

MASTEROPPGAVE

Harry Potter and Gender in the Upper Secondary ESL
Classroom

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Abstract

This study is grounded in the ongoing popularity of fantasy literature among young adult readers. The purpose of the study is to investigate to what extent excerpts from the *Harry Potty* books, and selected scenes from film adaptations of the same novels, are capable of raising gender awareness in the Upper secondary ESL classroom. The data from the study is contrasted with a selection of scholarly work, in a search for alignment or contrast. Questionnaires, individual interviews, and classroom discussions were used to gather the data.

The results show that 73% of the respondents found the literature capable of raising gender awareness when used in the ESL classroom. When compared with scholarly works on the gender roles in *Harry Potter*, the data shows a high degree of alignment. As the study confirms the ongoing popularity of the fantasy genre, the thesis advocates further use of the genre in the Upper secondary ESL classroom.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The use of literature in the ESL classroom is today widely advocated, and literature has found its rightful place in ESL curricula worldwide. This may in part be because literature is one of our best sources of cultural, ethical, and sociological knowledge. In Norway, ESL teaching is not limited to grammatical issues; the students are to get acquainted with English speaking cultures and ways of life around the world (udir.no, 2020). Through literature, students get more information about other people's lives and at the same time learn more about themselves, as literature provides occasions to see themselves in the text. One way of seeing themselves is related to gender and gender roles. Through the teenage years a lot is going on in terms of identity development, and texts published for this target group may become important agents in this development.

One of the most popular genres amongst young adults today seems to be the fantasy genre. Many of the fantasy novels have been subject to film adaptations, such as the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and J. K. Rowling, whose works have received world-wide appreciation. One of the bestselling novel series in the fantasy genre is J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Whereas many scholars have published work on the gender roles in *Harry Potter*, studies on how young adolescents experience the same topic are more difficult to come by. Young adolescents today were born in a different decade from all these scholars and have been raised and socialized into a rapidly changing society. To me, as an ESL teacher in upper secondary school, it is intriguing to make use of this opportunity to scrutinize the topic further.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate how the use of excerpts of the *Harry Potter* novels and film adaptations can be used in the classroom to raise awareness of gender and gender roles in literature.

The research questions of this study are the following:

R1: To what extent is the use of excerpts from the *Harry Potter* novels and scenes from the film adaptations, capable of raising gender awareness in the Upper secondary ESL classroom?

R2: Do the student responses to the texts support or question the scholarly work on gender in the *Harry Potter* novels?

1.3 Structure

The introduction is followed by a glance at the role of literature in the Norwegian ESL classroom, in terms of what the Norwegian official steering documents state about the use of literature in ESL teaching, and a piece on the differences between verbal and visual storytelling. This is followed by a literature review, and a clarifying section on how gender is understood in this study. Chapter three presents the methods and the material used and includes a further description of the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The findings are presented in chapter four, and further discussed in chapter five. In the final chapter, the thesis is summed up and concluded.

2. The Role of Literature in the Norwegian ESL Classroom

2.1 National Curriculum ESL

In the autumn of 2020, the Directorate of Education introduced their new steering document, the Norwegian “Subject Renewal” (udir.no, 2020). This involved some changes for the English subject in Vg1 Upper Secondary School on the vocational subject programme, both in terms of how the ESL teaching is organised and what is included in the English subject curriculum. Rather than dividing the ESL lessons into a period of two years, VG1 and VG2, the English subject is now only taught during VG1. The competence aims state that the pupils are expected to be able to “read, discuss and reflect on the content and language features and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-chosen texts” (udir.no, 2020a). Furthermore, pupils are to “discuss and reflect on form, content and language features and literary devices in cultural forms of expression in English from different media in the English-speaking world, including music, film and gaming” (udir.no, 2020a). The latter part of this competence aim illustrates the importance of integrating several media, such as film and gaming, in the ESL classroom. This implies a recognition of the media many ESL students of

today are familiar with from their spare time activities. As well as literature, the students are to “read and compare different factual texts” (udir.no, 2020a), however the competence aims do not explicitly state any guidelines as to how much time should be spent on literature versus factual texts.

In the core curriculum of the new national steering document on education, it is stated that “A pupil's identity and self-image, opinions and attitudes grow in interaction with others. Social learning takes place in both the teaching, training and in all the other activities at school” (udir.no, 2020b). The core curriculum emphasizes the importance of facilitating a learning environment where the students can be challenged, taught, and given information and motivation to develop as human beings. In this kind of learning environment, literature may add social, cultural, and historical information, which all are important for the students to develop their own self, and their own character. I explore in more detail the use of literature in the ESL classroom in the next section.

2.2 Literature in the ESL classroom

In a typical ESL class in upper secondary school, the students represent a variety in reading skills and L2 proficiency. Likewise, there will also be differences in reading strategies among the same group of students. Some students are fond of reading and may be classified as proficient readers, even when it comes to L2 literature. In every class there are also several students who find reading challenging and demanding to the extent where they only read when they are specifically asked to do so in school. Wurr finds that, “when readers focus on the surface features of the text and language rather than on the concepts expressed by these features, their concern for form reduces the amount of attention they can devote to meaning; their linguistic concerns limit the range of information sources from which they can draw in the reading process” (Wurr, 2003, p. 164). According to this, slow readers will find it more challenging to focus on the issue of gender or any other issue, due to L2 challenges. The focus of attention will often be related to the task of translation, in some cases word by word, in an attempt to create meaning out of the text. More common are perhaps students who understand most of the words in a sentence and use this knowledge to fill the gap created by one or two unfamiliar words. According to Bernhardt's (2010) compensatory theory, there is a transfer between L1 and L2, resulting in that a weakness in one area will be compensated by knowledge found in another area. However, respondents who for different reasons are slow

readers, may have limited L1 skills and knowledge. We can assume that a weakness in L2 proficiency may be referable to a weakness in a reader's L1 proficiency. The reader's L1 proficiency will, however, always be of help, regardless of the diversity of weaknesses it may contain. Kalaitzi finds in her recent study that "L2 reading comprehension was explained by both L1 reading comprehension and knowledge of L2 vocabulary" (Kalaitzi, 2020, p. 46). In summary, the more difficult a student finds the L2 used in a text, the more challenging it will be for the same student to express his or her view on the content of what they have just read, however, L1 proficiency will be helpful.

In a study like this one, it is imperative that the respondents are given the assistance they need in order for them to establish a sufficient understanding of the L2 text, enabling the respondents to evaluate the characters, the ways in which these communicate and focus on how they relate to each other.

2.2.1 Visual versus Verbal Storytelling

From conversations with my ESL students, I have the impression that they are enthusiastic consumers of movies and tv-series made available by online streaming services. Rather than discussing a book they have just finished reading, they share their impressions of the latest episode of a tv-series. Even though novels and movies have similarities in that they both presents a gallery of characters and they both dwells around a plot, students often need some help or guidelines as to what to look for in a text. For the respondents to make up their mind about the gender roles in *Harry Potter*, they need some assistance in what to look for during the reading of excerpts and watching the film adaptations. Kroeber states that "all stories, verbal as well as visual, are created by acts of selection. The great storytellers know what to leave out" (Kroeber, 2006, p. 14). Students who are used to the perception of on-screen-storytelling may find that the process of reading literature calls for another type of engagement. The act of imagining in verbal storytelling, as in the *Harry Potter* novels, differs from the kind of imagining we do when watching a movie. Kroeber finds that: "Movies provoke anticipatory imagining that differs from the associative imagining aroused by novels, which continuously bring the past into the present and – as it manifests in ironic passages – consistently evoke what is not said by what is said" (Kroeber, 2006, p. 20). Therefore, the aim of the pre-reading activities is to give the students practise in reading a text for different purposes, and to guide them in what to look for as we are scrutinizing the topic of gender roles in the selected reading material.

The following part of the thesis presents a glance into the vast collection of previous *Harry Potter* studies. A selection has been made, but the opinions of some of the major voices in gender related *Harry Potter* studies will be presented.

2.3 Literature Review

Inspired by their enormous popularity among children, young adult readers, and adults alike, scholars have scrutinized the *Harry Potter* books from many different viewpoints. Heilman finds *Harry Potter* to be “the biggest children’s publishing and merchandising phenomenon of modern times” (Heilman, 2009, p. 2). The Potter phenomenon has, according to Olechowska, “produced a record amount of secondary literature”, although she believes that “Harry Potter still awaits his academic *opus magnum*” (Olechowska, 2016, p. 384). The *Harry Potter* series has found its way into many homes, libraries, and schools. Such a phenomenon raises two immediate questions; What is causing this popularity and what is its cultural impact on readers? In an empirical Reader study, Lafontaine (2009) finds that there are “no well-defined and concretely measurable success factors for Harry Potter”, however, important factors were “it appealed to the reader’s imaginations, because of its mix of different genres, and because it is thrilling and emotive” (Patterson, 2009, p. 114). She finds that “both genres that evoke thrill (e.g., fantastic literature) and genres that appeal rather to the readers’ social needs (e.g., coming-of-age novel) have a significant influence on the perceived success of the book” (Patterson, 2009, p.113). Other scholars look at the impact of media and marketing strategies, Galligan (2004), Brown and Patterson (2006), Nel (2005).

The second question, on the other hand, is one that has arisen among parents, teachers, psychologists, feminists, and Christians. Literature arguably has an impact on its reader, as it expresses values and attitudes through the characters of the narrative. An interest in what kind of values children and young adults are presented with may have its root in a view which finds some literature potentially harmful on young minds. Dresang relates this to a conviction which sees “children-as-innocent-and-in-need-of protection” (Dresang, 2003, p. 21). While this is understandable in terms of exposing children and young adults to what one believes to be the correct role models, the idea that literature is always didactic is by some agreed as belonging to another century. A common view is that books of “Golden Deeds”, popular between 1864 and the 1920s, are shouldered aside by the continuous development of Children’s literature throughout the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries. (Nelson, In Mills

2014, p. 15). Townsend declares that “today nearly all the didactic books are dead; the survivors are those that rejected didacticism” (Townsend, 2006, p. 18). According to Otheguy, “avoiding didacticism in children’s literature is a dearly held belief among Anglophone writers, critics, and scholars” (In Mills, 2014, p. 29). However, Nelson argues that “while children’s authors no longer publish books of golden deeds with the frequency of the past, the concept of the golden deed remains alive in such institutions as the Book of Golden Deeds Award” (In Mills, 2014, p. 26). The very fact that such awards exist exemplifies the different views among readers on how and what children’s literature is supposed to be.

The concept of didacticism in children’s literature touches upon yet another interesting topic: the adult versus the child, and the perspective of the temporal otherness of childhood. Beauvais states that “The status of the child vis-a-vis the adult is always already one of transformation: it is constantly being modified towards adulthood” (Beauvais, 2015, p. 18). As far as literature is considered an agent in the upbringing and socialization during the temporal state of childhood, the adult writer inhibits the power of creating the literature, hence adding to the socialisation process the values and beliefs he or she finds valuable. Nikolajeva argues that fictional worlds “represent various aspects of society and should therefore be able to transmit social knowledge: a knowledge and understanding of societal structures, mechanisms and practices” (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 31). However, as children’s literature more often than not, is written by adult authors, Nikolajeva finds that “Childhood is represented through optative mode, not as it is, but as adult authors remember it, as they wish it were or had been and might be in the future, and not at least what they wish, consciously or subconsciously, that young readers should believe it is” (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 33). In other words, readers of children’s literature should be aware that literature’s depiction of society is not to be regarded as a mirrored society, but merely a subjectively construct of memories, personal analysis, and possibilities, all deriving from the author’s point of view.

As far as didacticism goes, regardless of genre, authors of children’s literature have to consider a lot of choices in their creation of literature. The choices they make will impact the readers of this literature. Perry Nodelman finds that:

What adults most frequently believe children need from their literature is education. Understood as innocent and inexperienced, children know less about the world they live in than they *might*, less about how to think about themselves than they *might*, less about how to behave than they *might*. Adults thus have a duty to teach children what

they don't yet know, so, from this point of view, children's literature is primarily a didactic literature (Nodelman, 2008, p.157).

Nodelman in this gives a description of a view on children's literature that according to Beauvais has its roots in "the reinforcement of existing power structures, valued by adult authorities within and outside children's literature" (Beauvais, 2015, p. 2). However, she finds that "Though often prescriptive, the (not-so-well-hidden) adult agency in the didactic discourse of children's literature generally is not, cannot be, and does not desire to be a dictatorial planner of the future, a controller of child minds and a supporter of adult normativity" (Beauvais, 2015, p. 3). Beauvais argues that the power dynamics between an adult author and a child reader should not be considered merely as a means of transferring adult agency.

Several scholars (Bettelheim 1975, Kohl 1995) have deconstructed children's literature. Mayes-Elma find that "clearly, many classist, racist, and sexist representations are being perpetuated through children's literature. Children's literature may contain many messages about gender, race, and class, both implicitly and explicitly" (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 20). Mayes-Elma emphasizes the importance of deconstruction of children's literature to prevent further perpetuation of these messages, implicitly finding such perpetuation to be harmful, or at least causing an effect on young readers. The next part of this chapter presents some of the scholars' view on how gender is perpetuated in the *Harry Potter* novels.

The portrayal of gender in the *Harry Potter* novels has been a topic of analysis among many scholars. Though most of the scholars argue that the books uphold gender stereotypes, some of them read Hermione as a feminist figure. Heilman and Donaldson find that "though both feminist and poststructuralist theories tell us that texts can be read from multiple, contradictory, and even transgressive positions, it is still important for criticism to reveal dominant and hegemonic conventions" (Heilman & Donaldson, 2009, p. 140). Heilman and Donaldson look at female representation in the *Harry Potter* series. In the first four books there are 29 girls and 35 boys. By the end of the series there are 115 females and 201 males mentioned. In the later books, women are depicted as leaders, hence developing beyond the stereotypical femininity depicted in the early books of the series. In the final battle at Hogwarts, Mrs. Weasley, who is depicted as a domestically minded mother, engages Bellatrix Lestrange in a duel. Minerva McGonagall takes leadership in protecting the school from the Voldemort attack.

Still, Heilman and Donaldson find that “males are represented more often, but they are also depicted as wiser, braver, more powerful, and more fun than females” (Heilman & Donaldson, 2009, p. 146). Furthermore, they find that females hold the positions of helper, they are emotional, and body and appearance obsessed. Fransisca and Mochtar scrutinize three of the female characters in the series, Hermione Granger, Ginny Weasley and Luna Lovegood. By using R. Barthes’ theory about myths, Fransisca and Mochtar conclude that there are two myths in operation: “that girls are supposed to be mothers” and “that mothers are supposed to protect, nurture, and educate” (Fransisca & Mochtar, 2017, p.1). They also find that “female characters are put in a position where they are not allowed to chase their own dreams and fight for their own cause” (Fransisca & Mochtar, 2017, p. 2). In their study, they find the myths of mother in the actions of Hermione, Ginny and Luna. Ginny and Hermione both take roles as Harry’s protectors. Luna and Hermione “take the role as nurturers, a role that is seen as a mother’s. Therefore, they do not only become nurturers, but they also embrace the role as mothers who nurtures” (Fransisca & Mochtar, 2017, p. 5).

In *Females and Harry Potter* (2006), Mayes-Elma analyses the ways in which women's agency is represented in the first book of the series. She finds that “we do see images of intelligent, take-charge women, but more frequently we see images of women who doubt themselves, feel the need to comfort or take care of men, and need validation from the men in their lives” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p.104). When it comes to the power of the patriarchal society, she finds that it “needs women to back down in order to maintain the patriarchal, institutionalized system of power” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p.104). In her critical discourse analysis, Mayes-Elma decided on five themes and studied how they relate to agency. For theme one, “Rule Following and Breaking”, she finds that both male and female characters break the rules, hence go against the dominant patriarchal system of power. However, the female characters do not do it for their own self-interest, but rather to help or enable the male characters. Also, girls are depicted to be remorseful and ashamed afterwards, whereas the boys do not seem to be affected in any way. According to Mayes-Elma “women are shown to be the rule enforcers as well as the rule followers, whereas on the other hand the men are seen to be the rule breakers” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 90).

On the next theme “Intelligence”, she finds that “more often than not they (women) use it to help further others’ interests, which again allows the oppressive patriarchal system of power to remain intact” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 91). Both Hermione and Professor McGonagall enact their agency through intelligence and become empowered, however only to a certain point. They are not allowed to transcend male oppression. The third theme Mayes-

Elma scrutinised is “Validating/Enabling”. She finds that Professor McGonagall, even though portrayed as an intelligent woman, often questions her intelligence and asks Dumbledore for validation. On a larger canvas, the female characters ask for the male characters’ validation, rather than asking other female characters. Mayes-Elma finds that “when the woman in the text enact their agency through questioning, they are represented as weak and unintelligent, which is contrary to how they are portrayed in other scenes throughout the text” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 94). In the fourth theme, “Mothering”, Mayes-Elma claims that many of the women are enacting their agency by caring for male characters, because this is expected of them because they are women. Only in the roles of stepmother and teacher, women are allowed not to enact such agency. “When a woman is in one of these roles, and only these two roles, she is “permitted” to step out of the mothering role” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 99). The fifth and final of Mayes-Elma’s themes is “Bounded Resistance”. By this she means that the female characters resist, but only up to a certain point, and only on certain issues. She finds that in the scenes where women use their agency to resist, instead of resisting constructions of gender, they are resisting the evil forces. Mayes-Elma concludes that “We do see images of intelligent, take-charge women, but more frequently we see images of women who doubt themselves, feel the need to comfort or take care of men, and need validation from the men in their lives” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 104).

Christine Schoefer argues that “no girl is brilliantly heroic the way Harry is, no woman is experienced and wise like Professor Dumbledore” (Schoefer, 2000). Pugh and Wallace are afraid the ways in which both Hermione and Dolores Umbridge affect the plot, represents a veneer of gender equity and hence mask “the extent to which women’s agency in the books is muted” (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 269). They find that although women hold important positions in both school, home and family, the top positions in each of these social institutions are held by men.

Rivka Kellner finds the role of the house elves in the series to be an allegory of subjugated and oppressed women in that these “small emotional beings with high-pitched voices, are treated very much like women used to be treated, and in some places are treated to this day” (Kellner, 2010, p. 369). She finds that Rowling projects an ambivalent attitude towards feminism. Hermione, being the central female protagonist, “takes the house elf cause seriously, but Rowling does not take Hermione seriously” (Kellner, 2010, p. 378). A similar view is held by Weiss, who finds that “the house elves also emerge as powerful emblems of gender” (Weiss, 2012, p. 209). She also comments on how Molly, depicted as a traditional

housewife early in the series, in the final heroic battle against Bellatrix, is established as antimother with the pledge “You will never touch our children again” (p. 756).

Maeve Eberhardt has scrutinized gender representations through speech in the *Harry Potter* series. The study analyses how the direct speech of the two sidekick characters, Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, is reported throughout the series. She found that the series “reveals patterns of asymmetry that also reflect broader cultural ideologies about gender, reproducing stereotypical views about essential differences between females and males...” (Eberhardt, 2017, p.227).

Eliza Dresang, who agrees that the Potter books perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes, has also commented on gender and speech, and finds that Rowling has employed gender-related stereotypic words to Hermione’s behaviour. “Repeatedly Rowling has Hermione “shriek”, “wail”, “squeal”, and “whimper,” verbs never applied to the male characters in the book” (Dresang, 2002, p. 223). This is also the case in adverbial phrases, as Hermione acts “in alarm”, “hysterically”. Dresang finds the fact that Ron and Harry are depicted much calmer and more reasoned to be problematic, since Hermione is the problem solver. However, Dresang goes beyond this observation to argue for an ultimately emancipated role for Hermione. Dresang focuses on the difference between a caricature and a stereotype, a caricature being “an exaggeration of the characteristics or features of a subject” and stereotype being “something conforming to a fixed or general pattern” (Dresang, 2002, p. 221). She finds that through the series, Hermione “transforms herself into a young woman who is able to resist the traps connected with her sex, she does not retreat into passivity and silence, she is not scared of the world dominated by men, she does not lose her voice” (Dresang, 2002, p. 230). In other words, Hermione transforms from a caricature when we first meet her, and gradually develops into a stronger role as the series goes on. For Harry to fulfil his mission as the chosen one, he needs Hermione. Dresang concludes that “Hermione is a strong, intelligent, thoughtful, compassionate female who is not only assisting the males with whom she has an interdependent relationship but also working to become her own agent as well as a catalyst for social change” (Dresang, 2002, p. 242). In other words, Hermione has developed through the books, resulting in an empowered character not only in terms of her own agency, but for others as well.

A similar view is held by Michele Fry, who finds the role of Hermione to be the essential feminine side of the conventional mythic hero, in that she is more sensitive to other people than Harry, who constitutes the masculine side in the dualism. Together Harry and Hermione become “one unific hero figure who overcomes the evil embodied by Voldemort”

(Fry, 2001, p. 165). Fry argues that “to see Hermione as a mere enabler or helper suggests that the reader has failed to read Rowling’s books with an open mind” (Fry, 2001, p. 165).

Another progressive view on gender in the Potter books is found in Andrew Blake, who notes that “Hermione is arguably the second most important character in the stories” (Blake, 2002, p. 39).

The various studies and publications on the topic of gender in *Harry Potter* show a diversity in approaches, such as analysing gendered representations through speech (Eberhardt, 2017), descriptive words (Fransisca & Mochtar, 2017), counting the number of males versus female characters (Heilman & Donaldson, 2009) and scrutinizing enacting of female agency (Mayes-Elma, 2006), studying agency through the lens of corpus methods (Hunt, 2015). The diversity in views among critics on the issue of gender in the *Potter* books, on which the previous section only represents a limited portrayal, lays the ground for this paper. While some critics find the *Potter* books to be sexist, and perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes, other critics claim that the books also depict strong female characters. From an ESL teacher’s perspective, it is intriguing for me to discover to what extent the students agree with the scholars. It is not given that young adult readers relate to the texts the way scholars do. The different opinions among scholars, which all represent the adult reader, open up an intriguing research area on how young adult readers in upper secondary school relate to the same topic. The next part of the paper clarifies the use of the term gender, explaining how gender is understood in the following study.

2.4 Gender

Gender, according to Flanagan, is “the social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviours” (Flanagan, 2010, p. 26). When studying gender roles in literature, one must take into consideration the fact that gender relations are culturally bound. Gender norms may vary from one culture to another. As the term hegemony explains the idea of one social class dominating over another, patriarchy “could be understood as hegemonic ideology in the sense that there is a process of internalization operating through which the view and values promoted by one gender are seen as natural and therefore not questioned by the other, devaluated, gender” (Ferrarelli, 2007, p. 65). Different cultures around the world set the stage for what members of each culture may consider to be proper agency for both males and females. Parker claims that “each culture sees what it supposes is essentially female or male in different ways from other cultures, and even within a given culture we can find variations

and differences” (Parker, 2011, p. 158). Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that gender roles are not static, they are continuously in development, as social norms and roles constantly change.

In the last decade new constructs of gender have been more explicit, as individuals struggle to find their identity within the traditional gender roles. These issues are explored by the field of queer studies, which recognises a plurality of genders used by people as a mean of expressing their own identity. According to Parker, “Just as deconstructionists see everything as multiple and feminists see many ways to be a woman and many ways to enact gender, so queer studies suggests that there are many ways to enact gender and sexual desire” (Parker, 2011, p. 179). By accepting the idea that performing gender is now entirely individual and not bound by traditional and cultural heritage, one may find the study of gender roles in literature overwhelming. However, even though gender roles are expanding and developing every day, they inevitably relate to the traditional spectrum of gender roles, male and female. The philosopher Judith Butler argues that we build models of gender through repetition. As we watch and perform gender repeatedly, this produces a “taken-for-granted idea that certain ways are natural and right” (Parker, 2011, p. 184). While young adults today may be more or less aware of the ongoing discussions about gender roles, they are all socialized into a society of traditional gender roles from early childhood. Hesse-Biber and Carter state that “gender is determined socially; it is the societal meaning assigned to male and female. Each society emphasizes particular roles that each sex should play, although there is wide latitude in acceptable behaviours for each gender” (Hesse-Biber, S. and Carter, G. L., 2000, p. 91). However, one should take into consideration that a great number of students are born and raised in other parts of the world, in other cultures where the gender roles may differ from traditional Western European gender roles. At the same time, this makes a study on upper secondary school students’ view on gender roles in literature all the more interesting. We are not scrutinizing how the Potter books relate to traditional Western European gender roles, but rather how students of today, representing a diversity of cultures, find the agency of female and male characters in the novels. We must keep in mind that some youths find their identity somewhere within the male- female spectrum, rather than strictly male or female, as the students engage with the text and mirror themselves and their own identity in the text.

In the last 2 years J. K. Rowling has herself been involved in controversy for expressing her views on the issue of sex and gender. In December 2019, she tweeted her support for Maya Forstater, a woman who lost her job for tweeting that sex is confirmed by biology. This statement was regarded transphobic. The fact that J. K. Rowling supported such

a statement caused a lot of anger and frustration among transsexuals. In June 2020, J. K. Rowling responded on twitter.com to an article published on devex.com, which used the term “People who menstruate” in its headline (Sommer, Kamowa, Mahon, 2020). Rowling tweeted a comment, where she asked, in a humoristic way, “I’m sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?” (J. K. Rowling, 2020). This was the beginning of a series of Twitter posts and retweets, where Rowling was accused of being transphobic and disrespectful to the trans and queer community. It started a heated online debate on sex versus gender, where people from all sexual orientations took part. Rowling found it necessary to post a lengthy essay on her blog, where she tries to explain her own views on the topic of sex and gender. In the essay she presents five reasons why she is worried about the new trans activism. First because it pushes to erode the legal definition of sex and replace it with gender, second because of the effect it may have on education and safeguarding, and third because of the importance of freedom of speech also regarding this topic. The fourth reason she puts forward is because of the increasing number of young women wishing to transition, as well as the increasing number who are detransitioning. The fifth and final reason for Rowling’s engagement in this debate has to do with concerns around single sex spaces. She is motivated by her own experiences as a domestic abuse and sexual assault survivor. In her essay she comes forward for the first time about her own experiences, to explain her present view on the topic.

The whole debate has caused Potter-fans worldwide to reconsider their support to Rowling and the *Harry Potter* novels. Recently, I read that libraries in Norway, as well as bookstores are reconsidering any arrangements that deal with Rowling and her publications (Kallelid, 2021, Engvik 2021). An Australian bookstore decided to ban the *Harry Potter* series, to “make safe space for transgender people” (Starkey, 2020). As we enter 2021 the debate goes on, and to me this only validates the aim of this paper, as it exemplifies the significance of gender roles in general and gender roles in literature more specifically.

In a study on gender, one must take into consideration how gender influences both the creation and the perception of the text. Rowling, a female writer, must decide on how she portrays male and female agency in the *Harry Potter* novels. If her goal is to expand female agency, she will have to portray female characters in a way both male and female students find liberating when mirroring themselves in the text. The students use their own identity and their social experiences when decodifying the text. It is important to bear in mind the ways in which reader response may vary from one student to another, due to differences in identities, gender awareness and different upbringings, experiences and social and cultural background.

3. Method and material

3.1 Research design

The aim of the study was to scrutinize how young adult readers in upper secondary school experience the topic of gender in the *Harry Potter* novels. Among the various models available, I found the use of interview, questionnaire, and classroom discussion most applicable for the type of research I wanted to perform. Being a L2 English teacher, I communicate with ESL students on a daily basis, and I wanted to learn more about how the students experience the topic of gender in the Potter novels. Through the use of interview as a method, there is room for the respondents to explain their thoughts on the questions rather thoroughly. According to Patton, there are three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews: “the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview” (Patton, 2002, p. 342). For this study I decided on the standardized open-ended interview. The strength of this variant is according to McKay “that it assures that all the same respondents are asked identical questions” (McKay, 2006, p. 52). McKay also finds that “The success of an interview is related to the wording of the questions” (McKay, 2006, p. 52). It is important that the responders are all asked, not only the same questions, but that the words and the phrases in each question are the same, and in the same order in all the interviews. Patton states that this approach “requires carefully and fully wording each question before the interview” (Patton, 2002, p. 344). I also considered the use of informal conversational interviews, because of the ability it arises for me as the interviewer to be responsive to individual respondents as they respond to certain episodes or dialogues from the novels. However, I wanted to get the respondents’ comments on specific episodes in the novels. If the respondents were free to comment on any particular episode or dialogue in the novels, this would have made it more difficult to gather the data needed in order to come to a certain degree of conclusion on the study at hand. Another weakness of such a method applied to this study, is that my comments throughout the interview could possibly affect the answers presented by the respondents. A third weakness with such a method, has to do with my own limited experience as an interviewer, which again is more likely to bias the responders’ answers when using an informal conversational interview as a method. The research was therefore conducted through a qualitative method, by using standardized open-ended questions and an interview protocol. Patton states that “The data collected are still open-ended, in the sense that the respondent

supplies his or her own words, thoughts, and insights in answering the questions, but the precise wording of the questions is determined ahead of time” (Patton, 2002, p. 346).

While the open-ended questions allow for the respondents to freely express their thoughts, the number of interviews to be held was in this study limited by the time we could spend on this project, versus the rest of the ESL curriculum. Due to the time restrictions, there was a demand for more feedback from the students participating in this study. The solution was to develop a questionnaire to gather written feedback from all the participating students. This, together with the open-ended interview questions provided a larger group of respondents yet keeping the timeframe of the project within reasons. In addition to this, field notes were taken during classroom discussions, which were executed a few times during the study. In sum, the interviews, questionnaires, and classroom discussions constituted the methodology in use for gathering the data in this study.

3.1.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaires were made primarily to gather data from the respondents at different stages during the study, but the questionnaires also presented a starting point for classroom discussions. In addition, they may have added to the scaffolding, since through the process of answering the first questionnaire, the students were given more precise guidelines as to what this study is about, as well as what to look for during the next reading session. There were four questionnaires, one pre-reading questionnaire (Appendix C), three while-reading questionnaires (Appendix D, E, F) and finally one post-reading questionnaire (Appendix G), that the students received when we were done reading, but before the interviews were held.

3.1.2 Interview

Eleven open ended questions were prepared for the interviews (Appendix H), which were all held at the end of the study. Notes were taken during the interviews, and the students’ answers are presented in Tables 9-14 in the result section.

3.1.3 Respondents

The respondents in the study were chosen from two different groups of ESL students, all attending upper secondary school VG1, vocational studies. Seven of the respondents have

Norwegian as their mother tongue and are born and raised in Norway. Four of the respondents do not have Norwegian as their mother tongue. This year they are all taught the same English curriculum. The respondents were chosen due to differences in mother tongue and places of birth, in order to give a representation of a typical ESL class in upper secondary school. Their English proficiency or previous reading experience were not taken into consideration. The respondent group consisted of seven female students and four male students.

The respondents were informed that we were going to do some close reading of British children's literature starting from week nine. I told the students in the two ESL classes that I wanted to ask them for some written feedback during our work on the *Harry Potter* novels. They were also informed that I would like to interview some of them for the purpose of this master thesis. Their participation was explained to be completely anonymised, and that any participation in the interviews was voluntary. All participants signed a statement of consent (Appendix I).

3.2 Validity and reliability

The study consists mainly of qualitative research with some quantitative elements. The questionnaires included a few closed-ended questions which constituted the quantitative selection of this study. The rest of the questions in the four questionnaires were open-ended questions, and to be regarded as qualitative research, together with the classroom discussions and the interviews. The study as a whole leans toward a qualitative method. The qualitative data was coded into five categories or themes, presented in the result section.

3.2.1 Quantitative Research

McKay refers to three major types of validity in quantitative research: "construct, external, and internal validity" (McKay, 2006, p. 12). Construct validity "deals with the degree to which the instruments used in a study measure the construct that is being examined" (McKay, 2006, p. 12). When making the closed-ended questions in the questionnaires, I had to consider what to ask for and how the phrasing ought to be. The questions had to be clear and easy to understand. In terms of construct validity, the questions needed to provide the respondents with a proper understanding of what they were replying to, to ensure that the data collected was about the exact same phenomenon.

External validity in quantitative research is defined by McKay as “the extent to which the findings of one study can be generalized to a wider population” (McKay, 2006, p. 12). In this study the respondents were students at an upper secondary school, which may be seen as a random sample of “a representative group of the target population” (McKay, 2006, p. 12). At least the respondents may be regarded as a representative group of Upper Secondary ESL students. The number of respondents in this study are far too low to achieve generalizability and the results should be considered as a sample of how ESL students may relate to gender roles in the *Harry Potter* novels.

The internal validity in quantitative research, according to McKay, “deals with the degree to which the research design is such that it has controlled for variables that could influence the outcome of the study” (McKay, 2006, p. 12). The students all took part in the same pre-reading activities, and were given the same amount of scaffolding, however, previous gender roles awareness, interest in and position on the topic were uncontrollable factors.

In terms of internal reliability in the closed-ended questions in the questionnaires, this can be challenged in cases where a student’s response to a question is ambiguous or even contradictory, hence providing challenging data for me to examine. As this has not been the case in this study, I would consider the internal reliability to be acceptable. The external reliability of the closed-ended questions in the questionnaires is also considered acceptable, as I believe another researcher would receive the same answers from the students on these particular questions.

3.2.2 Qualitative Research

One of the benefits of a small number of respondents, as in this study, is the ability to combine the use of open-ended questions in the Questionnaires with the use of Interviews. For qualitative research to be reliable and achieve dependability, McKay finds that “qualitative researchers need to provide comprehensive details about their procedures and catalogue their data in such a way that others could retrieve and review the evidence they provide in their research reports” (McKay, 2006, p. 14). In other words, all the qualitative data must be catalogued or categorised in a way that enables the reader to retrieve and review the evidence. Further it is important to me as the researcher, to ensure that I present representative examples from the interview data. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, “research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what

actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched” (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000, p. 119). However interesting an atypical answer from a respondent might be, I must give a representational presentation of the data collected in the interviews. The process of coding the qualitative data into a selection of five categories is further described in the Result section.

3.3 Description of Extracts

As the seven *Harry Potter* novels each represent a school year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the characters grow older by the year. Harry Potter is 11 years old in the first novel and has reached the age of 17 in the seventh novel. In terms of personal growth and development, a lot is going on between the two stages. Ideally, the respondents should have read all seven novels to get the best possible impression of the gender roles, and any development in these as the characters come of age. As interesting as such an idea may be, limitations in both time and ESL curriculum effectively put a stop to such arrangements. The solution was found in using excerpts from three of the novels, representing the characters at different ages as well as at different stages in reaching the ultimate solution to Harry Potter’s mission. The excerpts (listed in Appendix A) were taken from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (1997), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007).

When selecting the excerpts for reading, I wanted to include chapters where both genders were present, and the selection should represent both dialogue and action or plot driven parts. The following section gives an overview of the selected chapters, including a listing of characters involved and comments on why the chapter is included in the reading material.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
2	Harry, Dudley, Vernon, Piers,	Petunia, Mrs Figg,

In this excerpt, we are presented to everyday life at the Dursleys. The Dursleys are depicted as static characters who represent traditional gender roles, and it is interesting to discover to what extent the students find gender related differences in the way Harry is treated.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
10	Harry, Ron, Draco Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Professor Flitwick, Oliver Wood, Neville, Seamus, Professor Quirrell, Professor Dumbledore, Percy, Professor Snape	Hermione, Parvati, Lavender, Professor McGonagall

This chapter is interesting because it presents the reader to Harry's natural skills in Quidditch, adding to the myth of his character, to the role of the hero figure. Furthermore, the chapter presents a rare incident, where Ron must cast a spell on a troll who has entered the girl's toilets, in order to save Hermione. This incident is interesting, in that Hermione, being the most skilled one in casting spells, is too terrified to perform her skills. Professor McGonagall presents herself as a rule following adult, true to the system, when she decides on taking five points from the house of Gryffindor.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
11	Harry, Ron, Hagrid, Marcus, Lee, Adrian, Terence, Oliver Wood, George, Neville, Fred, Seamus, Dean, Professor Quirrell, Professor Snape, Filch,	Hermione, Angelia, Madam Hooch, Alicia, Katie, Parvati, Lavender, Professor McGonagall

In this chapter we get into the sport of Quidditch. Through the narrative we learn about the role of the genders when it comes to sport and competition. Even though female characters are participating in the match, the narrative is primarily focused on Harry and the other male characters. However, Hermione plays an important role in stopping Snape when she believes he is cursing Harry's broomstick, performing the act of a facilitator and spectator.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
16	Harry, Ron, Hagrid, Lee, Peeves, Neville, Professor Flitwick, Professor Snape,	Hermione, Professor McGonagall

This chapter dwells on the trio of Harry, Ron and Hermione. It shows the reader how Hermione is the one to solve the logic puzzle in order to enter the last chamber. In this scene Hermione is not a facilitator, she is depicted as the superior of the three, both in magic and logic.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
8	Harry, Ron, Arthur Weasley, Cornelius Fudge, Draco Malfoy, Lucius Malfoy, Percy, Ludo Bagman, Viktor Krum, Hassan Mostafa, Male members of the Bulgarian and Irish Quidditch teams,	Hermione, Ministry witch, Mrs Malfoy, Veela (the Bulgarian Team Mascots)

This is another Quidditch match chapter, where the male Quidditch players are depicted as sport heroes. Another point of interest is the introduction of the Veela, and how the male characters are affected by them.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
9	Harry, Ron, Arthur Weasley, Fred, George, Charlie, Mr Roberts, Bill, Draco Malfoy, Percy Ludo Bagman, Mr Crouch, Amos Diggory,	Hermione, Ginny, Mrs Roberts, the Veela,

This chapter depicts a lot of male characters from the Ministry of Magic, during a stressful situation. Hermione plays an important part of protecting Harry and stands up for the rights of the house-elves. The Veela continue their impact on the male characters.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
14	Harry, Ron, Neville, Professor Snape, Professor Moody, Fred, George,	Hermione, Lavender, Parvati, Ginny, Mrs Roberts, the Veela,

Hermione presents her agenda of caring for the house-elves as she presents the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare. She tells Professor Moody to stop cursing a spider during class, and she worries about the well-being of Neville.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
23	Harry, Ron, Draco Malfoy, Seamus, Dean, Neville, Roger Davies, Crabbe, Goyle, Krum, Professor Karkaroff, Cedric, Ludo Bagman, Percy Weasley, Hagrid, Professor Snape, Professor	Hermione, Fleur Delacour, Pansy Parkinson, Professor McGonagall, Cho, Madame Maxime, Angelina, Parvati, Padma, Ginny, Professor Sinistra, Professor Sprout.

	Dumbledore, Professor Moody, Fred, George.	
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The chapter is included due to its depiction of romantic feelings and how the students at Hogwarts behave before and during the Yule Ball.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
9	Harry, Ron, Lupin, Dolohov, Thorfinn Rowle,	Hermione, Tonks,

This chapter depicts the trio as they have to escape through teleporting, directed by Hermione. She continues to play a vital role through the chapter, and it will be interesting to get the respondents opinion on the agency on gender in this chapter.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
15	Harry, Ron, Ted, Dean Thomas, Dirk, Phineas Nigellus,	Hermione, Tonks,

At this stage of the plot the trio struggles with how to achieve the rest of the Horcruxes. Short on food and ideas, they search for the next step towards stopping Voldemort. The chapter includes discussions and depicts how Hermione deals with the current situation.

Chapter	Male characters	Female characters
23	Harry, Ron, Fenrir Greyback, Scabior, Draco Malfoy, Lucius Malfoy, Mr Ollivander, Dean, Wormtail.	Hermione, Narcissa Malfoy, Bellatrix Lestrangle, Luna.

This chapter depicts several strong female characters in a high-pitched action part of the plot. We learn more about how Harry, Ron and Hermione behave in a stressful situation at Malfoy Manor.

3.4 Scaffolding

The concept of scaffolding has been used “as a means to understand the ways in which teachers guide students in the appropriation of new skills and understandings” (Maloch, 2004, p. 2). In this study, teacher scaffolding was used as a pedagogical approach to guide the

students before and during the reading and watching activities. The scaffolding consisted of classroom talks on gender, gender roles, stereotypes, and female and male agency. Given the variety in gender awareness and interest in the topic among the students, this was necessary, in terms of providing an understanding of what we particularly were looking for in our study of the novels. As teenagers may tend to be plot-oriented while reading literature or watching a movie, instructions and guidelines can be motivating in that the reading becomes meaningful as well as entertaining. Gambrell points to the importance of providing value and meaning to classroom reading in terms of gaining motivation. Furthermore, “instruction that incorporates social interaction about text increases students’ motivation to read and reading comprehension achievement” (Gambrell, 2011, p. 175).

Our pre-reading activities also included conversations on the differences in how characters are depicted in novels versus in movies, and what remedies an author has at his or her disposal, versus a director of a movie. It was important that the students understood the limitations and the possibilities of each of the two media. The primary aim of scaffolding was to motivate the students by explaining what we were looking for and how to find it through an analytical approach. Through this process it was important for me, as the teacher, not to communicate any prejudices or to interfere on the students’ experience on the topics of gender portrayal in the novels.

3.5 Audio books

For motivational purposes, audio books by Stephen Fry were used as a classroom tool, adding variation to the reading process. The audio books were used in between the close reading sessions, as these had to be limited in time in order to maintain student engagement during the process. To be able to answer the Questionnaires the students had to be engaged readers, something which often can be challenging due to long hours at school. The use of audio books made it more possible for even slow readers to participate in the reading process. The excerpts were read or listened to in class, making sure that I was able to assist the respondents in translating unfamiliar words or phrases, and ensuring all respondents read or listened to all texts.

3.6 Project activities/ Classroom methodology

The project was performed as presented in Appendix B, over a period of four weeks. The role of the teacher was to structure the work, motivate the students, and answer questions from the students throughout the project. Each lesson varied in time from 80 minutes to 120 minutes. The questionnaires were answered four times during the period, and the interviews were held after the reading and screening of selected scenes were completed.

One of the challenges when working on a study such as this one, is to decide on how much scaffolding the students need, to be able to participate and fully understand the topics we are scrutinizing. In the ESL classroom we often read literature and talk about it. The students are accustomed to literary analyses where they write about plot, topic, and literary devices, and they have done some work on describing fictional characters. For me as the teacher in the classroom, it is important to guide the students into the topic of gender roles, by using examples and by investigating how much previous knowledge they have about it. Some of the students had previous experience with the topic from school, whereas others had not paid particular attention to this topic at all. The task for me was two folded:

1. Ensure a proper understanding of the term gender roles, and how we can find them in literature through dialogue, descriptions and in verbal actions.
2. Evoke students' motivation for participating in the study.

To provide a better understanding of the term gender roles, I decided to use the students' knowledge about character analysis as a starting point. They were told to use their previous experience from spotting and describing character traits and development. Next, we had classroom talks on how men and women behave at home and at work. This led to interesting talks on expectations and prejudices, as well as social norms and what is regarded as acceptable conduct for a boy versus a girl. The closer the topic of discussion approached the students' own lives, the more interested and participating they became, as they could relate to the topic. The first example of gender roles that came from the students, was how boys and girls behave differently in the classroom. This led to gender roles at choosing an education and an occupation, and then gender roles at home. Next, one student brought up gender roles in movies, and this led to a vivid discussion on stereotyping gender in movies and tv-series. To get the students to use their knowledge about gender roles when reading literature, they needed explicit instructions as to what to look for in particular. During the reading period,

they were told to look at descriptions of behaviour, dynamic verbs and dialogue. During the reading period, the students' opinions were recorded through the use of the questionnaires and my own notes on classroom discussions.

The talks on gender roles were followed by a talk on fantasy literature and the fantasy genre. Besides Harry Potter, many students were familiar with the works of Tolkien, most of them from film adaptations of the novels. Some students mentioned the popularity of The Avengers, recently made available through the Disney+ streaming service. Others mentioned their likings of *His Dark Materials* (HBO) and *The Magicians* (Amazon Prime/Viaplay).

The next part of the preparations dealt with motivation. From my experience as an ESL teacher in upper secondary school, I know that not many of them are prolific readers, and that they usually prefer on-screen-media during their spare time. However, they are accustomed to reading at school, and when given clear instructions combined with a manageable task, most of the students told me they were fine. As the Harry Potter novels are written with the native English teenage reader in mind, ESL teenage readers may find some words challenging, but they were often able to make sense of new words by finding the word used in a sentence. I assisted them from time to time, by translating difficult words into Norwegian. As we got going, the students told me they found the story exciting, and I had the impression that most of them were fascinated by the fantasy genre, the plot driven story and the use of the retrospective technique.

Another motivational tool was the use of audio books. The audio books were a joy to listen to, as the quality of Stephen Fry's reading were highly appreciated by many of the students. The audio files turned out to be very helpful, not only to the slow readers, but also for the prolific readers as the study involved reading quite a number of pages in a limited period of time. The students were able to listen to the recordings as they had the text in front of them. Some students came up to me and told me that they learned a lot about intonation and pronunciation through this. As for the aim of this study, it made it easier for the students to focus on the content of the text, rather than the text only.

Next, there is the issue of plot and continuity. Some of the students were familiar with the Harry Potter story, others were not. As we were to work on excerpts from several of the novels, as well as watching the adaptation of the fourth novel, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and the final scenes from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the students needed an understanding of the plot, and where the excerpts were taken from. In order to keep them motivated, they needed to get an understanding of the story as a whole, and the use of excerpts needed to make sense. This was done through explanations and filling the gaps

through classroom talks. As the settings change through the story, the students needed to know where the action took place and what had happened prior to the excerpts. To be able to evaluate the gender roles, they needed an understanding of context and the timeline. In terms of ESL classroom activities, these filling-the-gaps moments became valuable in that those students who were familiar with the story engaged themselves in plot explanations and took part in answering questions that evoked in class. This helped motivate the students that needed this information, as well as keeping the students that knew the story engaged and motivated.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the data from the questionnaires, the classroom discussions, and the interviews. The data was categorised into five themes, during the coding process: “Motivation”, “Behaviour”, “Communication”, “Empowerment”, and “Norms”. These themes will be discussed in the discussion section, however, they are also listed in this section, for clarity purposes.

4.1 Questionnaire and classroom discussion data.

The aim of the first questionnaire was to gather information about the students’ previous knowledge about Harry Potter.

Questions	Yes	No
Are you familiar with Harry Potter?	10	1
Have you read any of the Harry Potter novels?	0	11
Have you seen any of the Harry Potter films?	8	3

Table 1

All but one of the students had heard about Harry Potter, however none of the students had read any of the novels. Eight out of eleven (73%) had seen at least one film adaptation, whereas five students claimed to have seen all eight of them. These answers provided useful

information regarding the students' familiarity with the literature and film adaptations used in this study.

Chapter 2 - "The Vanishing Glass"

behaviour, norms

In the first excerpt from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* the respondents were asked to describe the gender roles at the Dursley's home, as a starting point. All respondents commented on the description of traditional gender roles presenting Mrs. Dursley as a housewife and Mr. Dursley as responsible for the income. The students found that both the Dursleys however, are equal in their behaviour towards Harry, and show the same lack of love and attention for him. During a classroom discussion one student said that he found it strange that Harry was so badly treated by the Dursleys, who after all were Harry's relatives. He claimed that Petunia Dursley was depicted as an evil stepmother, resembling a typical fairy-tale stepmother. When the students were asked about the behaviour of Mr. Dursley, one student stated that since Mr. Dursley was not blood related to Harry, his behaviour towards Harry was more understandable. They were not able to relate Mr. Dursley to any male fairy-tale character.

Chapter 16 - "Through the Trapdoor."

behaviour, empowerment, norms

In this chapter the students were told to pay particular attention to Hermione and how she contributes to reaching the last chamber. They found her role to be "motivational", "helping", and that "she helps with magical spells" and "with knowledge". When asked whether Harry could have reached the last chamber without the help of Hermione, ten out of twelve students did not think so, because Harry and Ron "lack the necessary knowledge". Harry and Ron are described by the students as "brave", "showing courage", "showing strategy", and "cleverness". The students find Hermione in this chapter to show "knowledge", "is smart", "cleverness", "friendship and smart", "she saw the logic". One student commented that Hermione in this chapter "is fearless". Another student commented that through the entire chapter "they worked as a team and it didn't matter who was a boy or who was a girl". One student stated that "it shows that the boys often are the main characters and that they need girls". When asked what the girls add to male main characters in general, the students' replies

varied between “love”, “care”, “a person that makes the main character take care for himself”, “someone to care for” and “someone to help out of a difficult situation”. All the answers dwelled around the male character using his strength and knowledge to help a girl in need, and to help himself due to a girl representing a value worth living for.

The students were then asked to reflect on their characteristics of Hermione in this chapter, as their descriptions of her did not match the stereotypes of girls playing a passive role, depending on the boys to assist or take the necessary action. Some students replied that Hermione, being a clever and hard studying student at Hogwarts, was depicted as the smartest of the three, and in terms of gender roles, her contributions to reaching the last chamber was as important as those of the boys. In other words, Hermione was not depicted as a girl in need, but rather as a girl supporting the needs of Harry and Ron. In the quest for the Philosopher’s Stone, both genders were contributing, and the students agreed that neither one of the sexes could have accomplished the task alone.

The students were then confronted with the statement that studying hard and being a hardworking student may by some be described as typically female behaviour, and that Rowling in this chapter only perpetuates stereotypical gender roles. While some students found the statement to be valid, others did not agree. One student stated that “it may be typical for girls to try to do their best in school, but boys can be just as smart as girls”. Another student commented that “Hermione in this chapter is not only using her knowledge achieved from her reading of books, but she also has to use logic and be clever”. Yet another student commented on the fact that “Hermione not only has to have knowledge, but she also has to be confident and believe in herself, when she tells Harry what bottle he is to drink from”. The discussion led to the students concluding that in this chapter Hermione depicts knowledge, magic skills, cleverness and that she trusts herself enough to tell Harry what bottle to choose, among the ones filled with poison.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

This novel is the fourth in the sequel and the students read chapter 8, 9, 14 and 23, before the film adaptation was screened.

Chapter 8 - “The Quidditch World Cup”

behaviour, norms

In this chapter there was one episode in particular that caused a heated classroom debate, when the Bulgarian Team Mascots entered the pitch. Two female students found it rather sexist that in a men’s World Cup, the Bulgarian Team had chosen to bring Veela as Mascots. One of the girls found the way the dancing was depicted as rather humiliating and called it “an erotic dance”. She found it “strange that the Veela were there at all” and questioned the way Rowling had included seductive women in a “children’s book”. To my surprise she was contradicted by another female student, who claimed that women as mascots or cheerleaders was a common phenomenon in many sports in real life. The first two girls replied that the Veela were seducing through their dance, while this is not the case with cheerleading. One of the male students in class replied that “cheerleading girls are often performing lightly dressed”, but the two girls claimed that there in general is nothing seductive in the way cheerleading is performed.

While at least two of the girls in class found the Veela sexist, the debate turned to the magical part of the Veela’s performance, as one boy said that “Harry and Ron are enchanted, and it does not necessarily have anything to do with sex”. However, some of the students did not believe in this, because of the way Hermione reacts to Harry’s and Ron’s behaviour.

In a questionnaire the students were asked how the two teams that arrive at Hogwarts for the Triwizard Tournament, are presented in the film adaptation. The girl team enters in blue dresses accompanied by soft music, which clearly contrasts the way the boys’ team are presented. The aim of the question was to find out how the students experienced the two teams’ entrance in terms of gender roles.

Gender	Answers
Boy	The girls are presented with music and dancing, but the boys are presented like warriors with flames and scary music.
Boy	Women are shown very feminine, and men are shown as powerful and scary.
Boy	The girls’ group is presented in a soft and calm way. The boys did show strength and that they were serious.
Boy	The girls introduced themselves by dancing and they were polite. The boys should be a little brutal.
Girl	The girls were elegant. The boys were tough.

Girl	The girls are presented as the stereotypical Disney princess types. The boys were presented as a mix of cavemen and break-dancer hybrids.
Girl	The girls are presented elegantly. The boys were as cavemen or Vikings.
Girl	The girls are friendly and kind, while the boys are presented as strong and brave.
Girl	The girls are presented in a very feminine way. It looked like they were working with very light, nice magic. The boys were presented in a darker way, almost like they were ready for war. The girls danced and glanced at everyone on their way into the hall, with lots of butterflies. The boys came with a lot of flames, they showed strength, and looked scary.
Girl	The girls walk in a girly way with butterflies, and the boys walked in a more tough way with sticks on fire.
Girl	The boys are very angry and stone-faced, but the girls are more happy and glad.

Table 2

The students' replies indicate that they clearly see the difference in appearance between the two teams, however only a few of them commented explicitly on the stereotypical depiction in these scenes. The respondents used the following words to describe the female team; "elegant", "soft", "calm", "Disney princess types", "polite", "dancing", "friendly", "kind". The words contrast the descriptions the respondents chose for the male team; "warriors", "flames", "powerful", "scary", "serious", "strength", "angry", "stone-faced". A male student claimed that this presentational scene was one of the most stereotypical scenes in terms of gender roles that he had watched in a long time.

Chapter 9 - "The Dark Mark" and Chapter 14 - "The Unforgivable Curses"
behaviour, communication

In these two chapters Hermione is caring for the welfare of the Elves and reacts to the way they are treated and spoken to. Hermione is also showing that she cares for Neville when she is the one to tell Professor Moody to stop casting spells on a spider, the moment she realises that it hurts Neville. In the following classroom discussion, some students found that Hermione spoke out because she dared to do so, and that her engagement for the elves and

Neville should not necessarily be addressed as typically female behaviour. One boy argued that he believed the reason for Hermione’s action was that she saw the way the elves were treated and had the guts to questioning the traditional way of treating them. This, however, was contradicted by other students in class, who argued that Hermione in her attempts to free the elves is ridiculed by other students. One boy argued that Hermione’s behaviour is typically female, and he argued that more girls than boys get involved in volunteering, for instance in organisations fighting for the climate. As we had no statistical material supporting such a statement, the students did not reach an agreement in this matter.

Chapter 23 - “The Yule Ball”

behaviour, norms, empowerment

The Yule Ball depicts a situation where the boys are to ask a girl whether she will go with him to the Ball. The boys are empowered in that they freely choose which girl to ask, but the girls are also empowered by the ability to accept an invitation or to decline. The students were asked “How does the Yule Ball affect the boys and the girls?”.

Gender	Answers
Boy	They need to find a partner, and for the boys it is harder, because they are shy.
Boy	The boys have to ask a partner and because of this they are stressed.
Boy	I think this is a situation that the girls like best, because they are the ones to be asked. They can say yes or no.
Boy	The boys seemed bothered because of the dance, but the girls get excited for it.
Girl	The boys are nervous to ask the girls out and the girls are laughing at some boys.
Girl	The girls seemed happy about it, but the boys almost seemed embarrassed, and they were struggling with how to get a date, at least some of them.
Girl	The girls seemed to be able to choose which boy to go with, the boys did not seem to like the situation at all.
Girl	I don’t know.

Girl	The girls look happy, the boys are clumsy.
Girl	It looks like it is important for the girls to be asked by a popular boy.
Girl	No answer.

Table 3

The students are not likely to have experienced this situation in school, as we do not have the same tradition in Norway. However, the Yule Ball chapter may be relatable to many of the students, as it dwells around tension between the two genders, and both the boys and the girls discuss the matter with their friends. I was peculiarly interested in whether the students were able to spot the power the girls have in this situation, and some of the answers indicate that the students were able to grasp the tension depicted both in the novel and in the film adaptation.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

In the seventh and final novel, Harry, Ron and Hermione are approximately 17 years old, about the age of the students. It is therefore likely that this novel is the one where the students are most able to identify with the characters. Due to this, in addition to reading the selection of chapters, the second half of the movie adaptation was also screened for the students.

Chapter 9 - “A Place to Hide” *norms, empowerment, behaviour*

As this chapter calls for quick decisions, as the death eaters are hunting down Harry, Ron and Hermione, the students were asked about the role of Hermione in this. One female student commented that “Hermione had prepared some clothes in a bag”. Another female student said that “Hermione thinks before anything happens, and she is always prepared”. When confronted with the assertion that Hermione on several occasions acts as a mother for Harry and Ron, one male student replied that “she really cares for Ron and Harry’s wellbeing”. Another male student commented that “When I read that she had brought with her other clothes in this magic bag, I do not think Harry or Ron would have thought of that or planned that in advance”. One girl replied that “girls are better at planning, especially when it comes to clothes and packing a bag”.

Chapter 15- “The Goblin’s Revenge”

empowerment, behaviour

As Harry, Ron and Hermione are searching for the next Horcrux, they are having a difficult time, moving from place to place avoiding the Death-Eaters. The chapter depicts the three in a time of stress, and the students were told to scrutinize how the trio cooperated, as in who took the lead, and who contributed to what. In a questionnaire, the students were then asked, “What can we learn about Harry, Ron and Hermione from reading this chapter?”

Gender	Answers
Boy	Hermione is brave, Ron is angry, Harry does not know what to do.
Boy	Ron can’t handle himself on his own. Hermione really takes the role of a mother. Harry acts as the leader.
Boy	Harry tries to find a new Horcrux and thinks a lot. Hermione is also thinking about how stuck they are. Ron is the most childish of them.
Boy	That they have difficulties.
Girl	The chapter shows that they are scared for the Death-Eaters. Ron is complaining about the food. Harry is thinking a lot. Hermione tries to make the best out of it.
Girl	Harry and Hermione are trying to figure out how to find the next Horcrux. Ron is getting angry and wants to give up.
Girl	They don’t know what to do next. Harry is trying to find out, and Ron is having a difficult time. Hermione is thinking about the Horcrux.
Girl	Hermione cares about them, Ron is impatient and angry. Harry is trying his best to come up with a plan.
Girl	Ron is mad, Harry is scared, Hermione is responsible.
Girl	Hermione talks to both Harry and Ron, since they are arguing.
Girl	No answer.

Table 4

When we discussed it in class, a male student mentioned that one of the reasons why Ron behaved so strangely was because of the Horcrux he carried. Other students stated that Ron still behaved childishly when he complained about the food. When asked who they felt was in

charge, the answers were two-folded. Some students argued that Harry was in charge and took the lead. Other students believed that Hermione not only was the one in charge, but that she also kept the trio together and came up with new ideas about where to find the next Horcrux. The majority of the class did not believe that Harry and Ron would not have made it in the woods without her help.

Chapter 23- “Malfoy Manor”

behaviour, norms

After reading this chapter and screening the corresponding scenes from the film adaptation the students were asked to characterize the male characters by using adjectives. This chapter involves a lot of characters of both genders. The students came up with the following characterisations: “angry”, “mad”, “afraid”, “strong”, “hateful”, “full of evil”, “dark”. Then they were asked to do the same with the female characters. The results were: “caring”, “evil”, “normal”, “kind”, “helpful”, “trustworthy”, “mad”.

When we discussed it class, the students commented that all the male characters were afraid of Voldemort, even his own men. One student commented that Ron’s behaviour reminded him of the fairy-tale knight who wanted to free the princess. For the women, the students thought Jaco’s mother seemed to be caring in a way, at least when compared to how Bellatrix was evil and afraid of Voldemort. Lucy was described by the students as only kind, helpful and caring. Then the students were asked to comment on the characters in terms of masculine and feminine behaviour, as we had talked about these terms in class in our pre-reading activities.

Character	Masculine behaviour	Feminine behaviour
Harry	Takes responsibility for the group. Gives orders to Dobby.	
Ron	Fighting for Hermione	Overwhelmed by his feelings for Hermione
Hermione	Does not give in for the torture of Bellatrix, determined	Cares for Harry
Bellatrix	Violent, Angry, Aggressive	
Fenrir	Violent	

Narcissa		Runs the house, Protects Draco
Draco		Does not give Harry away, shows emotions
Lucius	Angry, determined	
Luna		Kind, passive, helpful

Table 5

This was an interesting exercise in that it raised a classroom discussion on male and female traits. One debate dwelled on the issue of caring. While some students found caring to be a typically female trait, due to women giving birth, other students believed men were able to care for family members and others just as much as women. When the students were done, one student looked at the blackboard and stated that the most physical and violent character in the chapter is Bellatrix, a female character. When confronted with this, some students argued that since Bellatrix is a witch, she cannot be compared to women in real life, neither their female traits.

Chapter 36 - "The Flaw in the Plan"

empowerment, behaviour, communication, norms

This chapter is about the final battle between Harry and Voldemort. In the latter part of the novel Professor McGonagall is depicted as the woman in charge of Hogwarts, due to the death of Dumbledore, the old patriarch. As the plot in the novel and the film adaptation slightly differs, the students read the chapter and watched the corresponding scenes. The students answered the following question in the questionnaire: "In the final scenes of the movie, several female characters are assisting Harry and take part in the fight against Voldemort and his men. Do any of the female characters change, or do things they have not done before?"

Gender	Answers
Boy	We haven't really read about or seen women fighting before. That was new.
Boy	It seemed like they were not scared to come forward and speak up. They fought back.

Boy	The female characters in the chapter were Gonagall, Ron’s mother, Luna, Hermione and Ginny. They have changed because they have the responsibility to defend the school.
Boy	No answer.
Girl	Yes, Hermione changes her way to do things and gets braver. One of the female professors gets braver and Ron’s mother is suddenly very brave.
Girl	A lot of the female characters are more careless in a way. They say and do whatever they want and they are not scared to hold back. They are very straight forward and think “we probably gonna die anyway” kind of attitude. In Hermione’s case she is usually the smart one, but now Ron is the one taking charge and coming up with ideas.
Girl	In the film Hermione tries to kill the snake, in the novel it is Neville.
Girl	Ginny shows more of herself. Gonagall takes more responsibility of the school, because Dumbledore is dead.
Girl	Gonagall protected the school more and the students. Ron’s mother uses magic power to protect her children.
Girl	They show more faith in Harry than ever before, and they sacrifice their own life to help Harry defeat Voldemort. For example, Gonagall defended her school to buy Harry some time to figure out how to kill Voldemort.
Girl	The female characters are more violent since they have to use magic spells.

Table 6

The answers from the respondents indicate that they noticed a change in the way some of the female characters in the movie behave. Some students are not specific about the changes, other than commenting on them fighting, and take action to protect the school. While all the female respondents commented on a change in at least one of the characters, only one out of four male respondents did the same.

In the next question the students were asked more about the assistance Harry receives from the people around him. “The novels are all named “Harry Potter and...”. Do you believe Harry would have succeeded without the help of his friends?” By asking this question I wanted to figure out whether they saw Harry as a traditional male hero figure.

Gender	Answers
Boy	Probably not, at least not without Hermione.
Boy	Not at all.
Boy	If it were not for his friends, he would probably be stuck in the first novel.
Boy	I do, but it would definitely be harder for him.
Girl	Harry definitely would not have succeeded without his friends. Partly because they are a huge part of his motivation, but also because he doesn't have the brains. Hermione does and he has a habit of almost getting himself killed whenever he tries to act alone.
Girl	I don't think Harry could have done it without his friends.
Girl	No Harry would not have succeeded without Hermione.
Girl	No Harry's friends helped a lot.
Girl	No.
Girl	Absolutely not. Harry could not have killed Voldemort without his friends killing the snake.
Girl	Ron helped most physically, so perhaps Harry could do without him. He could not have done it without Hermione, because he needed her magic skills and knowledge.

Table 7

One male respondent believes Harry would have succeeded without help; the other nine respondents do not think so. The answers indicates that 90% of the respondents do not see Harry as a traditional hero figure, but they believe Harry succeeds with the help of others.

The next question was about the possibilities inherent in the fantasy genre. The students were asked: "The Harry Potter novels may be categorized as fantasy novels, a genre where everything is possible. In the fantasy genre, J. K. Rowling does not have to treat gender roles in a way she finds realistic or "as they are today". In your opinion, does Rowling, in her portrayal of gender roles, break out of realism?"

Gender	Answers
Boy	They don't break the realism, but they are a bit over the line.
Boy	No, I do not think they break out of realism. Perhaps in the end, but that is because Dumbledore is gone, and they need to do something.

Boy	No, I don't think so.
Boy	Not so much, at least compared to our culture. I would say that boys and girls in the novels and the movie are the same, as it is in real world.
Girl	In some way she does, but every human is different. Some will think the gender roles in Harry Potter are normal, some will think the female characters do more than they thought they were going to do.
Girl	I am not sure, sort of it is the way it is in the real world.
Girl	I don't think it breaks out of realism so to speak, but it does break out of the stereotypes in today's society.
Girl	No, I do not think so. That would have meant that Hermione would have to be very physical and use a lot of physical strength.
Girl	Probably when we read about Bellatrix, who is almost like a man in her behaviour.
Girl	There are so many different female characters. The girl team that comes for the Tournament is very feminine, while Ron's mother in the end is very masculine in the way she talks to Bellatrix and fights against her.
Girl	Mostly they do not break the gender roles.

Table 8

4.2 Interview data

The interviews were held at the end of the project, as we were done reading, and had finished answering the questionnaires and the classroom discussions had ended. Notes were taken during the interviews.

Question 1: "Have you read or seen any fantasy adaptations before this?"

The aim of the question was to gather information about previous experiences with the fantasy genre, in terms of finding out whether the students were familiar with the characteristics of the genre or not. Nine out of eleven students had either read fantasy literature or watched film adaptations of fantasy literature before our work on Harry Potter. 70 % of the students had only watched film adaptations, and 30 % of the students had both read and watched at least one film adaptation.

Question 2: “Do you like the genre?”

Nine out of eleven students like the fantasy genre, two of the female students answered that they do not like the genre. Both girls commented that they prefer realistic movies to fantastic ones.

Question 3: “When we started reading from the first Harry Potter novel, what were your first impressions of Harry, Ron and Hermione?”

Students	Harry	Ron	Hermione
Girl	Smart, patient,	Stupid, coward, awkward,	Smart, powerful, full of ideas
Girl	Open to everything	Open to others, Not the smartest	She thinks she is smarter than the others, I did not really like her.
Girl	Tough and outgoing	Not so tough	I liked Hermione the best, she showed that girls also can do something.
Girl	He was a special boy	A special friend of Harry. He seemed a little more afraid, more anxious.	She had more knowledge than the boys. She knew more spells. Strong girl, but she also cries.
Girl	Kind of strange, I am not sure why. I felt pity for him.	He was the strange one, a bit stupid.	I liked Hermione; she was brave enough to say what she wanted.
Girl	I thought there was something special about him because I knew he was the main character. Kind.	Harry’s friend, and he was in a way proud of it. Later he got more tough and showed his personality.	She was nice, clever and a good student. She was not so good at making friends with other girls. Perhaps they saw her as a threat.

Girl	He is a good friend, but he is always trying to fight Voldemort. He is difficult to characterize.	He is not as smart as Harry, but he becomes more and more brave.	Hermione is good in school, and she tries her best to be a good student. She is a good magician, better than the boys.
Boy	Insecure, but trying to stand his ground	Coward, scared of everything.	Very smart, always studying.
Boy	Cool, he is doing what is right, he does what he thinks is right.	In the movies he is portrayed as kind of slow. He is always in the background.	She always seems to know it all. She does not brag about it, but she always answers the questions in class.
Boy	He is kind of calm and thinks about something all the time. He is not muscular or tough, but he is brave.	First, he in a way wanted to be like Harry. Later on, he becomes more tough and stands his ground.	First, I did not like her, she was too high on herself. Later she shows that she is a caring person.
Boy	Smart guy, but also very quiet. He is not braving or anything, I think he is not that type.	Ron is kind of more outgoing than Harry. He is the one that gets Hermione.	She is smart and outgoing. But she is also a kind person that cares for others.

Table 9

The answers reveal that the female respondents found Harry to be a kind character that has something special about him. The male students responded that he is brave, calm and cool, one student finds him insecure, another student finds him smart and quiet.

Ron is described by the female students as not as smart as Harry, two students used the word “stupid”, one student called him “not the smartest”. The male students’ characteristics of Ron revealed that they found him to be a bit scared and slow, but that he develops in a positive way over the years, and that he is the one who gets Hermione.

The female students describe Hermione as smart and powerful, with knowledge and skills in magic. They find that she cares for others, is brave, but at the same time able to show

her feelings. The boys describe her as smart and outgoing, but at the same time kind and caring.

Question 4: “In the novels, Harry, Ron and Hermione grow from being 11-year-olds to becoming 17-year-olds in the final novel. Were you able to identify with any of the characters at any point?”

By asking this question I wanted to find out to what extent the students were able to relate the literature to an experience, feeling, setting or situation from their own life.

Able to identify	Boys	With whom	Girls	With whom
Yes	2	Harry,	6	Hermione (4) Harry (2) Ron (1)
No	2		1	

Table 10

Whereas 72% of the students were able to identify with at least one of the characters at a given point, several students commented that the genre of fantasy challenged the identifying process because the characters did many things the students cannot do or have never done themselves. Two of the boys and four of the girls identified with Harry, however the majority of female students identified with Hermione. One of the girls stated that:

It can be difficult to identify with them at some times, because they always get out of it – or like fix things with magic or like something unrealistic that we can’t do in reality. So – it doesn’t really like – it’s not like I can look to them and think Oh they did that – so I will do that too.

Another female student was of the same opinion: “Not really – but in the first novel when he got to a new school – there I could kind of be familiar with Harry”. When asked whether she was able to identify with Hermione, she answered “perhaps because she has boys as friends – and that she is more with boys than with girls”.

One female student found that “some of the things that Hermione does, are things that I could have done – if I was in the same situation. – For example, she likes to be with boys, and is not so happy around girls – that is something I also like best.”

Two of the male students felt they could not identify with any of the characters. One of them stated “I am not that kind of a person who have to depend on others. I like when someone is able to overcome things – they know they can do it alone. With the help of others, it becomes easier.” One of the female students was able to identify with Ron. She found that “he might feel that he is not good enough – being Harry’s friend”.

Question 5: “If no, what do the characters lack, in your opinion?”

One girl and two boys found it difficult to identify with the characters. The girl stated that since the characters live in a fantasy world, they do many things we cannot do in real life. When confronted with the question once more, she came to realise that she was able to understand some of the feelings portrayed by the characters, but as she had not been in the same situations, she still found it hard to identify with them. One of the boys said he was not able to identify with either Ron or Harry, but if there had been a character who was a mix of the two, he believed he could have identified with that character.

The other boy claimed that he found it difficult to identify with fictional characters in general.

Question 6: “Harry and Hermione are two of the main characters. What would you say are the main differences between the two?”

One of the girls found that:

Harry’s strength is his past - like with the whole history with Voldemort killing his parents and pretty much everyone knowing who he is. Hermione’s strength is – I think the fact that she knows that a lot of people don’t like her – because she is muggle born – uhm – in a way they are alike because they both are hated by the same people because of different things. Hermione is perhaps not so liked by other girls because – uhm – perhaps because she stands out and believes in herself as a person. Hermione is good at magic and knows a lot – perhaps the other girls think that she braves too much – uhm – and that is perhaps more accepted among boys.

Another girl shares the same opinion:

Harry is more brave than Hermione, and that is accepted both by the other students. Hermione is – uhm – more clever than Harry, and I think – perhaps the other girls would have accepted that, but – it is the way that she behaves – uhm – her high self-esteem that the other girls perhaps don't like. I mean – if a boy acts that way it is normal, but if a girl does the same, it is perhaps – not so common for a girl to act like that.

Some other respondents also commented on Hermione's behaviour as a challenge for her, when it comes to friendship with other girls. Several of the respondents commented that Hermione, in some areas of life, acted more like a boy than a girl. They found her not to be afraid of showing of her skills both in magic and in knowledge, and to them Hermione's challenge was not that she was clever and wise, but that she was so open about it due to a high self-esteem.

One of the male students claimed that:

Hermione thinks over everything before she does something, she thinks to her herself what the outcome will be. Harry is more like – he sees that he can do something and does something to help. – One thing I noticed was that Hermione is in a way – protects Harry – uhm – when he is about to do something Hermione stops him – uhm – and that has perhaps something to do with caring, almost like an elder sister, or a mother.

An interesting observation from a female student about Harry and Hermione, was that even though both are occupied with the obsession of killing Voldemort, Hermione shows more feelings than Harry. She is more emotional, and she allows her friends to see how she really feels. Harry does not show his feelings to the same extent, several students saw his character as a more enclosed one. Some of the students commented on the Yule Ball chapter, where both Harry and Ron really do not know how to precede. Both male and female students experienced the female characters to be more mature and able to behave correctly on this occasion.

Question 7: “What do you think of the way Fleur is depicted as a contestant in the Tri-Wizard-Cup?”

Students	Fleur
Girl	I mean, she was – there was always some kind of problem – so that she couldn't finish, and then the boys – Harry mainly – had to help her out. The boys were always like the hero – I think maybe the books needed it a little bit, because it gets kind of boring if the girls or the boys always win. Hermione seems to always be best in the classroom. It irritated me a little bit – because we were back to that same old thing – where the girl can't handle the emotional stuff, but at the same way she had almost lost her sister and she seemed tired, while Harry, Cedrick and Krum had this competition going.
Girl	She was portrayed like she gave up easily because she got attacked under water. In the maze she was captured. I don't really know because I didn't really care about that stuff. I think it is just how she is. I was not sorry about it – because the books and the movies are about Harry Potter – so you expect him to win.
Girl	She is portrayed as a careful girl – she is afraid to make mistakes in a way – She lost the contest but – I did not think that that was strange – I think they wanted to show that Harry won, because he is the hero – in a way – To make him win she had to lose – but I don't think it is good that the movies always show the girl as – the weakest. I think they should show that girls can do the same as boys – but it takes some more time for the girls to do it.
Girl	In the Tri-Wizard-Cup she seemed very afraid – and she was crying and she didn't want to finish the competition – so she is depicted as maybe a small girl – which was really afraid and wanted to quit. I was not angry – but I thought – uhm – you could maybe show us other girls that can fight for a little bit longer – some people quit faster than others.
Girl	I think she shows a lot about herself when Harry saved her sister from dying – she showed a lot of feelings when she was competing. She cares about others – but she still wants to win. I think Fleur is there to show girls that they can do the same thing as boys – but of course she couldn't win – because of Harry.
Girl	Girls do not have as much muscles as boys – and – I thought that it was typical that the girl in the contest loses for a boy – I didn't like it – but at the same time it is what we often see in movies.
Girl	I was focusing on Harry so much – I didn't think about Fleur at all. It was mainly about Harry – and in a way I knew he was going to be the winner.

Boy	I think she failed the challenge, because she wasn't able to rescue her little sister, so Harry does that for her. Maybe the boys were more courageous – I am not sure if that is a gender thing. I think the reason Fleur is in the contest – is to add variety – more than to show how the boys are better than the girls. Perhaps by adding a girls team makes it more interesting for girls to read the books.
Boy	I really didn't really think about it when I saw it – but I think she didn't have what it takes to do well in that kind of competition.
Boy	I mean – I don't know – For me she was just a plot device – they all revolve around Harry – everybody had to lose except from Harry – she could not win because it is not her story.
Boy	I think Fleur should not have been in the competition – uhm – because she in a way is a stereotype of weak girls that needs boys or men to help them – I don't understand why Rowling included Fleur in the Contest.

Table 11

In the interview only one out of four boys (25%), and four out of seven girls (57%) commented on the stereotypical depiction of Fleur. Several of the respondents commented on the Hero character of Harry, which made him the certain winner even before the contest had started.

Question 8: “In the second half of the final movie, some female characters are partaking in action scenes. Do any of these characters change in your opinion?”

One girl found that “Professor McGonagall has always been like – really uptight and stiff – like she doesn't really show a lot of emotions – she is like very serious – and pretty much all of the female characters in the last novel don't care anymore about what people are gonna think – and about the norms – since they may think that they gonna die anyway – but then all of a sudden they are really outgoing – and they do what they want and say what they want. It's fun to watch.”

Several students commented on the battle scenes at Hogwarts, where female characters were fighting along the male characters. One of the male respondents finds that “I am thinking about the scene where Ron's mother was fighting the evil witch -uhm – Bellatrix – she showed a lot of courage in that scene – and we haven't seen her like that before. She was

furious and physical - and – Professor McGonagall – she did the spell where she released the soldiers that jumped down from the building.”

One of the girls claimed that “I don’t think they changed so much – like they suddenly became braver – uhm – but – because of the things that happened – they perhaps needed to act like that- I mean take responsibility and fight.” Several of the students argued that because of Professor Dumbledore is dead, Professor McGonagall must take the lead. One male student commented that “I don’t think they change, but since Dumbledore is dead – McGonagall is the next in rank and has to take responsibility – I also think that the women has not shown this kind of aggressive behaviour before – because they didn’t have to – and it is not I think a very nice way for a woman to behave.”

In sum, the students mentioned Professor McGonagall and Ron’s mother as examples of women who change their behaviour. As all the respondents were able to identify some form of change in the behaviour of female characters, some students claimed it has to do with what is considered acceptable behaviour in terms of norms, other mentioned the extreme situation that called for extreme behaviour.

Question 9: “If you were to conclude on how the male characters are depicted, what would your conclusion be?”

Students	Male characters in <i>Harry Potter</i>
Boys’ answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All of them are somewhat courageous, - Everyone is different, some are bullies, some are good. - I think they are all different – a variety of personalities. - They are more like – uhm – competing each other – trying to achieve something – respect – uhm – or at least some kind of achievement.
Girls’ answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional, showing their feelings, not afraid to admit their fears, - They have lots of jealousy, competing, - Most of the guys were depicted brave, but some of them were hiding their feelings, - I think it is hard to settle on something they all have in common - maybe that they are more physical - they are not all brave – and some are more – uhm – outgoing than others.

	<p>- Perhaps that they are all more goal oriented than the girls – uhm – they are not so – uhm – showing their feelings.</p> <p>- Many of the boys – have to do something or go somewhere all the time – uhm – they don’t sit down and talk about feelings much – it’s more like – action.</p>
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Table 12

This question was obviously a difficult one since the students must consider all male characters. It is however an interesting question in that it may reveal a tendency in the portrayal of gender roles in the novels. The boys find the male characters to be more oriented towards achievements and they show more courage in general. The female respondents also commented on the issue of goal orientation and achievements, but some also found the men to be expressing feelings, and not be afraid to admit their fears. One girl commented that the male characters were more physically and were occupied by a task or a mission all the time.

Question 10: “If you were to conclude on how the female characters are depicted, what would your conclusion be?”

Students	Female characters in <i>Harry Potter</i>
Boys’ answers	<p>- Uhm – Well, I don’t know really. Maybe the girls show less courage than the boys do – When there is action it is always around the boys – and Hermione – she is kind of special.</p> <p>- I think there are many types of female characters. There is – uhm – Luna who is kind and a shy character. Hermione is – more outgoing and around Harry and Ron all the time – uhm- and Gonagall is quite – strict. Finally the witch – uhm – Bellatrix – she is perhaps almost like a mad man.</p> <p>- I think there are both kind female characters as well as evil ones – but the evil ones are not on Harry’s side. Harry’s aunt is – crazy – and so is Voldemort’s witch. Ron’s mother is kind – but shows courage in the end.</p>
Girls’ answers	<p>- I feel like the female characters are more like – smart – perhaps it is that they think more before they do something – they are not as – impulsive as the boys.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uhm – they are very smart but somewhat naive, I think – because they trust some boys that are not to be trusted. - Most of the girls are quite tough and – they dare to stand out. - I think many – like the boys always had another boy to team up with – but Hermione was alone so she was just this one girl – and maybe she was in despair some times because she didn’t have another girl – and the same thing with – uhm – Fleur she was alone and afraid in the Cup. I think we never read about girlfriends being together – like in real life. - I think it is difficult to find something they all have in common – perhaps that they are more – uhm- reserved and – careful – but that changes in the battle scenes in the end.
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Table 13

Like in the previous question, the students found this one challenging. Two of the girls and one boy were not able to conclude, arguing that the novels presented a variety of female characters. One boy found that the boys perhaps were presented as more courageous and more involved in the physical and dramatic scenes. The answers from the girls revealed that some found the female characters to be smart, tough, and outgoing. Other girls found them to be perhaps naïve, reserved, and careful. Many students commented on how several of the female characters change their behaviour in the dramatic battle scenes.

Question 11: “Do you think the Harry Potter novels are suitable for classroom use when it comes to focusing on gender roles?”

Students	
Girl	If you were trying to prove that – like – the stereotypical way of thinking of genders today – is not how it has to be – then I think it could be suitable – I think the fantasy genre perhaps make people more open to new ways of behaving – because anything can happen in fantasy. But I think – if you change the gender roles too much – then it perhaps will be more difficult to – uhm – identify with the characters.
Girl	I think fantasy novels are popular – and perhaps is good to use in school – Perhaps other books can be also good to use to focus on gender roles. I think the most important thing is that the books are interesting – uhm – so that we want to read them.

Girl	Yes, I think so – at least for some of us – it is perhaps more natural to discuss gender roles in a novel – than in real life. Perhaps we – dare to say what we mean – it is not so dangerous to say what you mean about it in a book – we can discuss the book and then perhaps use it in real life.
Girl	By seeing the movie and reading I think we can learn that girls can be just as strong as boys – and can be just as needed as the boys are – and maybe it is a little hard for people to see and read that – because normally it isn't that way – normally the guys are stronger and it is – always the boys there and the girls are a little under – In Harry Potter the girls are needed to complete the mission to kill Voldemort. It can give girls a self-esteem boost – girls need the push maybe.
Girl	I think both books and movies can show people how their life can be – both in a good and a bad way – Perhaps fantasy makes us think things in a new way – it could give us ideas about stuff – uhm – at least I feel like that.
Girl	I don't know – I was thinking about gender roles when we read in the classroom – how the boys and the girls behaved – but perhaps the focus is so much on Harry – and what will happen next – you forget it sometimes -
Girl	Perhaps – I think so – It was exciting to read – and – it was interesting to discuss in the classroom -
Boy	No, I don't think fantasy novels are good to look at if we are talking about gender roles – because in fantasy novels anything can be real – and in real life anything can't be real. I think realistic novels is better – because we can relate better to what is happening.
Boy	I think there is all this equality talk now – around us. I think it is important – to discuss it in school as well – Perhaps movies and books can be used to this – I think the fantasy genre is very popular – with the movies and all – so it is perhaps a choice that we students like. If we read something we are interested in – it is a good start for discussions.
Boy	I watch a lot of the Avengers movies. I don't know but I don't really think about gender roles – when I watch them. The Harry Potter project was different – because we were told to focus on it – so – I think it made us more aware. At school I think people might think about it – but if you read the books at home – I don't know-
Boy	Yes – because there are many different boys and girls – and – uhm – they all are different – we can learn from what they do – I think so –

Table 14

This question touched upon the crux of the matter in this project. As the students had been participating in the project for several weeks, they all were able to give their opinion on the Harry Potter novels' ability to depict gender roles. As some students uttered different degrees of uncertainty, other respondents made clear statements.

5. Discussion

In this chapter, the data presented in the previous chapter is discussed in relation to the research questions, in the context of the theory presented in chapter 2. The qualitative data collected from the Questionnaires, the Interviews and classroom discussions forms the basis for the discussion.

The research questions were as following:

R1: To what extent is the use of excerpts from the Harry Potter novels and scenes from the film adaptations, capable of raising gender awareness in the Upper secondary ESL classroom?

R2: Do the student responses to the texts support or question the scholarly work on gender in the Harry Potter novels?

In order to provide a systematic approach for the discussion section, the collected data was coded and divided into categories which constitute the basic unit of analysis. Friedman finds that "analysis in qualitative research is not a stage of research, but begins during data collection and continues through the research process" (Friedman, 2011, p. 191) As the data from the questionnaires and the classroom discussions was collected, it was reflected upon and elaborated on when the open-ended questions for the Interviews were made. This is what Richards argues to be the process of "(e) organizing the data to look for patterns and themes, and (g) collecting more data" (Richards, 2003, p. 272). For me to be able to relate the data to the research questions, categories had to be made. Budd and Thorp find that categories are "classes into which material is grouped for the purpose of analysis" (Budd & Thorp, 1963, p. 10). The process of coding the data resulted in the following categories or themes:

“Motivation”, “Behaviour”, “Communication”, “Empowerment”, and “Norms”. In the following, the data for each theme will be presented and contrasted with theory presented in Chapter 2. The final section in this chapter presents a discussion on Research question 1.

5.1 Motivation

To achieve reader engagement in the classroom, the students must find the literature interesting and appealing. It can be challenging to settle on what kind of literature to use in a group of several students, because of differences in interests, reading skills and previous reading experiences. As described in Chapter 2, the *Harry Potter* novels were chosen due to the ongoing popularity of the fantasy genre. Question 2 in the interviews revealed that 82% of the respondents appreciate the genre. This study also tried to illuminate to what extent the students were able to identify with any of the characters. Question 4 in the interviews shows that 72% of the students were able to identify with at least one of the characters at a given point. As weak readers often find reading of L2 literature challenging, the use of audio books was implemented in the reading process as a motivational tool, as described in Chapter 3. As this may have added to the students’ motivation for the implementation of the reading sessions, a further scrutinizing of how motivating the students found the literature was not executed. So far, the study has confirmed an interest in the fantasy genre, and an ability among most of the respondents to identify with at least one of the main characters. The next part discusses how the students experienced the depiction of gender roles in terms of behaviour.

5.2 Behaviour

The behaviour chapter aims at discussing whether the respondents registered systematic differences in patterns of behaviour between the male and the female characters in the novels. Both the Questionnaires and the Interviews revealed such patterns; however, the students did not concur on the degree of differences. The students concurred on the way the female and the male team were depicted as they arrived for the Tri-Wizard-Cup (Table 2). They all commented on the differences in the two teams’ appearances, however when it comes to the *Harry Potter* novels as a whole, the data becomes more differentiated. Harry’s behaviour is characterised as “thinking”, “planning”, “trying to figure out” (Table 4) and “takes responsibility”, “give orders” (Table 5), “tough and outgoing”, (Table 9). The data reveals

however that Ron's behaviour is characterised as "can't handle himself", "childish", "complaining", "getting angry", "wants to give up" (Table 4). Interestingly, the students comment on a change in Ron's behaviour in the final novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, where at Malfoy Manor he is "fighting for Hermione" (Table 5) and later on "taking charge and coming up with ideas" (Table 6). When asked to describe the male characters in the novels in general, their behaviour was found to be "somewhat courageous", "some are bullies, some are good", "competing each other", "trying to achieve something", "goal oriented", "more physical" (Table 12).

Moving on to the female characters in the novels, the respondents characterised the females' behaviour to "showing less courage", "kind and shy", "think more before they do anything", "reserved and careful" (Table 13). As for the female characters, a lot of the readers' attention is drawn to Hermione, being one of the protagonists in the novels. The data shows that the students find Hermione to be "more outgoing", "she is kind of special", "she showed that girls also can do something", and "too high on herself" (Table 9, 13). Aligned with the data presenting the male characters as "goal oriented", the students' description of Hermione as "kind of special", may indicate on the one hand that they experience her behaviour as closer to the male traits than many of the other female characters in the novels. On the other hand, the students also find that Hermione "cries", is "always studying", and is "a caring person" (Table 9). Her act of caring is also described as "like an elder sister, or a mother", establishing a view held by Fransisca & Mochtar. In sum, the data shows that the students experience Hermione differently from the other female characters.

The data further shows that the students comment on a change in female behaviour in the last novel, leading up to the battle scenes at Hogwarts. At this point in the saga, the students describe the female characters' behaviour as "not scared to come forward and speak up", "gets braver", "more careless", "more violent", "fighting" and "have changed". This observation is also held by Heilman & Donaldson. On the one hand, this can be due to a real development in Rowling's depiction of the female characters moving away from a stereotypical portrayal. On the other hand, some students argued that this change in behaviour was due to the absence of Professor Dumbledore and that "they [female characters] have the responsibility to defend the school" (Table 6). A substantial change in female behaviour is also found in the characters of Professor McGonagall, Ron's mother and Ginny. The students also commented on the behaviour of Bellatrix, being "violent", "angry" and "aggressive", depicting traits the students regarded as masculine behaviour (Table 5).

To sum up the chapter, the students find the topic of gender behaviour not to be stereotypical all through but claiming Hermione to be “special”, in that she also is depicting traits the students consider more masculine than feminine. The respondents also comment on an evidential change in the female characters’ behaviour in the latter half of the final novel, also moving away from a stereotypical behaviour. The next chapter discusses the results for the “Communication” category.

5.3 Communication

The communication section aims at discussing how the respondents experienced the verbal communication in the novels in terms of gender. While the students find Ron to be more “outgoing” than Harry, the male characters in general are described as “more impulsive” and “more outgoing” than the female characters (Table 12, 13). They are further found to be more “achievement oriented” and they communicate with “a goal in mind”. The students commented on the female characters being more capable of expressing their feelings and their thoughts, while the male characters’ communication often dwelled around action and “what to do next”.

Data from a classroom discussion can be used to exemplify the matter. At the Tri-Wizard-Cup, when Harry Potter has become one of the contestants, Ron is jealous of Harry. The students discussed the humorous scene from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, where Ron and Harry are communicating via Hermione. Some of the students commented on girls being better at expressing their feelings, and that Ron and Harry in this scene are depicted as “typically men”.

Another classroom discussion dealt with the use of instructional verbs, as I wanted the students to reflect on the matter of giving orders and instructions. One student commented on the teaching staff at Hogwarts, and that both female and male professors use instructional verbs in their teaching. Another student found that they use instructional verbs because they are teachers, rather than being either men or women. When they were asked about Harry, Ron and Hermione, one student claimed that Hermione often uses instructional verbs out of care for Harry and Ron. She often says “stop”, “wait” or “No!”, “because she is a caring person”, rather than having an urge to be in charge or in the lead. The same observation is held by Mayes-Elma, that “more often than not, they (women) use it (their intelligence) to help further other’s interests” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 91).

In a classroom exercise the students were asked to underline the verbs Rowling used in verbal utterances in chapter 15 in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. The students came up with the following words from Harry's utterances: "said", "demanded", "protested", "panted", "snarled", "shouted" and "enquired". In Hermione's utterances the students found: "cried", "said", "snapped", "said in a troubled voice". The students commented on the differences in use of verbs, claiming the depiction to be more stereotypical than not. The students' responses are in coherence with the position of both Eberhardt (2017) and Dresang (2002).

To sum up, the data reveals that the respondents find the communication of the male characters to often dwell around the plot or to be related to action and "what to do next". The female characters are better at expressing their feelings through communication, and the students found a gender difference in the use of verbs explaining utterances, between Hermione and Harry. Instructional verbs are used by both male and female Professors. When Hermione is using instructional verbs, she is motivated by her ability to care, rather than an urge to command or be in charge. The next section is called "Empowerment" and discusses how the students experienced gendered empowerment in the novels.

5.4 Empowerment

When discussing empowerment in *Harry Potter*, the data reveals that the respondents view Harry Potter as a special character, and that he is empowered in the sense that he is the chosen one, the one to fight Voldemort, his nemesis. The students characterise Harry as "a special boy", "something special about him" and "we know that he will succeed" (Table 9). In terms of power, the student found Harry, Dumbledore and Voldemort to be the most powerful characters. Hermione is found to be on the one hand not powerful because "she is muggle born", but on the other hand she is empowered through her hard studying and her achieved knowledge in magic. The students find that her being "brave", "smart" and that she "always answers the questions in class" (Table 9) add to her empowerment, in a way that makes her break out of a stereotypical female depiction, because her actions expand her agency.

Furthermore, the students found Bellatrix to be empowered in terms of magical skills, Ron's mother is empowered in her household, but the respondents commented that this kind of empowerment aligns with a traditional depiction of gender. In the Tri-Wizard-Cup, Fleur is depicted in the same tradition, one student finds her to be "a stereotype of weak girls that need boys or men to help them" (Table 11). When reading about the Yule Ball, the students argued

that the female characters are empowered in two ways, first by their ability to confirm or deny an invitation, second by their ability to cope better with a situation most male characters find challenging. The respondents find that “the boys seemed bothered, but the girls get excited”, “boys are nervous to ask the girls out”, “the girls are laughing at some boys”, and “the girls look happy, the boys are clumsy” (Table 3).

When the respondents were asked to think about empowered female characters in *Harry Potter*, their first response was Hermione. Then, Professor McGonagall was mentioned, although they stated that she was empowered because of the role as Professor and Deputy Headmistress. The respondents found both Narcissa Malfoy and Bellatrix to be empowered female characters, however “they were on the wrong side” and one student claimed, “they are empowered in a negative way”. Furthermore, the students found that the Veela are empowered in terms of the ability to influence on the male characters, but then again in a negative way.

In terms of “the patriarchal institutionalised system of power” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 14) the students commented on a change in female empowerment towards the end of the final novel. In the absence of Dumbledore, Professor McGonagall finds no need to back down in order to maintain the patriarchal system, however she is willing to take charge out of responsibility for the school, and perhaps even more importantly, according to the data, she “does it to help Harry”.

In sum, the students commented on a change in female empowerment towards the end of the saga, arguing that this change is in part due to the lack of Professor Dumbledore, creating a vacuum in the archetypical system of power. They also commented on the role of Professor Snape, as he is depicted before the truth behind his actions is revealed to the reader, is unable to take a leading position in protecting Hogwarts, adding to the weakening in the patriarchal power structure. In coherence with Fransisca & Mochtar (2017), the respondents argued that the action of Ron’s mother in the battle scenes is to be categorised as mothers who “protect, nurture and educate” (Fransisca & Mochtar, 2017, p. 1).

5.5 Norms

For the students to be able to comment on the gender depiction in the novels, they had to use their own experiences of gender behaviour and relate the novels to the gender norms in the society of which they are a part. In other words, they had to compare female and male behaviour to female and male behaviour as they see it performed by others as well as

themselves, in their everyday lives. As the *Harry Potter* novels depict different settings, places and environments, the students had to relate to several sets of norms, exemplified by school-life at Hogwarts, life at the Dursleys, and at other locations in real-life Britain. The genre of fantasy adds to the difficulty of relating to norms, since the students may find it challenging to relate the action of fantasy creatures to the set of norms they have at their capacity. When we discussed this in class, we concluded that we had to relate to the sets of norms which we know from our own lives. This discussion was interesting in that it presented an awareness among the students, about gendered behaviour being related to norms in society. As we have already seen, the respondents characterise Hermione as “outgoing”, “having more knowledge than the boys” and “brave enough to say what she wanted” (Table 9). At the same time, she is also “caring for others”, “a kind person”, “almost like an elder sister, or a mother”. This data may lean towards a challenge in the depiction of gender in the novels, also commented on by Pugh & Wallace (2000). The depiction of Hermione may “mask the extent to which women’s agency in the books is muted” (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 269). As Hermione is related to both feminine and masculine traits (Table 4, 5, 9, and 13), showing an ability to “care”, “nurture” and “express her feelings”, yet at the same time being “brave”, “outgoing” and “clever” (Table 4, 5 and 9), her character is challenging the norms of female behaviour in the novels. This may be exemplified in the way the students comment on Hermione as “not so good at making friends with other girls” (Table 9), and that “she has boys as friends, and that she is more with boys than with girls” (Interview). This again, may imply a depiction of non-confirmative normative behaviour in the case of Hermione. However, Fry finds Hermione to “be the essential feminine side of the conventional mythic hero, in that she is more sensitive to other people than Harry” (Fry, 2001, p. 165). The data shows that even though the students found Hermione to challenge a normative female behaviour in some areas, they were still able to address her agency as confirming normative behaviour in other areas.

The male characters were in large described by the students as “showing strategy”, “brave”, “showing courage”, and “goal oriented”, all regarded as confirmative normative male behaviour. However, the students commented on a non-confirmative behaviour in the cases of Ron, Niles and Draco. Even though Ron is found to develop through the saga, he is at first found to be a “coward”, “awkward”, “not so tough” and “scared of everything” (Table 9). Niles is “afraid” and “cares for others”. Draco is at first found to be “tough” and “outgoing”, however as the story develops, he “can’t stand the heat” (Interview).

In sum, the students find Hermione to be special and challenging the norms for female behaviour, and towards the end of the saga, female characters are found to be expanding their agency due to a collapse in the patriarchal power structures. Whereas the students find the male characters to act with their own agenda in mind, the female characters take the lead out of care for others. The next chapter presents and discusses the data relevant for Research question 1.

5.6 Gender awareness

One of the aims of this study is stated in research question 1:

R1: To what extent is the use of excerpts from the Harry Potter novels and scenes from the film adaptations, capable of raising gender awareness in the Upper secondary ESL classroom?

Throughout the research period the students have provided a lot of data for the study. As mentioned in chapter 3, at the start of the study, gender awareness among the students was found to differ from those who were vaguely familiar with the term gender roles, to those who had given it a lot of thought and already were interested in the topic. Through the pre-reading activities even more students took part in our classroom discussions and got involved in the study. The questionnaires demanded the students to express their opinions, and these were further challenged in new classroom discussions. As the interviews were held, the reading project had come to an end, and the students were familiar with the topic of gender roles, and how these roles can be depicted in fiction, both in novels and in film adaptations of these.

In the interview, the students were asked explicitly about research question 1. The data reveals that 8 students out of 11, (73%) believe the material is capable of raising gender awareness (Table 14). One student states that “the fantasy genre perhaps makes people more open to new ways of behaving – because anything can happen in fantasy” (Table 14). Others comment on the popularity of the genre, and how that may improve on student motivation and involvement. An interesting comment on discussing gender roles in a novel is that “we dare to say what we mean – it’s not so dangerous to say what you mean about it in a book – we can discuss the book and perhaps use it in real life”.

On the other hand, one student claims that “perhaps the focus is so much on Harry - and what will happen next – you forget it (gender roles) sometimes” (Table 14). Another student finds that “fantasy novels are not good to look at if we are talking about gender roles –

because in fantasy novels anything can be real” (Table 14). A third student believes the fact that they in this study were told to focus on it, made the books capable. However, he also argues that “but if you read the books at home – I don’t know “(Table 14). In the final section the paper will conclude on the two research questions, based on the data presented in chapter 4 and the discussion of the data in chapter 5.

6.0 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to investigate to what extent the use of excerpts from the *Harry Potter* novels and scenes from the film adaptations, is capable of raising gender awareness in the Upper secondary ESL classroom. The second research question aimed at scrutinizing whether the student responses to the texts supported or questioned the scholarly work on gender in the *Harry Potter* novels.

The data has shown that 82% of the respondents appreciate the fantasy genre, and that 72% were able to identify with one or more of the fictional characters in the *Harry Potter* books. This result aligns with the ongoing popularity of both the fantasy genre and *Harry Potter*, as presented in section 1. Furthermore, the study has shown that 73% of the respondents believe that the excerpts from the novels and scenes from the film adaptations are capable of raising gender awareness. Such capability is found to derive from a) the genre and b) the depiction of male and female characters in *Harry Potter*. As belonging to a popular genre, *Harry Potter* novels are likely to meet the taste of many ESL students in Upper secondary school. Further, the study has presented ample evidence of students discussing and contemplating gendered language, representations and behaviour, which indicates that, taught in this way, the novels are effective tools of raising gender awareness.

Aiming at answering the second research question, the data has been compared to the scholarly work on gender roles in the *Harry Potter* novels, presented in Chapter 2. In sum the data is found to support the scholarly work more than questioning it. The data correlates with the work of Heilman & Donaldson (2009), as the students find a definite change in the depiction of female characters in the later novels, hence develop beyond a stereotypical femininity. However, the students do not reach a unanimous agreement on a depiction of male characters as wiser and braver, also argued by Heilman & Donaldson (2009). The data shows that female characters even beyond Hermione are found to be brave in terms of expressing their feelings. When it comes to Fransisca & Mochtar (2017), the data correlates in that the female characters 1) protect and nurture, and 2) they do not chase their own dreams or fight

for their own cause. Several students comment on the differences in male and female agency in terms of being goal minded and that the female characters act as helpers or merely providers of help and assistance to male characters in their efforts in reaching their goals. However, when it comes to Hermione, the data from this study aligns with Fry (2001) and Blake (2002) in that Hermione moves beyond a depiction of a helper or an enabler, and that her character is “arguably the second most important character in the stories” (Blake, 2002, p. 39). Hence, the data also provides for an alignment to the work of Schoefer (2000) in that Hermione is not depicted as brave and heroic as Harry, but at the same time she stands out from the rest of the girls at Hogwarts.

Throughout the study, the students have provided data that emphasizes the importance of Hermione and Ron in order for Harry to succeed. While Fry sees Hermione as “the essential feminine side of the conventional mythic hero” (Fry, 2001, p. 165), the student data confirms that they do not believe Harry would have been able to fulfil his mission without the help of Hermione and Ron.

In terms of the work of Mayes-Elma, which concentrates on the first novels, the students were able to comment on the “patriarchal, institutionalized system of power” (Mayes-Elma, 2006, p. 104). This aligns with the student data that observes a change in female agency towards the end of the saga. This change in female behaviour has been explained by the students as a) due to the lack in the patriarchal power structure, and b) that Rowling may have wanted a development in the depiction of female characters before the end of the saga.

Furthermore, the students were able to find and observe gender-related stereotypic words employed to Hermione’s behaviour when they were specifically told to search for it. The use of adverbial phrases was found to differ between Hermione on the one side, and Harry and Ron on the other. On this the data from this study is found to align with the work of Dresang (2002).

In sum, the study suggested that 73% of the respondents found the selected literature and scenes from the film adaptations capable of raising gender awareness when used in the ESL classroom in Upper secondary school. The study has also shown the importance of teacher guidance and the necessity of establishing an understanding of the topic of gender roles for activities included in this study to succeed. Furthermore, the data has been found to lean towards supporting previous scholarly work on *Harry Potter*.

Another interesting observation is how the use of audio books may increase motivation and student involvement. A mixed approach by using excerpts from the novels, as

well as scenes from the film adaptations has also been found valuable in terms of student motivation and student involvement. Bearing in mind the small scale of this study, the results are to be regarded as an indication, not an absolute. The positive outcome in terms of student involvement and engagement in *Harry Potter*, I believe lays the ground for further work on the genre of fantasy literature in the ESL classroom.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Excerpts from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*:

Chapter	Pages
2 - "The Vanishing Glass"	19-26
9- "The Midnight Duel"	153-162
10- "Hallowe'en"	183-192
16- "Through the Trapdoor"	295- 309

Excerpts from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*:

Chapter	Pages
8 – "The Quidditch World Cup"	81-99
9 - "The Dark Mark"	100-122
14 - "The Unforgivable Curses"	176-191
23 – "The Yule Ball"	340-365

Excerpts from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*:

Chapter	Pages
9 - "A Place to Hide"	128-140
15- "The Goblin's Revenge"	231-252
23- "Malfoy Manor"	363-387
36- "The Flaw in the Plan"	592-594

Appendix B

Lesson	Classroom Activity	Student feedback	Teacher scaffolding
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the project. • Examining the students' familiarity with Harry Potter. • Gender roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral discussion • Questions • Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender roles • Literature versus movies • Answering questions • Motivating
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The World of Harry Potter • The main characters • Close reading • Screening of selected scenes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plot in <i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</i> • Motivating
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close reading • Audio book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective note • Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating • Reader support
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion • Close reading • Screening of selected scenes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating • The plot
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening of <i>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening of <i>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close reading • Audio book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective note 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating • The plot
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio book • Screening of selected scenes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions • Motivating
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening of the second half of <i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summing up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire • Classroom discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews 		

Appendix C

Pre-reading Questionnaire

(To gather information about previous knowledge and interest)

- 1 A Are you familiar with Harry Potter?
 If yes:
 - B Do you recall how old you were when you first heard about Harry Potter?
 - C What would you say Harry Potter is about?

- 2 A Have you read any of the Harry Potter novels?
 - B If yes, how many of the Harry Potter novels have you read?

- 3 A Have you seen any of the Harry Potter films?
 - B If yes, how many of the Harry Potter films have you seen?

- 4 A Have you both read a Harry Potter novel and watched the
 corresponding Harry Potter film?
 - B If yes, did you prefer the novel or the film?
 - C What were the reasons for your answer in B?

- 5 A Do you have a favourite Harry Potter character?
 - B If yes, can you explain why this is your favourite character?

Appendix D

Mid-reading Questionnaire 1 (After reading the excerpts from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*)

- 1
 - A How would you describe the gender roles at the Dursleys' home?
 - B Neville gets hurt during broomstick practise and is taken to the hospital wing by Madam Hooch. Malfoy then has a bullying comment, towards Neville. How do the female characters react to this?
 - C Moments later, Harry is caught red handed by Professor McGonagall as he illegally lifts off on his broomstick to catch Neville's Remembrall. What does Professor McGonagall's reaction tell us about her character?

- 2 The episode with the troll in the girls' toilets.
 - A Who solves the problem?
 - B What do you think of the way Hermione is portrayed in this situation?

- 3 Through the Trapdoor
 - A To get to the last chamber, they have to conquer a few obstacles. How does Hermione help Harry in this?
 - B Do you think Harry and Ron could have reached the last chamber without the help of Hermione?
 - C What strengths do the male characters show?
 - D What strengths does Hermione show?
 - E What kind of gender roles are presented in this scene?

Appendix E

Mid-reading Questionnaire 2 (After the screening of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*)

1 The Triwizard Tournament

- A Two different teams arrive at Hogwarts for the Triwizard Tournament, one from a boys' school and one from a girls' school. How are they presented differently?
- B How do the girls and the boys perform in the Tournament?
- C Did you notice anything particular regarding gender roles during the Tournament?

2 The Yule Ball

- A How does the Yule Ball affect the boys and the girls?
- B Has this anything to do with gender roles?

3 How would you describe Harry Potter, as you see him in the film?

- 4 A Is Harry Potter in the film any different from Harry Potter in the novels?
- B If yes, in what way is Harry Potter different?

- 5 A From watching the film and reading, what would you consider to be Harry's strengths?
- B What do you consider to be Harry's weaknesses?

6 Try to describe Hermione, as you see her in the film.

- 7 A Is Hermione in the film any different from Hermione in the novel?

- B If yes, in what way is Hermione different?
- 8 A From watching the film and reading, what would you consider to be Hermione's strengths?
- B What do you consider to be Hermione's weaknesses?
- 9 A Are any of the female characters in the movie empowered in any way?
- B If yes, which one and how.
- C Does any of the female characters show any strength that none of the male characters have? If yes, explain.
- D Does any of the male characters show any strength that none of the female characters have? If yes, explain.

Appendix F

Mid-reading Questionnaire 3 (After reading the excerpts from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*)

1 A Place to Hide

- A In this chapter Hermione plays an important part. What does she do, and could this have been done by Harry or Ron?
- B What does this tell us about Hermione?

2 The Goblin's Revenge

At this point in the story, the three characters are having a difficult time. What can we learn about Harry, Ron and Hermione from reading this chapter?

3 Malfoy Manor

- A In this chapter we are presented to many male and female characters. Try to characterize the male characters by using adjectives.
- B Try to characterize the female characters by using adjectives.
- C Compare your adjectives in A and B. What do they tell us about how the two genders are depicted in this chapter?

Appendix G

Post-reading Questionnaire

- 1 A From what you now have seen and read; did you notice anything particular about how the male characters are portrayed?

 B Is there anything you have noticed about how the female characters are portrayed?

- 2 A The novels are all named “Harry Potter and”. Do you believe Harry would have succeeded without the help of his friends?

 B If no, which character/characters is/are essential for Harry to succeed?

- 3 The Harry Potter novels may be categorized as fantasy novels, a genre where everything is possible. In the fantasy genre, J. K. Rowling does not have to treat gender roles in a way she finds realistic or “as they are today”. In your opinion, does Rowling, in her portrayal of gender roles, break out of realism?

- 4 In the novels Harry and Voldemort are the hero and his nemesis. Imagine the novels were called “Hermione Granger and the ...”. Do you think the novels would have been less or more popular if they were female characters? Explain.

- 5 Imagine Hogwarts was a boys’ school, and that all Professors were male characters. How would that change the novels, in your opinion?

- 6 Why do you think Harry Potter has become so popular worldwide?

Appendix H

Interview questions:

- 1 Have you read or seen adaptations of fantasy literature before this?
- 2 Do you like the genre?
- 3 When we started reading from the first Harry Potter novel, what were your first impressions of Harry, Ron and Hermione?
- 4 In the novels, Harry, Ron and Hermione grow from being 11-year-olds to becoming 17-year-olds in the final novel. Were you able to identify with any of the characters at any point?
- 5 If no, what do the characters lack, in your opinion?
- 6 Harry and Hermione are two of the main characters. What would you say are the main differences between the two? Do any of these differences deal with gender roles?
- 7 What do you think of the way Fleur is depicted as a contestant in the Tri-Wizard-Cup?
- 8 In the second half of the final movie, some female characters are partaking in action scenes. Do any of these characters change in your opinion?
- 9 If you were to conclude on how the male characters are depicted, what would your conclusion be?
- 10 If you were to conclude on how the female characters are depicted, what would your conclusion be?
- 11 Do you think the Harry Potter novels are suitable for classroom use when it comes to focusing on gender roles?

Appendix I

Samtykke til deltakelse i prosjekt

I forbindelse med at jeg skriver masteroppgave i fremmedspråk i skolen, engelsk, ved Høgskolen i Østfold, ønsker jeg å innhente data som gjelder bruk av litteratur i engelskundervisningen. Temaet for masteroppgaven er kjønnsroller i et utvalg av *Harry Potter* bøkene.

Jeg undersøker hvordan elevene opplever kjønnsrollene i disse bøkene, og i hvilken grad bøkene er egnet som utgangspunkt for et søkelys på og diskusjon om kjønnsroller i dagens samfunn. Jeg kommer til å be om et intervju med noen av elevene, der det vil bli tatt notater underveis.

Alle opplysninger som kommer frem, vil bli anonymisert. Jeg har taushetsplikt og alle opplysninger behandles konfidensielt. Opplysningene vil kun benyttes i denne oppgaven.

Det er helt frivillig å delta i studien og elevene kan når som helst trekke sitt samtykke uten å oppgi grunn. Alle deltakere er over 15 år.

Ja, jeg bekrefter at jeg vil være med i studien: _____

Stryn, 25.02.21

Alf Andre Bjørke

Reflective note

In my daily occupation as an ESL teacher, I have always found the use of literature in the ESL classroom to be enriching. In the latter years, I have experienced how the students' attention is drawn to films and tv-series, more so than to books. Yet, I am of the impression that students appreciate reading literature in the ESL classroom, if they find the literature appealing and if the texts are not too long or difficult to understand.

As the time arrived for me to decide on a topic for my master's thesis, I wanted to scrutinize in a more detailed manner, to what extent popular fantasy literature is capable of raising gender awareness in the students. There is a vast number of popular fantasy novels to choose among, and I decided to use the *Harry Potter* novels for this study. For motivational purposes, I decided to use audio books and scenes from the film adaptations, along with the printed texts. Another interesting point of departure was to find out whether the students would support or question a selection of scholarly work.

When we started on this project, I was surprised at the differences in gender roles awareness among the students. As an ESL teacher this was a reminder about the importance of pre-reading activities in order to provide the students with necessary scaffolding for the students to become motivated and involved in the reading. The pre-reading activities turned out to be crucial important in terms of establishing an understanding of gender roles, and how they can be depicted in literature and films. During the study, student involvement in classroom discussions on gender roles, gendered language and gendered behaviour turned out to surpass my initial expectations.

Another interesting observation was the alignment between the student data and the scholarly work. As the students are much younger than the scholars are, I was interested in finding out whether they presented a different view on the depiction of gender roles in the novels. As the results of the study provided only minor differences, it may indicate that the students found the literature appealing and became involved and motivated to participate in the close reading. The use of well-produced audio books, narrated by Steven Fry, proved highly successful, laying the ground for a future study on the impact of audio books in the ESL classroom.

I found the method of Qualitative research and open-ended questions to be valuable in this study, and even though the process of coding the data was demanding, I learned a lot from it. I see now that the number of questions in the four Questionnaires could have been reduced. Another challenge has been the dilemma of how much time we could spend on this

project, as it involved time-consuming activities. When I now look back at it, I believe the time was well spent, considering the positive outcome in terms of student engagement.

The students' ability and willingness to contemplate and discuss gender roles in fantasy literature, lays the ground for further use of the genre in the ESL classroom. This creates opportunities for the ESL students to use and hence develop their English oral and written proficiency, which after all is the very foundation of our ESL teaching.

Alf Andre Bjørke

16.05.21