19 Intertextual Analysis of Finnish EFL Textbooks: Genre Embedding as Recontextualization

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INTRODUCTION

The EFL textbook may be described quite accurately through the concept of "complex genres" introduced by Bakhtin (1986) in his famous essay on speech genres. According to Bakhtin, many genres of arts and sciences, for instance, are complex or "secondary" genres which

> absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion. These primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones. They lose their immediate relation to actual reality and the real utterances of others. (p. 62)

One of the most striking features of the contemporary Finnish EFL textbook is its textual and discursive heterogeneity. The textbook aims at representing language use in its full variety and therefore draws upon a wide array of different genres and discourse types. The attempt to provide a comprehensive selection of genres may be seen as one of the tasks of the EFL textbook as a genre. Indeed, one of the clearest trends in the development of the Finnish EFL textbook from its beginnings in the late 1890s till today has been the diversification of the genres presented. Certain traditional textbook genres such as transactional dialogues or highly informational, encyclopedic texts on "key" areas and subjects (such as important historical figures) have been supplemented with—and to some extent supplanted by—genres and conventions which are assumed to be more in tune with the lifeworld of the teenage readers and thus more salient and appealing to the intended readership.

This development may be attributed to different factors. The rise of the so-called communicative paradigm in language teaching, with its emphasis on authenticity and authentic materials, has undoubtedly been a major factor in this. Pedagogically motivated solutions have nonetheless been contingent upon other factors to a varying degree. From a material point of view, increased international mobility and technological development have meant that a wider range of au-

thentic texts is easily accessible for textbook authors to draw upon. The changed role of English in Finland has enhanced this effect: as the English language has become a part of many communicative situations in Finland, increasing amounts of English-language textual material are available. From a technological point of view, advances in printing technology have made it possible to reproduce or recreate texts which *look* like real-life exemplars of the genres. This is significant as the visual outlook of texts, such as typical layout features, provides crucial cues in the recognition of genres in general as well as in the textbook context. Finally, the cultural context of the Finnish EFL textbook has changed significantly and with it the readers' expectations and, crucially, textbook authors' assumptions regarding those expectations. The typical Finnish teenager learning English at the turn of the millenium lives in a highly visual and remarkably text-saturated, mediatized and multi-modal world. As far as her use of English is concerned, she uses and encounters English in diverse everyday contexts without having to leave Finland (Leppänen, 2007). This profile is reflected in the ways in which contemporary Finnish EFL textbooks draw upon generic influences.

THE EFL TEXTBOOK AS AN OBJECT OF RESEARCH

Critical analyses of EFL materials have often attended to the socio-cultural content of textbooks. "Global" textbooks published by large multi-national companies, and used in diverse cultural and religious contexts around the world, have received attention in particular. Scholars have argued, for example, that textbooks typically represent values and worldviews which are highly culture-specific (and typically aligned with Anglo-American or "western" way of life) and which may be alien or even offensive to students of different cultural backgrounds (e.g., Alptekin, 1993; Colebrook, 1996; Gray, 2000). However, it has also been pointed out that recent policies, increasingly adopted by publishers, mandate cultural appropriateness and inclusivity, and this has resulted in textbooks being dominated by "aspirational" texts[2] or educationally appropriate informational texts dealing with, for example, social issues such as environmental problems (Colebrook, 1996; Gray, 2001; see also Jacobs & Goatley, 2000). EFL/ESL materials have also been looked at in terms of socialization, that is, in terms of what kinds of skills and competences they provide (Lesikin, 2001; Littlejohn, 1998). At the same time, some scholars have emphasized that analyses should focus increasingly on the role and the meaning of the textbook as a cultural artifact (Colebrooke, 1996) and the way in which textbook texts are dealt with in the classroom (Gray, 2000; Sunderland, Cowley, Abdul Rahim, Leonzakou, Shattuck, 2001).

Yet, despite the characteristic multi-genericness of the contemporary EFL textbook, the notion of genre does not feature prominently in the body of research on English language textbooks. Dendrinos (1992) is an important excep-

tion. She sees the EFL textbook as constructing a particular kind of social reality through the wide array of genres, or "discourse/text types," as she prefers to call them, which they (re)present. She ascribes to a view of genre which posits as a social practice implying particular ways of producing and interpreting texts (cf. Kress & Threadgold, 1988). While Dendrinos makes illuminating observations about how micro-level choices in instructional texts serve to position readers both as learners and as social subjects, her account fails to address the precise way in which textbook texts are linked to genres of out-of-school reality and, in particular, the generic and discursive hybridity which is evident in foreign language textbook texts. In my view, this is a crucial question in the analysis of foreign language textbook texts, which the concept of intertextuality can help elucidate.

This paper reports one part of an ongoing research project on the intertextuality of Finnish EFL textbooks. The research focuses on the manner in which textbooks draw upon generic influences. The data has been drawn from two series of Finnish EFL materials, published between the years 1995 and 2001. The books are intended for the grades 7-9 in the Finnish school system, which means that the texts have been written for 13- to 16-year-old pupils. The analysis focuses on the reading texts contained in the materials. Moreover, a body of secondary data has been collected, consisting of a selection of Finnish EFL textbooks from 1891 till the late 1980s, relevant policy documents (notably the National Framework Curriculum), and a body of authentic exemplars of genres from which textbook texts draw influences.

The specific aim of this paper is to argue for and to illustrate intertextual analysis as a viable model for the analysis of foreign language textbooks, which is warranted in the first instance by the characteristic generic heterogeneity of such textbooks. The paper focuses on the most obvious kind of intertextuality manifested by Finnish EFL textbooks, namely genre embedding. Of particular interest are the effects of the recontextualization of embedded generic formats in a textbook.

TEXTBOOK TEXTS AS HETEROGENEOUS ENTITIES

The prevalent approach to foreign language teaching in Finland, broadly based on the principles of communicative language teaching, lays emphasis on authenticity in language teaching. Despite this emphasis, contemporary EFL textbooks contain relatively few authentic texts, when an authentic text is seen as one which was originally produced for some other purpose and some other audience and which is incorporated into a textbook without adapting it in any significant measure[3]. Moreover, in the cases in which real texts *are* borrowed, they often come from educational magazines, such as *Senior Scholastic*, or from school textbooks in English for other subjects. As for other kinds of authentic

texts, there are some literary extracts (e.g., from a Sherlock Holmes story and from *Romeo and Juliet*) and scattered instances of genres such as school regulations or graphs representing official statistics, to name a few, which are often appended to another text by way of illustrating or expanding its subject matter. Far more common, then, than bringing authentic texts into textbooks is for textbook authors to write original texts which draw influences from varied genres from out-of-school contexts.

EFL textbooks do not imitate or borrow genres in a consistent manner, but rather "absorb and digest" elements in varying ways and degrees. In some cases generic influences are drawn upon quite explicitly, so that a textbook text reproduces a genre text intact, adhering to the central conventions of the genre throughout the text. In other cases, generic influences appear more implicitly. The distinction between more explicit and more implicit incorporation of varied generic or discursive elements into a text has been referred to as the distinction between "embedded" and "mixed" intertextuality, respectively (Bhatia, 1997, 2004; Fairclough, 1992). The present paper focuses on the use of "embedded" generic influences in EFL textbooks.

Bhatia (1997, p. 191) defines "genre embedding" as cases in which "a particular generic form . . . [is] used as a template to give expression to another conventionally distinct generic form." He illustrates the definition with an example in which a job advertisement is written—and displayed—in the format of a poem. That the example comes from advertising is not a coincidence. Bhatia himself observes that genre embedding is very common in advertising. Bex (1996) discusses the same phenomenon, and notes that advertising tends to exploit such genres which are associated with a given section of population which is targeted by an advertisement. Embedded generic formats as employed in advertising thus serve to construct a specific target group *and* to construct that group as having shared needs, interests and concerns.

This is not unlike the case of the contemporary EFL textbook. The intertextual makeup of the EFL textbook, including its genre choices, is based particularly explicitly on assumptions regarding the literacy events and literacy practices in which young people engage in out-of-school contexts. That is, the EFL textbook will contain genres or conventions from genres which are assumed to be familiar to the teenage users of the books. Moreover, genres and generic conventions are often drawn upon in such a manner that they are easily recognized and may be identified. Embedded genres or genre formats are a case in point.

EMBEDDED GENRES AS RECONTEXTUALIZED GENRES

One central thought which emerges both from Bakhtin's (1986) discussion on secondary genres and Bhatia's (1997) definition of embedded genres is that

when imported into a new context, a given genre will be altered. This is inherent in any process of "recontextualization." Linell (1998, p. 144) defines recontextualization as "the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context to another." Recontextualization as a concept has particular inflections in the context of educational research where it is mainly associated with the work of the educational sociologist Basil Bernstein (1996). According to Bernstein, "[p]edagogic discourse is constructed by a recontextualizing principle which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourse to constitute its own order" (p. 47). The various kinds of transformations which occur upon recontextualization are thus indicative of the practices and the values at stake in the particular social and textual site.

The question of recontextualization is germane to studies on intertextuality. It is particularly central, for example, in analyses of "intertextual chains" (Fairclough, 1992) or local "genre systems" (Devitt, 1991) which focus on the conventional ways in which texts (whether written or spoken) are recycled and reworked into new texts within or across institutions or professional settings (Berkenkotter 2001; Devitt, 1991; Solin, 2001). The process of recontextualization described in such studies is somewhat different qualitatively from the case of genre embedding. They focus mainly on the type of intertextual processes which Devitt describes as "referential intertextuality," which is a case of one text or set of texts functioning as the subject matter of subsequent text(s) and/or as an authority which is referred to in other texts.

As for the embedded generic formats featuring in the EFL textbook, the relationship between the textbook text and its intertext is imitative rather than referential. Thus, on the surface, it might seem that an embedded genre undergoes minimal transformation when relocated into a textbook. However, the situation is much more complex than that. As pointed out, for example, by Dendrinos (1992), the very relocation of a genre/text into the new site changes its nature irrevocably. A newspaper article occurring in a textbook will not trigger the same expectations in the reader when she encounters it in a textbook, as a pupil, as when she reads a similar text in a newspaper which she has bought or has a subscription to. One central feature of texts and genres imported into a textbook is that the relationship between the reader and the text is heavily mediated. Bakhtin (1986) and Bernstein (1996) both underscore the fact that upon relocation a genre or discourse loses its unmediated, "real" nature and, in Bernstein's words, becomes "imaginary" (p. 47).

Finally, it should be noted that recontextualization is a two-way process. Fairclough (1992, pp. 127-128) suggests that there are "constraints and rules of compatibility" between genres and discourses, albeit not nearly as conventional or as stable as between particular genres and compatible register choices, for ex-

ample. An analysis of genre embedding thus also involves an examination of discourses potentially carried over into the textbook with the generic format. From the point of view of recontextualization, then, we need to focus our attention on the way in which a given genre is transformed upon recontextualization, but also on how the importing of elements from particular genres—and, crucially, not from others—into the textbook affects the textbook as a genre.

THE CASE OF "THE BLUNDERS LETTER"

In this section, I shall illustrate the above discussion empirically, with reference to data from a Finnish EFL textbook. The first subsection illustrates a typical case of genre embedding in my data, while the latter explicates the way in which genre embedding is an instance of recontextualization and what kinds of effects it has.

Genre embedding

The example which I am about to discuss is a text entitled *Dating disasters*[4] from a book called *This Way Up: Texts 2* (1999, pp. 54-55). The text poses as a spread from a teenage magazine, imitating a particular subgenre of readers' letters which is commonly found (and specific to) contemporary teenage magazines. These are letters in which readers recount and describe embarrassing events, arising from various kinds of social blunders they have committed themselves or witnessed. Magazines contain special sections for these letters. For want of a conventionalized genre label, I shall refer to these letters as "blunders letters[5]." The analysis below is informed by an examination of a sample of 64 authentic blunders letters from two Finnish and two North American teenage magazines.

There are a number of cues which guide the reader to construe the six personal narratives as readers' letters, albeit fictional, to a teenage magazine. Among the most obvious and explicit ones are self-referential verbal cues, that is, the name of a fictitious teenage magazine, *Young&Hip*, and the headings, *Your letters* and *Dating disasters*, which point to the genre and the more specific subgenre which are modeled in the text. Also crucial are different kinds of visual cues: the layout of the page, the use of colors, borders and photographs, as well as the use of different typefaces are all very similar to authentic exemplars. The text also displays textual and linguistic features which testify to its intertextual relation with teenage magazines' blunders letter sections. The overall structure of the text, consisting of heading(s) > a lead-in > a "colony" (cf. Hoey, 2001) of similar but independent short texts (followed by a signature) is conventional in the genre. The texts representing blunders letters are written in the first person singular, and they display a particular kind of narrative format which is characteristic of

authentic exemplars. The letters fit both linguistically and structurally the definition of a storytelling genre which Eggins & Slade (1997), drawing upon Plum's (1988) typology, classify as an "anecdote."

What characterises anecdotes is a structure in which an "orientation" (a phase describing the setting of the events) is followed by some "remarkable event," that is, some unexpected and typically either embarrassing or amusing incident, which often represents or results in some kind of breach of social norms. An anecdote culminates in the "reaction" brought about by the remarkable event, that is, either the protagonist's own reactions or the reactions of others, which may be either psychological (e.g., mortification, disapproval) or physical (e.g., laughter, scream). As optional elements, anecdotes may open with an "abstract," which captures the gist of the story in a nutshell, and/or close with a "coda," which takes the narrator and the audience back to the "here and now" and comments on the significance of the events relayed. Linguistically, anecdotes are characterised by marked interpersonal involvement, manifested by the use of expressions which are evaluative and/or affective in nature. (For evaluative language, see, e.g., Thompson & Hunston, 2001.) Example 1, below, presents a structural analysis of one of the letters from *Dating disasters* as an anecdote.

> Example (1)
> From: *Dating disasters* (*This Way Up*, Otava 1999), reproduced with the permission of Otava Publishing house.

- **Orientation**
  I was out on a first date with a guy I had chased for so long. He took me to a really fancy little restaurant, which made me a bit uncomfortable.

- **Remarkable Event**
  During the dinner, as I was sipping my soda, he cracked some joke. I laughed so hard that the soda came out of my nose. I started choking.

- **Reaction**
  Everyone stared at us.

- **Coda**
  My date was really embarrassed and never called again.

Where anecdotes differ from "the classical narrative" as defined by Labov and Waletzky (1967), then, is that there is no explicit resolution (brought about by the protagonist's actions), nor do they necessarily contain an evaluation com-

ponent, which spells out why the story was worth telling. It seems then that an anecdote presupposes more shared contextual information from the audience, that is, an audience that can appreciate why a particular incident is so amusing, embarrassing, and so forth. It is a type of story which is told among peers.

Recontextualization

In the above section I discussed one aspect of genre embedding, namely the way in which the conventions of one genre are drawn upon in order to create a template for the purposes of another genre. This section focuses on the way in which this template is put to work in the adoptive context. This involves examining, first, what sorts of features are carried over into the textbook from the original context of use of the embedded genre and, second, how it is modified or adapted in the new context.

The "blunders letter" is itself a recontextualization. It is the product of relocating the conventions of private (and perhaps primarily oral[6]) storytelling into a public genre. One particularly noteworthy feature of the "blunders letter" as a genre is its markedly gendered nature. Out of the 64 authentic "blunders letters" examined for purposes of comparison, 57 were written by females; in five cases the writer's pseudonym or the content of the letter did not unequivocally reveal the sex of the writer; and two letters were clearly written by males. This is explained to a large extent by the fact that this type of reader's letter is a constant feature of teenage magazines targeted at girls, which, of course, further reinforces its status as a gendered genre. However, even when it occurs in a gender-neutral magazine, most writers are girls and, interestingly, are *portrayed* as girls in humorous cartoon-like drawings employed to illustrate the letters (even in cases in which the sex of the writer is not apparent).

The gendered nature of the "blunders letter" is not surprising in light of the studies on oral storytelling, referred to by Eggins & Slade (1997). They point out that, based on the findings of Johnstone (1993) and Coates (1995), it seems that "stories in which speakers show themselves in fearful, embarrassing or humiliating situations are far more likely to be told by women than by men" (1997, p. 229). The appearance of the "blunders letter" in an EFL textbook is significant in that it is one example of several genres occurring in contemporary Finnish EFL textbooks which are typically associated with female readership. Such genres include notably media genres, such as horoscopes and personality tests, but also more private genres, such as diary entries. The fact that textbooks feature gendered genres has important consequences for the way in which textbooks position their readers. (For reader positioning, see Kress, 1985).

Besides the baggage of a gendered genre, however, the "blunders letter" as a genre affords a particular kind of meaning potential which may be deemed valu-

able from a pedagogic point of view. Storytelling does a lot of interpersonal work in conversation (Eggins & Slade, 1997), and it could be seen as being given similar functions in the language textbook. The anecdotes found in "blunders letters" are characteristically very involved: they are told in the first person; they are make extensive use of evaluative, affective language; and they present the narrator in a socially vulnerable position, but they are nonetheless humorous. It can be plausibly argued that an important function of the fictional "blunders letters" is to create proximity between the text and the student reader. Indeed, personal narratives and other kinds of stories are quite common in the EFL textbook generally.

What further attests to their perceived usability as elements of engaging pedagogic texts is the fact that narrative genres have a long history as textbook genres, going at least as far back as the time of the Reformation (C. Luke, 1989; see also Venetzky, 1987). Tales, jokes and anecdotes were also staple material in Finnish EFL textbooks from their beginnings in the 1890s for many decades. In textbooks from the early 1970s onwards, such storytelling genres have typically occurred within, or mixed with, generic formats from out-of-school contexts. In other words, the intertextual makeup of contemporary EFL textbooks is the product complex set of recontextualizations, with both synchronic and diachronic dimensions.

When entering a language textbook, texts undergo some fairly obvious changes. In the case of embedded generic formats, these changes could be seen as those features which immediately give away a text's status as a textbook text for all its genre-specific conventions. In *Dating disasters* such features include notably the chapter number, line numbering and the numbering of the letters. These are textbook conventions which have become naturalized owing to the purposes they serve in the totality of the discursive practices of schooling. Reading texts are numbered and often further categorized according to their centrality (e.g., "core" and "extra" materials) and/or the specific pedagogic purpose they are intended to serve ("listen," "find out," "study," "read," etc.). Moreover, the use of a text in the classroom is facilitated by providing line numbering and sometimes, as in this case, by numbering sections of the text. As C. Luke & A. Luke (1995) argue, such conventions arise out of the practices of a self-referential pedagogic "order of discourse" (see Fairclough, 1992), formed by a configuration of genres, discourses and practices such as the reading text, the adjunct exercises, the practices of the EFL classroom, and ultimately, for instance, the national curriculum and language pedagogic theory.

In addition to the overlay of textbook conventions, recontextualized generic formats in the EFL textbook are fitted into the school text in other ways as well. The recontextualization of the "blunders letter" into a textbook has brought

about certain interesting "meaning shifts" (see Solin, 2004) in the way the genre is construed. Far from representing the blunders letter as a female genre, the writers of the fictitious letters in *Dating disasters* are predominantly male. It seems, then, that the textbook attempts to subvert the stereotype of men as incapable of telling stories about their blunders or foibles—and as not engaging in the writing of "blunders letters." Again, this is especially intriguing because it is not an isolated incident in my data: a similar shift occurs, for example, when another gendered genre, the pet magazine, is embedded into the textbook. This kind of adaptation of genre characteristics is likely to stem from (implicit or explicit) policies of textbook publishers to avoid texts or representations which could be potentially offensive (cf. Gray, 2001) and/or which are not in concordance with the value base of educational policies and official documents such as the national curriculum which emphasises, among other things, gender equity.

Modification of genre characteristics is also in evidence in the lead-in preceding the letters in *Dating disasters* (see Example 2, below).

> Example (2)
> From: *Dating disasters* (*This Way Up*, Otava 1999), reproduced with the permission of Otava Publishing house.

- Why is it that we always make fools of ourselves when somebody important is there to witness that terrible moment? The indescribable embarrassment makes your cheeks glow red-hot. You wish you had never been born. Don't fret! Read these stories and—what a relief!—your "disaster" wasn't that bad after all!

In authentic examples the lead-in dares the young readers to "expose themselves," as one magazine says, and to "entertain" other readers by sharing their grossest social blunders. The tone is almost celebratory, presenting blunders as something to boast about. (For example, in the *M Magazine*, blunders letters are tellingly referred to as *LOL stories*, where the three-letter acronym stands for "laughing out loud.") In the textbook version, on the other hand, the tone is rather more consoling than celebratory, and what is presented as the rationale for the publication of the letters is to show to the reader that other teenagers are equally fallible and that one's own disgraces may not even be that bad in comparison with those of others. To use the term from Bakhtin (1986), the lead-ins differ in terms of "addressivity," that is, they anticipate different kinds of readers and readings. Authentic examples address readers who are both able *and* willing to react to the lead-in by writing and sharing their own experiences. The textbook version, in turn, addresses a more passive audience who can only react

emotionally, not physically and verbally by sharing their own stories. In other words, the lead-in implies a student-reader whose uptake of the text is controlled to a significant degree by the practices of the EFL classroom.

CONCLUSION

The *Dating disasters* text is an illustrative example of the way in which the EFL textbook attempts to engage and motivate its readers by incorporating generic influences from the domain of youth culture and particularly from the youth media. The characteristics of genre embedding in EFL textbooks may be usefully examined in light of the concept of "affinity" as formulated by Hodge & Kress (1988, p. 123). According to them, affinity is the expression of modality, a term conventionally used to refer to the truth value or the degree of obligation assigned to a verbal utterance. Hodge & Kress, however, extend the concept of modality, which they see as expressing commitment to representations of truth or "the real," and which may be constructed through different modalities. To give a few examples, a photo is regarded as being more "trustworthy" than a drawing; a news report is regarded as portraying reality more accurately than a fairy tale; and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is probably regarded by most as saying something truer and more profound about human nature, love and relationships than a Barbara Cartland novel. From this perspective, the imitative intertextual linkages to salient genres can be seen as signaling "high" affinity in Hodge & Kress' terms. That is, the textbook aims at constructing a relationship of solidarity towards the reader by creating a textual environment which is "real" or "authentic" for the intended readership. In the case of *Dating disasters*, the specific generic features of the "blunders letter" enhance this effect. One of the most important functions of blunder stories, whether published in a teenage magazine or shared more privately in conversations or chatrooms, is surely the creation and maintenance of solidarity among peers.

However, the analysis of genre embedding in terms of recontextualization also underscores the complexities—and the challenges—involved in the embedding of such specific, situated genres into a textbook. Though not an entirely analogous case, Duff's (2004) study on pop culture references as an element of educational discourse is illuminating in this respect. What emerges from Duff's study is that the incorporation into classroom discourse of such intertextual elements is a strategy which relies heavily on an assumption of shared cultural knowledge and shared literacy practices and which, in the best of circumstances, may be empowering and engaging for students, but it also runs the risk of excluding those students who, for one reason or another, do not share the same resources. Such a concern is also relevant with respect to *Dating disasters* in that it models itself on a genre which is very strongly associated with gendered dis-

courses and subjectivities. Despite the textbook's re-creation of the "blunders letter" as a gender-neutral genre, it retains its "social dispositions" (cf. Emmons, 2007, p. 192) as a gendered genre. Thus it might fail to engage male learners in the kind of discussion which the textbook authors seem to have intended, based on suggestions inscribed in the teacher's guide accompanying the book in question. Looked at from another angle, the case of *Dating disasters* exemplifies the way in which educational discourse "appropriates" genres and discourses under its own order, as suggested by Bernstein (1996) (see also Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 110). By rendering the "blunders letter" as educationally appropriate, as it were, the textbook text blurs the social and cultural anchorings of the genre, failing either to problematize the way in which media industries target and position girls (see below) or to validate the "blunders letter" as a re-source for playful identity construction (primarily) for young girls.

Finally, the patterns of recontextualization evident in contemporary EFL textbooks provide an insight into the complex ways in which the textbook, as a culturally salient institutional text, is related to its social context. The notion of pedagogic discourse and, by extension, the school textbook as entities which are characterized to a large extent by the way in which they relocate discourses and genres, is not new. However, I have argued in this paper that the recontextualization of intertextual influences is particularly apparent in the contemporary EFL textbook. I also maintain that the intertextual features of the textbooks can be seen as indexing *the linguistic and discursive aspects of macro-level societal and cultural phenomena. F*or example, the occurrence of gendered genres in textbooks should be addressed, besides as a choice made by textbook authors, in terms of what there is to choose from. In other words, the fact that the textbooks feature several media genres which are associated primarily or exclusively with female readership, while any distinctly "male" genres are hard to find, is partly connected to the way in which women and girls are targeted as readers (and consumers) by the print media. There is a proliferation of "general interest" women's and girls' magazines, while boys' tastes, it seems, are catered to by more specialized magazines. (And as a print genre, the magazine is easy to imitate in the printed textbook.) The prevalence of media genres and particularly their visual conventions in EFL textbooks could be interpreted in a similar vein, as reflecting the increased mediatization of communication, but also its increased visualization, in contemporary societies.

APPENDIX A: THE VERBAL TEXT OF *DATING DISASTERS*[7]

Your letters
Dating disasters

Why is it that we always make fools of ourselves when somebody important is there to witness that terrible moment? The indescribable embarrassment makes your cheeks glow red-hot. You wish you had never been born. Don't fret! Read these stories and—what a relief!—your "disaster" wasn't that bad after all!

(1) "I was out on a first date with a guy I had chased for so long. He took me to a really fancy little restaurant, which made me a bit uncomfortable. During the dinner, as I was sipping my soda, he cracked some joke. I laughed so hard that the soda came out of my nose. I started choking. Everyone stared at us. My date was really embarrassed and never called again." *Gina, 16* *Sacramento, CA*	(2) "I had the hots for this girl at school. I had asked her out and she'd said 'Yes'. I was on cloud nine and started showing off to my buddies. I'd always fancied myself as a good dancer, so I decided to show them how I would dance with my date. I was swinging my hips and doing a great routine in the school corridor. At first, the other guys were just grinning, but when my old belt broke and my pants went down to my ankles, they cracked, pointing their fingers behind my back. As I turned, I saw my date watching my show with a bunch of her friends." *Trevor, 16* *Baton Rouge, LA*	(3) "My boyfriend's parents went to the movies, but we decided to go and eat out in a Chinese restaurant. He ordered a meal which was large enough for an army: ribs, fried rice, soup and spring rolls. When the food arrived, he discovered he had no money. I had to pay the check! What really annoyed me was his parents' reaction. They thought it was funny and they didn't offer to pay for my boyfriend's share." *Ally, 18* *Bangor, ME*

| (4) "My fourth date with a new girlfriend went fine until I accidentally called her by the name of my ex-girlfriend. That was the end of a promising relationship!" *Chas, 17* *Providence, RI* | (5) "My dating disaster happened at my senior prom. My girlfriend and I both still had braces on our teeth. While we were dancing cheek to cheek, we kissed every once in while. During one long kiss our braces somehow managed to get stuck! The whole school just stood there laughing their heads off." *Rob, 18* *Dallas, TX* | (6) "You would never expect to end up in a hospital on your first date—not even in your wildest dreams. It happened to me, and I wasn't the patient. My date wanted to teach me to bowl. She was really into bowling and good at it, whereas I was an absolute beginner. I dropped a bowling ball on her toe, so we spent a night in the not-so romantic emergency room of the hospital." *Theo, 14* *Detroit, MI* |

APPENDIX B: AN IMAGE OF THE DATING DISASTERS TEXT[8]

Your letters

19

Dating disasters

Why is it that we always make fools of ourselves when somebody important is there to witness that terrible moment? The indescribable embarrassment makes your cheeks glow red-hot. You wish you had never been born. Don't fret! Read these stories and – what a relief! – your "disaster" wasn't that bad after all!

1 "I was out on a first date with a guy that I had chased for so long. He took me to a really fancy little restaurant, which made me a bit uncomfortable. During the dinner, as I was just sipping my soda, he cracked some joke. I laughed so hard that the soda came out of my nose. I started choking. Everyone stared at us. My date was really embarrassed and never called again."

Gina, 16,
Sacramento, CA

2 "I had the hots for this girl at school. I had asked her out and she'd said 'Yes'. I was on cloud nine and started showing off to my buddies. I'd always thought of myself as a good dancer, so I decided to show them how I would dance with my date. I was swinging my hips and doing a great routine in the school corridor. At first, the other guys were just grinning, but when my old belt broke and my pants went down to my ankles, they cracked, pointing their fingers behind my back. As I turned, I saw my date watching my show with a bunch of her friends."

Trevor, 16,
Baton Rouge, LA

3 "My boyfriend's parents went to the movies, but we decided to go and eat out in a Chinese restaurant. He ordered a meal which was large enough for an army: ribs, fried rice, soup and spring rolls. When the food arrived, he discovered that he had no money. I had to pay the check! What really annoyed me was his parents' reaction. They thought that it was funny and they didn't offer to pay for my boyfriend's share."

Ally, 18,
Bangor, ME

4 "My fourth date with a new girlfriend went fine until I accidentally called her by the name of my ex-girlfriend. That was the end of a promising relationship!"

Chas, 17, Providence, RI

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NOTES

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² Gray (2001) reports that EFL textbook publishers use the term "aspirational" to refer to content which centers around things which young people are assumed to find desirable and worth aspiring for, such as holidaying, shopping, etc.

³ In other words, I am using the term here to refer to the provenance of texts. This is a conventional use of the term in much of language teaching literature. However, it should be noted that many authors emphasize that authenticity does not reside in texts. Widdowson (1991), for example, talks about the "genuineness" of texts when referring to their origin, distinguishing it from "authenticity" (or "inauthenticity"), which he reserves for describing the response to, or the uptake of, a text.

⁴ The verbal component of the text is reproduced in Appendix A. An image of the text, displaying the visual conventions used, is provided in Appendix B.

⁵ The names of "blunders letter" sections in Finnish and North American teenage magazines include: *Traumarama*, *Boy blunders*, "*Self-exposure*" (translated from Finnish), "*Blunders*" (translated from Finnish).

⁶ It should be noted that the primacy of the oral mode might be challenged here on the grounds that young people, in particular, make extensive use of different electronic media and the written mode for private, informal interaction.

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