Gradu Results

In her Master's Thesis Sälpäkivi (2014) found that there is a tendency to edit or even completely delete content that is deemed inappropriate for EFL textbooks. The editing and deleting usually

happens when an authentic text (e.g. novel, newspaper article) is embedded into the textbook. The content is more likely to be edited if it contains mentions about sex or sexuality, alcohol, drugs or religion.

As material, Sälpäkivi used textbooks made between 1980 and 2012 by different publishers. The found examples were analysed in the light of the National Curricula of 1981, 1985, 1994 and 2003. The method of analysis was based on critical discourse analysis (CDA).

### 3. Research Questions

Precious studies have not sufficiently dealt with the issue of censorship which is why the following research questions were set.

The present study will endeavour to answer the following questions:

1. What are Finnish EFL teachers' attitudes towards censorship of textbooks regarding sensitive subjects?
2. How would the teachers deal with sensitive issues, such as sex, alcohol, religion, in class?

### 4. Material and Methods

The following section lays out the methods used in the interviews and the materials used in them.

#### 4.1 Sample and Description of the Interview

The study will be conducted by interviewing two language teachers, who shall remain anonymous, at Etu-Töölön lukio in Helsinki. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the teachers in order to obtain their views on censorship and dealing with sensitive issues in class. The interviews will be semi-structured in order to allow for some leeway for new ideas and viewpoints to be brought up during the interview. Furthermore, the semi-structured format allows the personal



experiences of the interviewees to move into focus. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed.

he questions asked during the interview will be of the following nature:

- How do you feel about the censored texts?
- In your opinion, was the censorship justified?
- How would you have dealt with the issues raised in the censored text extracts?
- Do you think it is okay to talk about sex, alcohol, religion, etc. in an English (or other language) class?
- When designing your own materials, do you use the PARSNIP principle?

## 4.2. Textbooks

As material for the interviews I will be using *Guys 'n Gals* (1994, Otava), *Culture Café* (2002, Otava), *English United* (2006, Tammi) and *Open Road* (2008, Otava). All of the textbooks are for the first English course of upper secondary school, which means that the students using them would be 15- and 16-year-olds. The text examples can be found in the appendix (section 10).

From *Guys 'n Gals* the example is *Adrian Mole's Diaries* which has had an entire diary entry removed because of an allusion to teen pregnancy.

From *Culture Café* the example is Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* which has had parts removed that have to do with female sexuality and smoking.

From *English United* the example is Leila Aboulela's short story *The Museum* which has been adapted so that mentions about religion and suicide have been removed.

From *Open Road* the example is Cathy Newman's article *Every Shoe Tells a Story* from *National Geographic*, 2006. The article has been edited so that references to sexuality have been removed.

These materials will be used in the interviews to prompt the interviewees. The interviewees are allowed to study the examples and express their feelings toward them and how they would react to such teaching material being present in a textbook.

## 5. Analysis of interview data

The analysis will be presented by first looking at each textbook example individually and then according to the additional themes that came up during the interviews. Each textbook and theme will be its own subsection where the two teachers' views will be presented. The teachers interviewed will be referred to as *Teacher 1* and *Teacher 2*. The pronoun "they" will be used to refer to the interviewees so as to not to reveal their gender.

### 5.1 Guys 'n Gals (Adrian Mole's Diary, Sue Townsend)

*Teacher 1* thought that the example from *Guys 'n Gals* would have been too outrageous for a 1990s classroom. They said that nowadays people are more open to talking about different topics, even ones that are outside their comfort zone, but back in the 1990s that would have been out of the question. *Teacher 1* recounts an incident from the 1990s when they attended a publisher's textbook info where someone from the publisher's was boasting that they were brave enough to have the word "bra" in the new textbook.

*Teacher 1* said that a person's sexuality is an important topic, but discussing it in a language classroom would not be appropriate. They said that discussing sexuality on a neutral level might be acceptable, but delving too far into personal issues would not.

*Teacher 2* said that the *Guys 'n Gals* text has several problematic points. The teacher said that she would not use this text in the first course of upper secondary school. However, they said that the text could be used in the eighth course when the students are older, but even then the teacher would have to know the students extremely well and be absolutely sure that the text would not make them uncomfortable. *Teacher 2* said that were they to use this text during the first course, most of the students would probably drop out and think the teacher was unhinged. *Teacher 2's* opinion was also that some of the first year students are still at a stage where they would rather be playing at the sand box and hence not at all ready to discuss such matters as sex.

## 5.2 Culture Café (White Teeth, Zadie Smith)

*Teacher 1* said that the mention of the bra (example 2 a) in Smith's text would not have been a problem in their class. They point out that it might cause a little hilarity among the students, but that would not be so terrible. With regard to example 2 b, *Teacher 1* said that most likely many of the first year students would not understand the simile of the text. According to them the example might have been left out because it can be interpreted as disparaging towards women. *Teacher 1* thought that example 2 c would not be acceptable today because of the strict tobacco laws, but back when the textbook was made (2002), it would have been possible in theory to keep it in the textbook. *Teacher 1* suspected that the mention of a particular tobacco manufacturer was left out for political reasons. They were of the opinion that talking about smoking is perfectly fine, because it is not a taboo subject like sex. *Teacher 1* told that they had in fact talked about smoking in connection with James Bond.

*Teacher 2* thought that the extract was unnecessary in the first place. Their opinion was that novel extracts in textbooks do not serve any real purpose because, despite appearances, they do not really represent textual authenticity. Extracts only represent a tiny fraction of the original novel and do not really do any justice to the author. With regard to example 2 c about smoking *Teacher 2* said that the topic is acceptable when talking about health in general. In addition, smoking can be talked about from the point of view of money use. *Teacher 2* pointed out that under no circumstances would promoting smoking be acceptable for a teacher. They thought that generally textbook writers sometimes take political correctness too far, which makes texts very bland. Furthermore, *Teacher 2* questioned the decisions of textbook writers in choosing texts they then edit. They wondered why the writers don't use texts that are unproblematic in content.

## 5.3 English United (The Museum, Leila Aboulela)

*Teacher 1* said that examples 3 a and b which allude to the Muslim faith would be acceptable topics in class. They said that bringing up different beliefs through fictional literature is suitable for a language class.

With regard to example 3 c, *Teacher 1* said that suicide is not a topic one sees in textbooks. Again the topic is such that it might make some students uncomfortable. *Teacher 1* explained that they had once had a student who was seriously ill, so a topic like suicide would have been wildly inappropriate in that situation.

*Teacher 1* said that talking about HIV is acceptable (example 3 d). *Teacher 1* said that they had talked about HIV already in the 1990s. According to them, HIV is a topic which most likely does not concern them on a personal level, which is why it is alright to talk about it in class. *Teacher 1* points out that it is quite rare to see any diseases talked about in a textbook. They think that talking about diseases would be alright if it were done through storytelling where a person tells about their life and choices.

*Teacher 1* said that since example 3 e contains an allusion to menstruation, it would probably make female students ill at ease. However, *Teacher 1* thought that mentioning sanitary towels was not so bad as such, but emphasised the fact that context is always king. Talking about these kinds of things is acceptable if the proper framework is at hand.

*Teacher 2* said that religion in general is a perfectly acceptable topic, and avoiding it in today's world would be silly. They thought that deleting the mention of praying was peculiar. With regard to examples 3 c and d, *Teacher 2* also pointed out that suicide and illnesses are serious issues that have to be dealt with in a sensitive manner. *Teacher 2* said that they understood why those topics were cut from the textbook version. *Teacher 2* pointed out that sometimes things are cut from the textbook purely for the reason that there is not enough space on the page, and in those cases the writers have to consider which parts of the text serve the purpose best.

#### 5.4 Open Road (Every Shoe Tells a Story, Cathy Newman)

*Teacher 1* said that the examples from text 4 were all such in nature that they would be quite disconcerting to most people in the class, including the teacher. Again when the topic turns to sexuality, it is understandable that it was deemed too racy for a textbook. Especially the mention of fetishes is too controversial for the classroom. *Teacher 1* said that the recording of this particular text has parts in it that are read by a gay individual with a very effeminate voice, which always causes some students to giggle. *Teacher 1* said that it was a brave choice from the

publisher's point of view. On the other hand, *Teacher 1* said that since gay people are nowadays much more prominent in different media, it was no longer such a big deal as it might have been previously.

*Teacher 1* said that in the last year of upper secondary school, in course seven for example, there could be a text that deals with different forms of sexuality, but it would have to be an expository text. According to them, texts which deal with sexuality are often conceptually too hard to grasp for first year students. *Teacher 1* said that as long as sexuality and sexiness were portrayed in a non-threatening manner, they could be dealt with in class. Especially if the topics were looked at from a humorous angle which was not offensive to anybody.

*Teacher 2* said that editing the original as heavily as has it has been destroys the style of the text completely. They thought that the original text was much more interesting than the edited version in the textbook. In fact, *Teacher 2* had never used that particular textbook text in her teaching because it was so unengaging. However, *Teacher 2* thought that the issues raised in the article regarding sexuality might be too embarrassing for some students, so most likely they would not consider this kind of text as teaching material.

## 5.5 Suitable Topics for a Language Classroom

Both of the interviewees thought that it was acceptable to edit content when it comes to language textbooks. They both felt that especially sex is a topic that would make some students very uncomfortable. Since the textbooks used in the present study are for the first course of upper secondary school, both the teachers felt that the students would be of such tender age that bringing up sex in class would not be prudent. In addition, they both pointed out that there might be students in the class who are not yet secure in their own sexuality and making them face that topic and talk about it might be harmful for their personal development. They also emphasised that nobody should be deliberately embarrassed, and that if sex or sexuality is portrayed in a non-threatening manner it is alright to talk about it in class.

Both teachers said that they think of themselves as a fairly open-minded and liberal people who can talk about any subject, but as the text examples made them realise that not all topics are acceptable or appropriate for the classroom. They emphasised, however, that teachers should be

prepared to talk about anything. *Teacher 1* said that talking about, for example, tobacco and drugs is acceptable and even desirable as a form of education. Furthermore, both pointed out that using humour helps, but teachers have to be careful about how and when to use it.

Both teachers agreed that teachers of other subjects might be more equipped to handle sensitive topics than language teachers. They pointed out that neither of them had had any training concerning these kinds of topics and how to tackle them in class.

*Teacher 2* emphasised the fact that all topics that come from the students themselves are worth talking about. However, they would probably not bring up sensitive topics themselves. *Teacher 2* said that they have to always take into consideration the age of the students and mirror that with the topics they want to discuss in class. *Teacher 2* said that they were considering showing a movie related to human rights in the next period. They said that, for example, human trafficking is subject that is far enough from the reality of the students and hence something that can be tackled and discussed openly. Both teachers thought that discussing and debating different topics is beneficial, but the topics have to be justified somehow and the students need to be able to ground their arguments in facts.

## 5.6 Teachers' Own Materials and the use of PARSNIP

According to *Teacher 1*, designing one's own material works on the same basis as designing textbook; the material has to be usable for quite a while. They screen all material before using it in class to make sure that there is nothing that would upset or offend anybody.

*Teacher 1* said that they once showed a video which had a few swear words in it. *Teacher 1* noticed that the students did not really pay any attention to it. *Teacher 1* was of the opinion that a few profanities will not cause problems for anybody.

*Teacher 1* had not heard of the PARSNIP principle before, but they understood why it would be necessary for the production of global textbooks. According to *Teacher 1*, tackling issues of religion were not that sensitive in Finland since the society is tolerant towards different creeds. *Teacher 1* pointed out that dealing with political issues in textbooks is always tricky because political texts are always very topical, whereas a textbook has to be relevant from 5 to 10 years. *Teacher 1* said

that talking about politics as a part of a person's everyday life would be a welcome topic and such that should be dealt with more in class.

*Teacher 1* said that talking about different isms would be perfectly alright, as long as the texts were general in nature. They thought that some teachers might want to avoid isms on the basis of them labelling people too strongly into different categories. *Teacher 1* said that young people should be steered away from stereotypes so that they do not see the world as black and white. According to them, the textbook publisher should avoid seeming to promote any ism; different viewpoints can and should be presented, but only as a way of educating the students about different world views.

*Teacher 2* said that when using their own materials, they do consider whether or not the topic is appropriate for the class. However, *Teacher 2* thought that almost all topics are alright, provided one knows how to tackle them. The PARSNIP principle was not familiar to *Teacher 2*, and they said that they have used all of the topics covered by it in class. *Teacher 2* also pointed out that students like the fact that they get to talk and write about real issues, instead of hobbies and such that they usually deal with in language classes.

## 5.7 The Publisher's Point of View

*Teacher 1* said that the publishers have to consider various viewpoints when designing a textbook. Considering that the textbook has to be acceptable in all parts of Finland may lead to some content being edited. *Teacher 1* pointed out that especially the Laestadian portion of the market would most likely object to content that had to do with sex. They made the argument that the publisher need to be able to sell the textbook to as wide an audience as possible. The textbook has to also endure the test of time which means that themes that are too topical and tied to a certain place in time are usually discarded. In other words, the market dictates content to a high degree.

*Teacher 1* explained that when new textbooks are made, they are sent to a group of teachers for comments. Those teachers can influence the process so that a text which is deemed inappropriate is omitted from the textbook. *Teacher 1* has commented on two textbook series in the past. They were not aware that textbooks contents are edited when they first started teaching. It was only after being involved in textbook commenting that they found this out. According to them,

publishers are not very vocal about how textbooks are made; it is only those teachers who are involved in the process that actually know what happens.

*Teacher 2* had actually been involved in writing textbooks and according to her, sometimes textbook writers are prone to experiment with content, but any topics related to sexuality are always awkward. *Teacher 2* said that textbook text go through much more scrutiny than what the teacher actually says or does in class. In the classroom the teacher can do as they please and raise any issue they deem important enough to talk about. *Teacher 2* said that the topic is not important, but how the teacher deals with it. When the teacher knows his or her students thoroughly, they can make informed decisions about what topics are acceptable.

## 5.8. Feelings about Censorship

*Teacher 1* and *Teacher 2* both said that they were on principle against using novel extracts in textbooks because they tend to remain very isolated and out of context. However, they both also understood why some texts have to be edited when recontextualised into a textbook. They might either contain inappropriate content, or they might be too advanced in language for the students to understand. Both teachers said that the texts chosen for textbooks should serve a clearly defined communicative purpose. They both thought that it is useless to choose texts that have to be censored in order for them to be suitable for textbooks. If the original author has agreed to their text being edited, then both teachers thought that it was acceptable to do so.

## 6. Conclusion

There is definitely a feeling that teachers want to protect their students from material that might upset them. Furthermore, some material is just too flammable for the classroom. Both of the interviewed teachers understood the publisher's intention in editing textbook material; the companies producing teaching material have to take into consideration multiple factors determined by the market. Both of them were at least moderately surprised about the censorship.



They were of the opinion political correctness has its place, but it should not be taken a level that reduces texts to unoriginal blandness.

The teachers interviewed were not averse to discussing sensitive topics in class, but they emphasised the fact that nobody should be deliberately embarrassed and the issues discussed should arise from the students' own interests. They also agreed that they did not possess the skills to face the most difficult issues, such as sexuality and suicide, since they had had no training for it. They were of the opinion that talking about those kinds of issues should be left to professionals.

Both of the interviewed teachers considered themselves very open-minded and ready to discuss any topic that came up. They pointed out that not all teachers are the same; some might be very wary about raising any sensitive topics in class. They both did consider the issue of appropriateness when designing their own materials, but they also thought that making the material interesting for the students was important, and if that meant tackling some sensitive issues, it was perfectly acceptable.

## 7. Discussion

The emphasis on authentic texts created by CLT paradigm is a noble pursuit, but does it guarantee any real results? Most likely all EFL textbooks nowadays familiarise students with authentic texts, but it is also important to teach them how to interpret them and how to remain critical towards them. Teachers should endeavour to make the students look beyond the texts they use in class and examine the ideologies and values behind them. It is likely that most teachers are not aware that even today textbook texts are edited so that "unsuitable" content is removed. If they were aware, they could decide for themselves whether to take the issue up with their students. Teachers should not be afraid to take up ethical question up in class; they could even spark up a lively debate and as side product the students would learn to communicate complex ideas in the target language.

If the ultimate goal of CLT is communication, why do we need textbooks at all? English teachers could gather their own material from authentic sources and make up exercises based on them. The problem is that the ultimate goal of upper secondary school is not fluent communication in

English, but passing the matriculation exam, which is quite far from anything resembling authentic communication. In actuality, many teachers do use authentic materials and technological tools to encourage communication, but not many have abandoned textbooks completely. These teachers use the textbook as a roadmap to guide them in their choice of materials. Even if the teachers choose their own material from authentic sources, they still might avoid using texts that cover “unsuitable” issues, but as long as that choice is left up to them, and not the publishers, some progress has been made. It should be noted that abandoning textbooks completely is not a realistic option for most teachers. In Finland, teachers can choose which textbook they use or if they use one at all, but most do use them because they make their lives easier. Designing all the needed material for each course just is not possible due to time and other restrictions.

When different genres are embedded into the textbook, they are affected by various social factors. The social context of the school is a key factor when looking at how teachers adapt and censor their teaching material. Both of the interviewed teachers expressed opinions that alluded to the fact that the school is a special environment where the students should feel safe and protected from harmful influences. This idea affects the recontextualisation process when textbooks are designed; the textbook cannot contain any elements that would jeopardise the students’ sensation of safety. The question arises to what extent any sensitive material actually affects the students’ sense of safety? In addition, is it acceptable for the teacher to risk someone getting offended if the educational premise of a task or assignment is sound? These questions should be studied further, but in my opinion, political correctness has its place, but giving it too much weight is a mistake because it gets in the way of discussions and debates that can develop the students’ creative and critical thinking.

The aim of this study was to find out what kinds of attitudes teachers have towards censored material in EFL textbooks and how they would themselves deal with sensitive material in class. This aim was achieved, and the teachers interviewed had revealing insights about the issue at hand. Despite these valuable insights, the fact that only two teachers were interviewed makes this study very limited. Because of this, no generalisations can be made. Both of the interviewed teachers represented the same school in Helsinki, and they also shared most of their opinions.

Future studies should include a wider range of teachers from different parts of Finland. For example, teachers working in religious areas might provide interesting insights into censorship.

The findings of the study support Gray's (2000) study which found that teachers adapt and censor material they deem inappropriate. As pointed out earlier, also Gray's study was quite limited, which means that more work on this issue is needed to gauge the real "temperature" in the field. What Gray (2000: 280) suggests is that textbooks should be looked at critically by both teachers and students. According to him, students rarely have the opportunity to respond to the teaching material they are using from the point of view of their own culture. Prodromou (1992: 46) has advocated a cross-cultural approach where students compare their own culture to that represented in the textbook. As encouraging critical thinking is one of the main goals of education, this would be a very commendable approach to take.

## 8. Primary Sources

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## 10. Appendix

1. Sue Townsend's *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole* which appeared in *Guys 'n Gals* (1994, Otava)

The following diary entry has been removed:

SUNDAY APRIL 18TH

*Low Sunday*

Pandora has just left my bedroom. I am just about devastated with frustration. I can't go on

like this. I have written to Aunt Clara, the Agony Aunt.

Dear Aunt Clara,

I am a fifteen-year-old schoolboy. My grandma tells me that I am attractive and many people have commented on how mature I am for my years. I am the only child of a bad marriage (apart from the dog). My problem is this: I am deeply in love with an older girl (by three months). She is in a class above me (I don't mean in school: we are in the same class at school. I mean that she is a social class above me.) but she claims that this doesn't matter to our relationship. We have been very happy until recently when I have started to be obsessed by sex. I have fallen to self-manipulation quite a lot lately, and it is OK for a bit but it soon wears off. I know that a proper bout of lovemaking would do me good. It would improve my skin and help my mind to concentrate on my O level studies. I have tried all sorts of erotic things, but my girlfriend refuses to go the whole hog. She says we are not ready.

I am quite aware of the awesome things about bringing an unwanted baby into the world and I would wear a protective dildo.

Yours in desperation,  
Poet of the Midlands

2. Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* which appeared in *Culture Café* (2002, Otava).

The following changes have been made:

a) Original: She needed no bra – she was independent, even of gravity – she wore a red halterneck which stopped below her bust - - → This sentence has been omitted from the textbook.

b) Original: She wore her sexuality with an older woman's ease, and not (as with most of the girls Archie had run with in the past) like an awkward purse, never knowing how to hold it, where to hang it or when to just put it down. → Omitted completely from the textbook.

c) Original: "Archie Jones," said Archie, offering her a Marlboro. → Textbook: "Archie Jones," said Archie. Mention on Marlboro omitted.

3. Leila Aboulela's short story *The Museum* which appeared in *English United* (2006, Tammi).

The text has been edited considerably. The sections left out have to do with, for example, religion, suicide, HIV and women's hygiene products.

The following examples have been omitted from the textbook:

a) [Shadia is admiring a boy's straight hair in class.] "When she went to Paradise she would have hair like that."

b) "One day she forgot to pray in the morning. She reached the bus-stop and then realised that she hadn't prayed."

c) "Last year, last year a Nigerian on this very same course committed suicide. *Cut his wrists.*"

d) "The mirror in the public bathroom, at the end of the corridor to her room, had printed on it 'This is the face of someone with HIV'."

e) "A man with a franchise for 7Up and the paper factory which had a monopoly in ladies' sanitary towels. Fareed's sisters never had to buy sanitary towels, their house was abundant with boxes of Pinky, fresh from the production line."

4. Cathy Newman's article *Every Shoe Tells a Story* from *National Geographic*, 2006 which appeared in *Open Road* (2008, Otava).

The following examples have been omitted from the textbook:

a. [Natacha Marro is a maker of custom fetish boots in London.] This particular morning, Marro is wearing robin's-egg-blue Mary Jane wedges with a split toe that looks like nothing so much as a pig's trotter. "It's animalistic," she says. "I like animalistic."

Shoes are theater. "Shoes turn you into someone else. You can't be a dominatrix in a sneaker. If you are in a high heel, you are in pain, and you are going to make someone pay for it." Then there is the drag queen who puts on a high platform heel, and he becomes she. "You know women who will kill for the right shoe? There are men, too! You put on heels, and suddenly you are six inches higher," she says. "Who doesn't want to be six inches taller? Even men--more men than you can imagine--want to. It's a play. It's a power thing. You can dress as a sailor, a Victorian, a Renaissance princess. When I go to carnival in Venice, I put on ray brocade high heels, and I am in the 17th century.

"And the epitome of a sexy shoe is?"

"You can't go wrong with a nice fitted black leather boot with a four-inch heel."

b. Gillian Carrara, a professor in the fashion department of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, is demonstrating the anatomical effect of the high heel. "Look what happens when I put on a high heel," she says, pulling on a Vivienne Westwood shoe. Westwood, the British designer responsible for the punk look, is famous for having brought supermodel Naomi Campbell to her knees when she sent Campbell down the runway in a pair of platform shoes so high that the supermodel stumbled and fell.

Carrara places the shoe on the floor, steps in and up. "The breasts go out; the derriere juts back; the leg elongates," she says, as her anatomy puts her words into action. "Men find that very attractive."

"The foot is an erotic organ and the shoe is its sexual covering," wrote William A. Rossi, a podiatrist, in *The Sex Life of the Foot and Shoe*. "The shoe is the erotic foot's pimp and procurer."

Surely, it's all those digits. Toe cleavage. Heaving arches.

"Wrong," counters Harold Koda, curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. "The shoe isn't the pimp for the foot. It's the other way around. The foot is the pimp for the shoe. It's the shoe that is the erotic object." Cinderella's glass slipper, not her foot, ignited the Prince's ardor.

c. Feminist alert! The theme of helplessness runs rampant in the history of shoes--from Chinese foot-binding to the 21st-century stiletto. "I like high heels," British photographer David Bailey reportedly said. "It means girls can't run away from me."

The needle-sharp heel called the stiletto, from the Italian word for "dagger," appeared in the postwar years of the early 1950s. After the war and years of Rosie the Riveter masculine dress, fashion turned feminine; the focus turned to babymaking. Technology contributed a steel core allowing for a thin heel that lifted the shoe up like a skyscraper (previous heels, made of wood, could break). Voilà! The beautiful, dangerous stiletto stepped out.

d. Joanne Heaney, thirtysomething winner of a shoe-aholic contest run by a Canadian chain of shoe stores, lives in Toronto and carries photographs of her favorite shoes in her wallet. "I have about 200 pairs," she says. "My fancy shoes are in my closet. Summer shoes are in another room. Winter shoes are in the basement."

"Why shoes? They fit if you gain or lose weight. They make me feel pretty. They make me feel sexy. They're a great antidepressant. I don't have a pet or a boyfriend. I have my shoes."

