ABSTRACT: The article describes the contemporary Finnish EFL textbook as a ‘complex genre’ (Bakhtin 1986), which ‘absorbs and digests’ a variety of real-life genres. It is suggested that the imitative intertextuality characteristic of the EFL textbook may be fruitfully analysed using the concept of ‘genre embedding’ (Bhatia 1997, 2004). It is argued that besides identifying generic formats, an analysis of genre embedding as recontextualisation is imperative when studying school textbooks from a critical perspective, and that recontextualisation needs to be addressed both in terms of appropriation and in terms of colonisation. A data example is analysed to illustrate genre embedding and the effects of recontextualisation of generic formats into EFL textbooks.

KEYWORDS: EFL textbooks, intertextuality, genre embedding, recontextualisation

1. Introduction: The EFL textbook as a ‘complex genre’

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.” (1986, 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 since the second world war 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 – conventions of ‘real-life’ genres.

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 authentic 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 authentic or 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 stereotypical Finnish teenager learning English at the turn of the Millennium lives in a highly visual and remarkably text-saturated, mediatised and multi-modal world. As far as her use of English is concerned, she is not so much a tourist as a cosmopolitan using and encountering English in diverse everyday contexts without having to leave Finland. This stereotype is reflected in the ways in which the contemporary Finnish EFL textbooks draw upon generic influences.

Past research on EFL textbooks has tended to focus on their pedagogic solutions and their merits or drawbacks, or their cultural content, its appropriateness or – as is often seen to be the case – its inappropriateness. Analyses of the characteristics of the foreign language textbook as a genre, as “a socially ratified text-type” (Kress & Threadgold 1988: 216) drawing on particular conventions, however, remain a relatively neglected area of investigation. Yet the EFL textbook provides an intriguing and challenging case for genre analysis. It is intriguing precisely because of the nature of the textbook as a ‘complex’ genre, a collection of genres, and it is challenging in the sense that textbook genres defy neat description. Despite the often obvious intertextual relations of the textbook to the genres of everyday communication, the recontextualisation of the latter in a textbook does not leave them unaltered.

This article reports one part of my ongoing PhD research on the intertextuality of Finnish EFL textbooks. The research focuses on the manner in which textbooks draw upon generic influences. The data consists of core reading texts (as opposed to ‘extra’ materials and songs, poems, etc.) from two series of EFL textbooks published by two Finnish publishing companies between 1995 and 2001. The books are intended for the grade 8 in the Finnish school system, which means that the texts have been written for 14-to-15-year-old pupils. The principal method employed is empirical text analysis, but text analyses are supplemented with interviews of textbook authors and with a body of secondary data consisting of ‘control texts’ (that is, examplars of the real-life genres from which textbook texts draw influences) and a selection of earlier Finnish EFL textbooks from mid-1940s till late1980s.

2. Texts as heterogeneous entities: the mixing and embedding of discursive elements

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. 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 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 real texts through their generic features.
EFL textbooks do not imitate or borrow real-life 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 and are possibly mixed with elements from various other genres in addition. 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 (e.g. Fairclough 1992, Bhatia 1997, 2004). The present paper focuses on the use of ‘embedded’ generic influences in EFL textbooks.

Bhatia (1997) 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” (1997: 191). Bhatia illustrates the definition with an example in which an 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 a range of specific generic formats are commonly exploited in advertising. Bex (1996) touches upon the same phenomenon when analysing an advertisement imitating a problems page, consisting of the letter of a dog-owner distressed by ‘dog-induced’ smells in her car and the reply by an expert who provides a solution to the problem in the form of a particular product. Bex (1996: 158) argues that “[o]ne of the tasks of a successful advertising campaign is to target a section of the population in such a way as to suggest that they have common interests […]. Advertising will, therefore, tend to be parasitic on those genres which are associated with such potential customers.”

This is not unlike the case of the contemporary EFL textbook. The intertextual make-up 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 recognised and may be identified. Embedded genres or genre formats are a case in point.

3. Embedded genres as recontextualised 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 ‘recontextualisation’. Linell (1998: 144-145) describes recontextualisation as “the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context to another” which involves “the extrication of some part or aspect from a text or discourse, or from a genre of texts or discourses, and the fitting of this part or aspect into another context (…) and its use and environment”. Recontextualisation 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 recontextualising principle which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourse to constitute its own order” (1996: 47). The various kinds of transformations which occur upon recontextualisation are thus indicative of the practices and the values at stake in the particular social and textual site. Bernstein
(ibid.) sees recontextualisation as a process which creates a space “in which ideology can play”.

The question of recontextualisation 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 (Devitt 1991, Solin 2001, Berkenkotter 2001). The process of recontextualisation 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 (1991) 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 face of it, it might seem that an embedded genre undergoes minimal transformation when relocated in(to) a textbook. However, the situation is much more complex than that. First of all, the very relocation of a genre/text into a 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. Bernstein argues that “[a]s discourse moves it is not the same discourse any longer. […] It is transformed from an actual discourse, from an unmediated discourse to an imaginary discourse” (1996: 47). Bakhtin (1986: 62), too, stresses the fact that upon entering a complex genre unmediated everyday genres become mediated and “lose their immediate relation to actual reality and the real utterances of others.”

Finally, it should be noted that recontextualisation is a two-way process. Fairclough (1992, p.127-8) 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 example. 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 recontextualisation, then, we need to focus our attention to the way in which a given genre is transformed upon recontextualisation, but also to how the importing of elements from particular genres – and, crucially, not from others – into the textbook affects the textbook as a genre.

4. The case of the 'blunders letter'

In this section, I shall illustrate the above discussion empirically, with reference to actual data. 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 recontextualisation and what kinds of effects it has.

4. 1. Genre embedding

The text is entitled “Dating disasters”

1 The verbal component of the text is reproduced in Appendix 1. An image of the text, displaying the visual conventions used, is provided in Appendix 2.
specific genre, as readers’ letters recounting embarrassing experiences constitute a specific subgenre in contemporary youth magazines. For want of a conventionalised genre label, I shall refer to it as the ‘blunders letter’. As for the structure of the verbal text, it consists of the title identifying the specific section of the magazine in question and specifying the genre to be found there (i.e. readers’ letters), followed by the main heading which refers to the subject matter of the letters (‘dating disasters’). The heading is followed by a lead-in section written by an editor of the magazine. This is followed by six personal accounts of ‘dating disasters’, written by teenagers aged from 14 to 18.

There are a number of fairly explicit cues which guide the reader to construe the six personal narratives as readers’ letters, albeit fictional, to a youth magazine. The most obvious cues are the informative title “Your letters”, and the fact that each letter is followed by a signature. However, that is not enough to frame the texts as letters to a youth magazine. That particular frame is constructed to a great extent through visual features. That is, it is crucial that the spread looks like a spread from a youth magazine. For example, the texts extend over a spread of two pages, which enhances the impression that one is looking at a double-page in a magazine. The spread uses a particular colour scheme (which stands out from the rest of the book); it is encircled with a border; and the logo of the fictitious youth magazine appears on both pages. The logo displays the name of the magazine, “Young&Hip”, which is another central cue. The manner in which the verbal text is laid out on the pages sets up yet another linkage to the genre of readers’ letters. The structure consisting of heading(s) > lead-in > several ‘mini-texts’ (separated from each other through typographical means, e.g. the number and width of columns), is conventional in the genre, though it is important to note that such a fragmentary layout is obviously not exclusively a feature of this particular genre.

In the case of “Dating disasters”, the subject matter of the text also forms an important part of the generic template. As pointed out above, the contemporary Finnish youth magazine contains separate sections for several different types of readers’ letters. Among them, the one which is found the most frequently and the most consistently in different magazines is a section in which readers tell about all kinds of embarrassing situations in which they have found themselves and about social blunders they have committed. The embarrassing and mortifying (but perhaps also amusing, in retrospect) incidents described in “Dating disasters” are a case point. Finally, the narrative form of the letters is a crucial feature of the genre. In fact, the fictitious readers’ letters represent a specific type of storytelling genre which is somewhat different from the classical narrative described by Labov & Waletzky (1967). Eggins & Slade (1997) draw upon Plum’s (1988) typology of storytelling genres and, accordingly, distinguish among ‘narratives’, ‘anecdotes’, ‘exemplums’ and ‘recounts’. Authentic ‘blunders letters’ are typically what Eggins & Slade classify as anecdotes, and so are the letters in “Dating disasters”.

The schematic structure of an anecdote may be presented as follows: (Abstract > ) Orientation > Remarkable event > Reaction (> Coda). An anecdote is close to a classical narrative in that it, too, culminates in some kind of a crisis. Where it differs from a classical narrative is that there is no explicit resolution (brought about by the protagonist’s actions); rather “the crisis is reacted to in some way: by an expression of amazement, frustration, embarrassment, humiliation, etc.” (Eggins & Slade 1997: 237). Below, I have marked the different stages for two of the letters in the “Dating disasters” text.
Example 1.

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.

Example 2.

Abstract
My dating disaster happened at my senior prom.

Orientation
My girlfriend and I both still had braces on our teeth. While we were dancing cheek to cheek, we kissed every once in while.

Remarkable Event
During one long kiss our braces somehow managed to get stuck!

Reaction
The whole school just stood there laughing their heads off.

The above examples contain all the obligatory elements of an anecdote. There is an Orientation, which describes the circumstances of the unfolding events. This is followed by a Remarkable event, that is, something which disturbs the expected course of events. This is followed by a Reaction brought about by the remarkable event. In the above cases, what is described are reactions of other people to something that the protagonists do. In Example 1, the reaction indicates a breach of social norms on the part of the narrator and a (mild) sanction for the behaviour. In Example 2, the narrator and his girlfriend have an accident, which causes great amusement in the crowd around them. It is fairly obvious that the situations cause embarrassment to those involved, but in Example 1 this is made explicit in the Coda, an element which typically reiterates the point of a story and returns the focus back to the present moment. The letters in “Dating disasters” are structurally identical to real instances of ‘blunders letters’. 27 real-life exemplars of the genre were examined for this article for purposes of comparison. They all display the structure of an anecdote as described by Eggins and Slade (1997). Most of them manifest a structure consisting of Orientation > Remarkable Event > Reaction, while Coda seems to be optional in them, too.

4. 2. Recontextualisation

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 another genre. This section focuses on the way in which this template is put to work in the adoptive context. An examination of recontextualisation may be seen as an analysis of the way in which a genre is appropriated and made to fit in a set practices or, conversely, how a given genre is colonised by ‘outside’ elements.

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 the “Dating disasters” text such features include notably the chapter number (19) at the left-hand corner of the page, line numbering and the numbering of the
letters. These are textbook conventions which have become naturalised owing to the purposes they serve in the totality of the discursive practices of schooling. Reading texts are numbered and often further categorised 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 Luke & 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, the imported generic formats in the EFL textbook are fitted into the school text in other ways as well. Critical analyses of EFL materials have often drawn attention to the ‘Trojan horse’ type of quality of the materials: texts and exercises represent and implicitly put forward values, worldviews and competences which are highly culture-specific (and typically aligned with Anglo-American or ‘Western’ way of life) and may be alien, irrelevant or even offensive to students of English in the various corners of the world (see e.g. Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989; Colebrook 1996; Littlejohn 1998; Lesikin 2001). We need, therefore, to examine the content inserted into the generic format.

It is important to note, however, that this is not just a matter of content. As pointed out above, recontextualisation is a two-way process. A generic format will be altered when relocated into a new context, whether in form or in content. That genre will, in turn, carry a baggage of features, such as a range of associated discourses, with it, thus affecting the adoptive genre by giving it particular inflections. “Dating disasters” provides a highly illustrative example of how the baggage of a particular ‘import genre’ (Solin 2007) affects the adoptive genre and how the generic features of the imported genre may have to be modified in the pedagogic context.

One particularly noteworthy feature of the ‘blunders letter’ as a genre is its markedly gendered nature. A sample of 27 ‘blunders letters’ from four different youth magazines were examined for purposes of comparison. 21 were written by girls; in 5 cases the writer’s pseudonym or the content of the letter did not unequivocally reveal the sex of the writer; and only one letter was clearly written by a boy. This is explained to a large extent by the fact that this type of reader’s letter is a constant feature of youth magazines targeted at girls, which further reinforces its status as a gendered genre. However, even when it occurs in a gender-neutral youth 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 the light of 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: 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. Most of them are media genres, such as horoscopes and personality tests; others more private, such as diary entries. The relative prevalence of gendered genres has important consequences for the way in which textbooks position their readers. (For reader positioning, see Kress 1985).
That said, the recontextualisation 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/representations which could be potentially offensive 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 – and a display of similarly moderate tone – is also in evidence in the lead-in preceding the letters in “Dating disasters”. In real-life 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. 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 to those of others. To use the term from Bakhtin (1986) the ‘addressivity’ of the two lead-ins is different: real-life examples address readers who are in the position to react to it by writing and sharing their own experiences while the textbook version addresses a more passive audience who can only react emotionally, not physically by sending in their own letters.

The generic characteristics of the blunders letter are also exploited for pedagogic purposes. As was shown above, the structure of the blunders letter (in real-life as in the textbook) conform to a high degree with that of actual storytelling genres found in casual conversation. Storytelling does a lot of interpersonal work in conversation (Eggins & Slade 1997), and it could be seen being given similar functions in the language textbook. The stories found in blunders letters are characteristically very involved: they are told in the first person; they present the narrator as quite vulnerable; and they are high in evaluative, affective language. As Thompson & Hunston (2001) point out, one of the central functions of evaluative language (which includes e.g. expressions of affect) is maintaining relations between writer and reader. It could be plausibly argued that one of the communicative functions of the kind of stories as those found in “Dating disasters” is surely to create proximity between the text and the student reader. Indeed, personal narratives, anecdotes and other kinds of stories are quite common in the EFL textbook generally and get inserted into and mixed with various generic formats, which attests to their perceived usability as elements of engaging pedagogic texts. Moreover, stories are a historical textbook genre: especially witty anecdotes were staple material in the Finnish EFL textbooks of the 1940s to 1960s.

5. Discussion

The above analysis illustrates traits characterising genre embedding in Finnish EFL textbooks. The main principles conditioning the construction of a generic template are recognisability and salience. Recognisability is ensured through an admixture of visual and
verbal cues. Layout features and the use of colours, for instance, create the impression of “Dating disasters” as representing the section for readers’ letters in a youth magazine, and this is spelled out with explicit verbal cues (“Your letters”; “Young&Hip”). Salience is striven for by drawing influences from genres which are assumed to be familiar to and relevant for the intended readers. Based on the results of the larger ongoing study which this article reports, it is clear that media genres are the most prominent source of generic influences for EFL textbooks. This seems to indicate that the different (print and electronic) media are considered to be particularly salient in teenagers’ lives and, moreover, the primary contexts in which young people in Finland become exposed to the English language. The youth magazine is a stereotypical young people’s genre and, as a genre of the print media, easy to imitate in the printed textbook.

These characteristics of genre embedding in EFL textbooks may be usefully examined in the light of the concept of ‘affinity’ as formulated by Hodge & Kress (1988). 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 describing “the stance of participants in the semiotic process towards the state and the status of classification of the mimetic plane” (ibid.: 122). In other words, affinity expresses commitment to representations of truth or ‘the real’, which may be constructed through different modalities. To give a few examples, a photo is regarded as being more ‘trustworthy’ than a drawing, a newsreport 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 signalling ‘high’ affinity in Hodge & Kress’s (1988) 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. The genre draws upon the conventions of oral storytelling genres and employs affective language, which are effective textual and linguistic resources for constructing proximity between the writer and the reader. However, that relationship will remain heavily mediated. If we accept that entities like ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ are always mediated through semiosis, as Hodge & Kress argue, then the textual reality constructed in and by the textbook must be seen as being doubly mediated for the recontextualisation of genres and their conventions into a textbook sever their relationship to real-life utterances. This point is made emphatically by Bakhtin (1986) and Bernstein (1996), whose respective accounts of the relocation of genres/discourses were referred to earlier.

The analysis in the preceding section demonstrates the effects of the recontextualisation of a generic format into a foreign language textbook. These include modifications to the conventions of the genre in question but also more generally the manner in which the relocated generic format gets appropriated, “absorbed and digested” in Bakhtin’s (1986) words, by the adoptive genre. Two main points emerged. The first is that the selection of genres may affect reader positioning in ways which may not have been anticipated by textbook writers. To be more specific, particular genres may have associations which are carried over into the textbook. The genre discussed above, the ‘blunders letter’, is a markedly gendered genre, and it was pointed out that the EFL textbooks analysed draw upon several different genres associated with female readership. In such cases the recontextualisation may be said to affect the textbook genre as much as the imported genre.
The second main point pertains to the way in which the relocated genre gets modified. The analysis showed that despite its many genre-specific features, the “Dating disasters” text also displays many features which mark it as a pedagogic text. These features include a range of textbook conventions discussed above, but also more subtle shifts in the way the text addresses and represents its readers. It was pointed out that the lead-in, which defines the communicative function of the letters to follow, addresses a clearly more passive recipient than real-life exemplars of the genre, implying a student-reader whose uptake of the text is controlled to a significant degree by the practices of the EFL classroom. Moreover, the text re-creates the blunders letter as a gender-neutral genre by representing the writers of the letters as predominantly male. It was argued that this shift is motivated by the educational agenda behind the text.

6. Concluding remarks

The article opened with the observation that contemporary Finnish EFL textbooks are characterised by textual heterogeneity and by the wide range of real-life genres they draw upon. An examination of genre embedding in EFL textbooks sheds light on the function assigned to genres in textbooks. It suggests that genres are not so much objects of explicit instruction as \textit{instruments} of instruction. They serve to engage the reader and contribute to the construction of a ‘fictitious reality’ (cf. Luke 1988) with which the student is hoped to identify.

The analysis of genre embedding in terms of recontextualisation underscores the complexities involved in the use embedded generic formats in foreign language textbooks. Unlike in some other cases where generic formats are used merely as stylistic devices (cf. a job advertisement in the format of a poem), embedded generic formats in EFL textbooks do also have a function of representing the variety of actual, socially situated language use, even if the ‘inauthenticity’ of the texts is apparent to the student (although it may not always be so). Textbook authors therefore face the challenges of writing texts which are plausible genre texts, on the one hand, and dealing with the discourses and practices associated with a given generic format, on the other.

References


Appendix 1: The verbal text of “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!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“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.”</td>
<td>Gina, 16, Sacramento, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“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.”</td>
<td>Ally, 18, Bangor, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“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.”</td>
<td>Trevor, 16, Baton Rouge, LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“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!”</td>
<td>Chas, 17, Providence, RI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“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.”</td>
<td>Rob, 18, Dallas, TX</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>“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.”</td>
<td>Theo, 14, Detroit, MI</td>
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Appendix 2: An image of “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!”
   Char, 17, Providence, RI