

THE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS OF IRANIAN HIGH SCHOOLS: THE FAIRCLOUGH MODEL IN FOCUS

A ANÁLISE DO DISCURSO CRÍTICO DA REPRESENTAÇÃO DE GÊNERO NOS LIVROS DE INGLÊS DE HIGH SCHOOLS IRANIANO: O MODELO FAIRCLOUGH EM FOCO

Zahra Sadat Hosseini Ahmadabadi

TEFL Department, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
st_zs_hosseini@azad.ac.ir

Mahnaz Azad*

TEFL Department, East Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
mahnaz.azad@iau.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

The present study adopted an exploratory critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to examine gender representation in Iranian government mandatory high school ELT textbooks using Fairclough model. Considering the model, female and male characters' visibility, semantic, domestic, and social roles, activities, and pictorial representations in the textbooks were scrutinized. These factors were described, interpreted, and explained both qualitatively and quantitatively. Additionally, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 30 experienced high school educators and their responses were coded, scrutinized, and interpreted. The findings revealed the permanence of male dominance in the textbooks and that the gender bias in educational materials would have strong socio-cultural effects on students' mind sets, future careers, and fields of study. The findings highlight the must to address gender inequalities as one of the most crucial socio-cultural concerns of Iran EFL educational textbooks.

Keywords: English textbooks. Critical discourse analysis. Fairclough model. Gender representation. Teacher's perception. Traditional biased culture.

RESUMO

O presente estudo adotou uma abordagem exploratória de análise crítica do discurso (CDA) para examinar a representação de gênero nos livros didáticos de ELT do ensino médio obrigatório do governo iraniano usando o modelo Fairclough. Considerando o modelo, a visibilidade dos personagens femininos e masculinos, papéis semânticos, domésticos e sociais, atividades e representações pictóricas nos livros didáticos foram escrutinados. Esses fatores foram descritos, interpretados e explicados qualitativa e quantitativamente. Além disso, uma entrevista semiestruturada foi realizada com 30 educadores experientes do ensino médio e suas respostas foram codificadas, examinadas e interpretadas. As descobertas revelaram a permanência do domínio masculino nos livros didáticos e que o viés de gênero nos materiais educacionais teria fortes efeitos socioculturais nas mentalidades dos alunos, futuras carreiras e campos de estudo. As descobertas destacam a necessidade de abordar as desigualdades de gênero como uma das preocupações sócio-culturais mais cruciais dos livros didáticos educacionais de EFL do Irã.

Palavras-chave: Livros didáticos de inglês. Análise crítica do discurso. Modelo Fairclough. Representação de gênero. Percepção do professor. Cultura tradicional tendenciosa.

1. Introduction

ELT materials, as the cornerstone of teaching and learning a foreign or second language, are used globally by educators and learners to uphold effective learning (Lee 2009; Michelis, 2023; Tomlinson & Masuhara 2017). Considering their critical role, Liu (2016) argued that ELT texts need to be scrutinized, first, to help teachers have a deep and systematic view of the materials and to distance themselves from superficiality (Ellis 1997) and second, to assist educators in judging their appropriateness considering the educational, social, and cultural values (Lestariyana *et al.*, 2020; McGrath 2002).

Gender bias and gender under-/misrepresentation, as one of the global issues in instructional materials, has led researchers to evaluate and revise textbooks to support gender equality in the society (Blumberg 2008). Textbooks shape students' perceptions and understanding and their perceptions of gender roles are directly impacted by the way female and male genders are depicted in the textbooks (Frawley 2008). Hence, inaccurate/unequal portrayals of the genders instigate students' misconceptions of the social standing of each gender (Afshar 2015).

Additionally, since teachers are the main consumers of the textbooks, their valuable comments on the materials should be taken into account in the evaluation process (Lee & Bathmaker 2007). As Burns (1992) put, teachers' perceptions and attitudes have a highly influential effect on their pedagogical practices. Thus, they should share a main part in the evaluation, adaption, and adoption of teaching materials to ensure the books are suitable for the learners (Azizifar 2009).

Since the 1970s, researchers have paid great attention to the representations of genders in EFL/ESL textbooks resulting in many efforts to analyze the issue in the textbooks at various levels. In carrying out the inquiries, the researchers focused on the visual representation of male and female characters including images, presented through paintings and photos, and their textual presentations in conversations and written content. Among the first studies conducted in this field was that of Graham (1975), who after analyzing five million words in US children's textbooks, concluded that the number of references to men and boys was twice as much as that to women and girls. There were three times as many male protagonists and speakers as females. Five years later, Hellinger (1980) conducted a content analysis on ELT textbooks reporting that females were not present at all in 30% of the textbooks, males had a stronger presence in 93% of the texts, and women were displayed less effective than men.

Additionally, Porreca (1984) studied 15 ESL textbooks published in the US, looking at the categories of omission and job observation as well as the images, dominance and general masculine structures in these textbooks. She came to the conclusion that "sexism is still dominant in FL/SL materials" and although "females shape half the society, they are portrayed half as often as males in the textbooks" (Porreca 1984: 718-19). Sleeter and Grant (1991) analyzed forty-seven textbooks of the first to the eighth grades during 8 years (1980-1988). They found that in the textbooks, it is implausible for men to be portrayed in traditional female roles such as a secretary or a teacher, but it is plausible for women to have different roles. Lee and Collins (2006) conducted a comparative analysis of 20 current English textbooks and the textbooks circulated in the 1980s and the 1990s in Hong Kong.

The findings showed that while the new books tried to evade biased perspective towards genders compared to the old ones, women were still assigned household duties and had a less active and more passive roles than men.

In Iran, Ansary and Babaei (2002) investigated the gender bias in English textbooks (The Right Path in English I and II). They found that, in the dialogues and reading texts, out of the 40 topics presented, 27 were related to men. Women were assigned mostly nurses or students occupations whereas men had a greater varieties of occupations, such as police officers, soldiers, dentists, farmers, physicians, and teachers. Also, women's free time spent in indoor activities such as watching TV, cleaning, reading, etc. In general, the results indicated an unfair view of women in the mentioned books.

Using Rifkin's (1998) model, Bahman and Rahimi (2010) looked at how genders were represented in three volumes of the textbooks in Iranian secondary schools. The findings indicated that there were more males than females in these books. In other words, males were more noticeable in nouns, pronouns, names, and adjectives addressed to them. In reading texts, female characters appeared less frequently than male characters, and words attributed to men were frequently preferred over feminine terms.

Hall (2014) studied the representation of gender in current EFL textbooks (The Right Way of English Language I and 2) mandatory taught in Iran. She used a quantitative analysis for examining gender representation in pictures, dialogues, and parts of reading. The qualitative part of the study concerned with (1) male-centered language comprising (a) superiority and (b) masculinity in public structure; (2) gender-related employment opportunities; (3) home responsibilities; and (4) leisure activities. Her findings demonstrated the disparity in the representation of genders in the course books.

In the interim, many scholars have adopted CDA models to evaluate textbooks. CDA investigates social injustice and takes a stand against social abuse (Le & Short 2009). According to Van Dijk (1999), CDA mainly examines ways of reproducing domination, abuse of social power and inequality, approval, and

resistance to the text, and dialogue in various social and political contexts. Accordingly, CDA seems to be an appropriate tool for studying how genders are portrayed in ELT materials and can be used as an effective framework for assessing gender ideology in the textbooks (Fairclough 2015).

One of the widely used CDA models (also employed in this inquiry) is the Fairclough three-dimensional model consisting of three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. In the description stage, the linguistic devices used in the text are analyzed. The interpretation stage deals with the relationship between discursive practices and the text, and finally, in the explanation stage, the relationship between discursive and social processes are examined. Therefore, the explanation stage's goal is to situate the text in a larger socio-cultural context and demonstrate how social structures that are mainly focused on power relations shape the text.

Amerian and Esmaili (2014, 2015) examined how genders were represented in the textbooks taught in Iranian secondary schools using the Fairclough framework. The research findings revealed that the textbooks had “sexist etiquette in favor of males”. Moreover, Javani and Tahriri (2018) evaluated the ‘Prospect’ series using Fairclough (1995) model to examine the representation of gender. The results showed that, in most cases, there is a sexist attitude in favor of males in these textbooks originated from the inherent ideology of Iranian culture.

In 2015, Afshar conducted a survey on gender portrayal in one of the Iran ELT textbooks (Prospect 1). The results showed that the percentage of male presentation in the texts was 62% while that of female was 38%. In this study, teachers’ responses to a questionnaire revealed they mostly believed in the unfair gender representation in the textbook. In another study, Dabbagh (2016), explored the images of Iran ELT textbooks, Prospects 1, 2, and 3, with the focus on Goffman’s (1976) as well as Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) models. His analysis revealed that men were shown more active than women, and this was quite evident in the pictures where women were not present in open spaces and their pictures were more related to the outdoor settings, which shows the prominence of men compared to women.

Regarding the studies in other countries, Jin *et al.* (2013) examined Malaysian secondary schools ELT textbooks and discovered that males were presented in various outdoor activities while females were displayed as doing household tasks. Siren (2018) scrutinized gender representation in Open Road 1-7 in Oulu and found the gender bias portraying females as the weaker gender. Ahmad and Shah (2019) studied the ELT textbooks in Pakistani schools in terms of gender equality and concluded a gender bias in the textbooks. In the same vein, Al Jumiah (2016) and Aljuaythin (2018) investigated the ELT textbooks of elementary students in Saudi schools and noticed a gender imbalance in favor of males. In addition, Al Kayed *et al.* (2020) analyzed the representation of genders using CDA in Jordanian ELT textbooks (Interchange 1A & 2B Student's Textbooks) and reported the textbooks were biased in favor of males in activities presented, but in visibility and pictorial representations, there were no differences.

It is apparent that ELT textbooks are effective sources for portraying social and cultural ideologies through language medium. Thus, in light of the aforementioned literature, although, some previous studies have critically examined gender (in)equality and sexism in ELT textbooks, neither have targeted the textbooks analyzed in this inquiry nor have they examined the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the potential impact of the issue on the students which is the innovative and exploratory part of this research. Hence, to bridge this gap, this inquiry examined the representation of genders in two of the newly developed ELT textbooks (Vision 2 and Vision 3) taught mandatory in the 11th and 12th grades of high schools in Iran incorporating the Fairclough's CDA framework. Moreover, EFL educators' perceptions concerning the pedagogical effects of mis/under representations of genders in ELT materials were scrutinized. Therefore, this study sought to examine:

- How genders are represented in the two textbooks considering the Fairclough CDA framework;
- Whether there is a discrimination between the representations of genders in the textbooks; and

- How EFL educators perceive gender representation and its potential impacts in Iran mandatory ELT textbooks.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a mixed method design to address gender representation in the ELT textbooks in question. Since the CDA's primary emphasis is to examine the structural relations of power, discrimination, and control manifested in language (Blommaert 2005), this research used the Fairclough CDA framework to investigate gender representation both qualitatively and quantitatively. Furthermore, the exploratory analysis was employed to analyze the educators' perceptions on the textbooks qualitatively.

2.1 Participants of the study

The participants in the present study were 30 Iranian male and female English language educators who had the experience teaching 'Vision textbooks' and voluntarily participated in the study.

2.2 Materials

The content of two EFL textbooks, Vision 2 and Vision 3, from the series of EfS (English for Schools) textbooks taught mandatory in the 11th and 12th grades of high schools in Iran, was chosen for content analysis in this research. Each textbook contains three lessons, and each lesson covers such sections as new vocabulary, grammar, conversation, pronunciation, reading comprehension, listening and speaking, and writing.

2.3 Interview

In addition to the Fairclough Model, a semi-structured interview was used to obtain a detailed information on educators' perceptions based on the goals and objectives of the study and to add more depth to the results. After preparing and

confirming the interview questions, 30 educators participated in the interview with their consent. The interview responses were collected and the content was coded, and analyzed using the Nvivo software.

2.4 Procedure

The present study inspected gender representation in the two of the ELT textbooks which are mandatory in Iranian high schools. Hence, in the first phase, all pictures and written texts were examined in which the number of nouns, pronouns, proper nouns, social, semantic, and domestic roles, activities, and the number of pictures in which genders were presented were counted and analyzed. Then, the Fairclough CDA model was used to analyze the content of the two textbooks. The model has the description, interpretation, and explanation stages. In the description stage, the linguistic devices and grammatical components of the texts are described. In this study, the first stage focused on five aspects:

2.4.1 Visibility of female and male

The number of females and males appeared as gendered nouns (e.g. a police officer, a postman, a man, a woman, a mother, a father, a boy, a girl, etc.), pronouns (e.g. he, she, him, her, himself, and herself) and proper nouns (e.g. Sara, Parham, Ehsan ...) in the content of the textbooks. For instance:

- (1) Behzad likes eating junk food when he's watching TV. (Vision 2: 51)
- (2) Has your father given up smoking?
Yes, he knows smoking is harmful to his health. (Vision 2: 68)

2.4.2 Female's and male's social and domestic roles

Here, the social and domestic roles assigned to each gender were examined. The following excerpts are but some examples of the female and male's social and domestic roles:

- (3) Mona is sixteen and she hopes to be a nurse. (Vision 2, workbook: 55)
- (4) Mrs. Sanders is a teacher who lives in a city. She works in a village that is near the city. (Vision 3: 59)

(5) Mr. Saberian is a translator who works for IRIB. (Vision 2: 19)

2.4.3 Female's and male's semantic roles

Semantic roles were examined in four categories of the actor, the recipient, the experiencer and the beneficiary in the two textbooks.

(6) Erfan and Ehsan have started a business. (Vision 2: 65)

(7) Farzaneh enjoys watching scientific movies. (Vision 2: 76)

(8) Hamideh sits on the sofa and watches TV all the day. (Vision 3: 21)

2.4.4 Female's and male's activities

In this part, the activities each gender was engaged in were investigated.

(9) Mina speaks English. (Vision 3: 43)

(10) My dad goes fishing on Fridays. (Vision 3: 75)

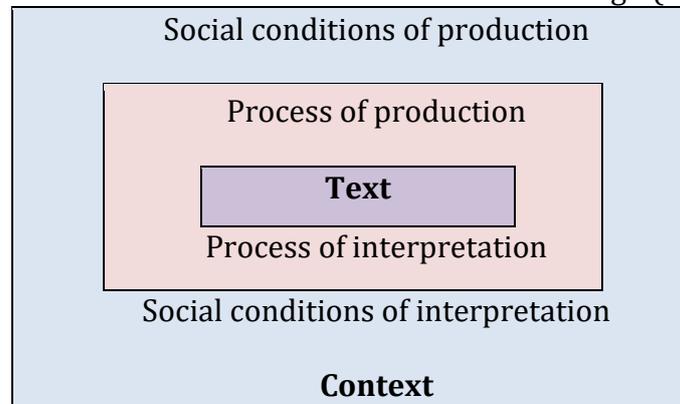
(11) Saeed studied hard for the exam. (Vision 2: 36)

2.4.5 Pictorial representation

This section was analyzed in five categories: 'only male', 'more male', 'only female', 'more female', and 'equal share'.

In the interpretation stage, the relationship between discursive practices and the text are examined and finally, in the explanation stage, the text is analyzed considering the social and cultural contexts to see how social structures and power relations shape the text.

Figure 1 – The three-dimensional model of Fairclough (2015: 58)



This research was also framed as an exploration into how genders are portrayed and the ‘borders’ between identities. Thus, in the second phase, after randomly selecting the participants, all phases of the inquiry including obtaining consent from the participants, explaining the purpose, and gathering data were conducted online via Telegram and WhatsApp. The interviews were conducted mostly online due to the pandemic and just two were in-person lasting for an average of one hour. All ethical considerations including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of the information were observed. The interview responses were audio recorded, transcribed, coded, and the themes were extracted and analyzed by the Nvivo software.

3. Results

This section presents the findings considering the Fairclough's paradigm through description, interpretation, and explanation of the data.

3.1 Description stage

3.1.1 Visibility of the genders in the EFL Textbooks (Vision 2 and Vision 3)

To check the visibility of genders in Vision 2 and Vision 3, the number of pronouns (he/she/her/his/him), proper nouns (a specific name for a particular

person, place, etc.), and nouns (father, mother, sister, brother, daughter, son, etc.) were counted in the textbooks. Tables 1 and 2 show the frequency and percentage of the visibility of both genders in Vision 2 and Vision 3. In Vision 2, 112 cases were related to males presented in the nouns, pronouns, and proper nouns while females were presented in 55 cases. These cases in Vision 3 were 195 to 72 in favor of males. In other words, 67.06 % and 32.94% in Vision 2 and 73.03% and 26.97% in Vision 3 constituted the frequency of male and female presentations in these textbooks, respectively. This means that males were mentioned twice as much as females in the textbooks.

Table 1 – Frequencies and percentages of gender visibility in vision 2

			Visibility			Total
			Proper N.	Noun	Pronoun	
Gender	Male	Count	75	21	16	112
		% Within Gender	67.0%	18.8%	14.3%	67.06%
	Female	Count	17	14	24	55
		% Within Gender	30.9%	25.5%	43.6%	32.94%
Total	Count	92	35	40	167	
	% Within Gender	55.1%	21.0%	24.0%	100.0%	

Table 2 – Frequencies and percentages of gender visibility in vision 3

			Visibility			Total
			Proper N.	Noun	Pronoun	
Gender	Male	Count	81	45	69	195
		% Within Gender	41.5%	23.1%	35.4%	73.03%
	Female	Count	17	25	30	72
		% Within Gender	23.6%	34.7%	41.7%	26.97%
Total	Count	98	70	99	267	
	% Within Gender	36.7%	26.2%	37.1%	100.0%	

Porreca (1984) claimed that when women are not presented as frequently as men, it sends the subliminal message that women aren't as significant as men, that their accomplishments aren't as valued as men's, or that they aren't significant enough as people to be included.

3.1.2 Semantic roles of females and males in Vision 2 and Vision3

The second issue examined in the study was the semantic role of both genders in the textbooks. To this aim, four semantic roles were adopted, i.e., the actor, the recipient, the experiencer, and the beneficiary. Examining the semantic roles indicated that males were assigned more semantic roles than females illustrated through the abundance of males' roles compared to females in these textbooks.

Table 3 – Frequencies and percentages of gender semantic roles in Vision 2

			Semantic Roles				Total
			Actor	Recipient	Experiencer	Beneficiary	
Gender	Male	Count	32	0	17	2	51
		% Within Gender	40%	0.0%	21.25%	2.5%	63.75%
	Female	Count	17	2	8	2	29
		% Within Gender	21.25%	2.5%	10%	2.5%	36.25%
Total	Count	49	2	25	4	80	
	% Within Gender	61.3%	2.5%	31.3%	5.0%	100.0%	

Table 4 – Frequencies and percentages of gender semantic roles in Vision 3

			Semantic Roles				Total
			Actor	Recipient	Experiencer	Beneficiary	
Gender	Male	Count	39	2	5	0	46
		% Within Gender	51.99%	2.66%	6.66%	0.0%	61.33%
	Female	Count	23	2	4	0	29
		% Within Gender	30.66%	2.66%	5.33%	0.0%	38.67%
Total	Count	62	4	9	0	75	
	% within Gender	61.3%	5.3%	12.0%	0.0%	100.0%	

As revealed in Table 3, 63.75% of the semantic roles in Vision 2 were related to males from males were presented at 40% in actor roles, 21.25% in experiencer roles and 2.5% in beneficiary roles. It was while 36.25% cases were related to females' and women's share of the semantic roles: 21.25% in actor roles, 2.5% in recipient roles, 10% in experiencer roles, and 2.5% in beneficiary roles. Moreover, Table 4 indicated that there were 46 male (61.33%) and 29 female (38.67%) semantic roles in Vision 3 from which males played 51.99% of actor roles, 2.6% of recipient roles, and 6.66% of experiencer roles whereas females occupied 30.66% of the actor roles, 2.66% of the recipient roles, and 5.33% of the experiencer roles.

3.1.3 Social and domestic roles of both genders in Vision 2

Examining social and domestic roles and duties also provided insight into the distinctions between male and female portrayals.

Table 5 indicates that, in contrast to the 21 times males are shown in different social and domestic roles in Vision 2, females are shown in 11 cases. Female characters are presented in such social and domestic roles as students, poets, craft women, nurses, mothers, daughters, and sisters.

Table 5 – Frequencies and percentages of gender social and domestic roles in Vision 2

			Social And Domestic Roles													Total	
			Parent	Son/brother	Daughter/sister	Student	Teacher	Friend	Translator	Nurse	Firefighter	Shopper	Doctor	Buyer	Crafts		Police officer
Gender	Male	Count	7	2	0	2	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	21
		% Within Gender	33.3%	9.5%	0.0%	9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	4.8%	0.0%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	0.0%	4.8%	4.8%	65.63%
	Female	Count	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	11
		% Within Gender	18.2%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	9.1%	0.0%	34.38%
Total	Count	9	2	3	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	32	
	% within Gender	28.1%	6.3%	9.4%	12.5%	6.3%	6.3%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	6.3%	6.3%	3.1%	100.0%	

Table 6 – Frequencies and percentages of gender social and domestic roles in Vision 3

		Social And Domestic Roles													Total			
		Parent	Son/brother	Daughter /sister	Student	Teacher	Friend	Nurse	Physician	Poet	Farmer	Pilot	Author					
Gender	Male	Count	6	5	0	4	3	8	0	3	3	1	1	1	35			
		% Within Gender	17.1%	14.3%	0.0%	11.4%	8.6%	22.9%	0.0%	8.6%	8.6%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	64.81%			
	Female	Count	7	0	3	2	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	19			
		% Within Gender	36.8%	0.0%	15.8%	10.5%	0.0%	31.6%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	35.19%			
Total	Count	13		3	6	3	14	1	3				3	1	1	1	54	
	% within Gender	24.1%		5.6%	11.1%	5.6%	25.9%	1.9%	5.6%				5.6%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	10.0%	

Additionally, males outnumbered females in Vision 3, as shown in Table 6, there were 35 (64.81%) roles associated to males and only 19 (35.19%) to females. Males were present in a range of social roles such as doctors, students, teachers, writers, firefighters, pilots, and poets while females mostly played domestic roles such as mothers, sisters, and daughter, or stereotypical social roles such as nurses and students. Hence, the social roles associated to each gender displayed ‘sexism’ in the textbooks.

3.1.4 Activities of females and males in Vision 2 and Vision 3

Also, ‘activities’ were investigated as other manifestations of gender representation in the textbooks.

Table 7 – Frequencies and percentages of gender activities in Vision 2

		Activities												
		Talking about people and places	Studying	Doing house work	Watching TV	Buying	Engaging in sports and games	Going and coming to different places	Doing homework	Writing	Weaving a rug	Singing	Total	
Gender	Male	Count	7	0	0	2	3	7	7	0	0	1	1	28
	%within Gender	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	10.7%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	3.6%	60.87%	
Female	Count	2	2	2	0	2	1	1	3	0	0	0	18	
	%within Gender	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	11.1%	5.6%	5.6%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	39.13%	
Total		Count	9	2	2	2	5	8	8	3	3	1	1	46
		%within Gender	19.6%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	10.9%	17.4%	17.4%	6.5%	6.5%	2.2%	2.2%	100.0%

Table 8 – Frequencies and percentages of gender activities in Vision 3

		Activities													Total
		Watching TV	Talking about people and places	Reading the book	Buying	Cooking	Fixing the car	Writing	Weaving carpet	Playing	Going/coming to different places	Reading the book	Washing the dishes		
Gender	Male	Count	2	7	11	2	1	2	1	1	4	2	11	0	44
	% within Gender	4.5%	15.9%	25.0%	4.5%	2.3%	4.5%	2.3%	2.3%	9.1%	4.5%	25.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Female	Count	0	6	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	15	
	% within Gender	0.0%	40.0%	13.3%	13.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	13.3%	6.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	2	13	13	4	2	2	1	1	4	3	13	1	59
		% within Gender	3.4%	22.0%	22.0%	6.8%	3.4%	3.4%	1.7%	1.7%	6.8%	5.1%	22%	1.7%	100.0%

Tables 7 and 8 indicate that the number of activities performed by males compared to females in Vision 2 were 28 to 18, and this number was 44 to 15 in Vision 3. In effect, 60.87% of the total activities was dedicated to males and 39.13% to females in Vision 2, and this ratio was 74.58 to 25.42% in favor of men in Vision 3. Males dominated activities such as watching TV, fixing cars, playing, reading books, traveling, weaving carpets, talking, and singing while females dominated house chores such as washing dishes and cooking. Also, studying and doing house chores were monopolized by females.

3.1.5 Pictorial representation of females and males in Vision 2 and Vision 3

Finally, the pictorial representations of both genders were examined in both textbooks (Tables 9 and 10). In Vision 2, 31 pictures, and in Vision 3, 18 pictures exclusively portrayed males while the corresponding numbers for females in Vision 2 and Vision 3 were 11 and 8, respectively. The results revealed an unfair distribution of images between the two genders, as 71.73% of the images presented in Vision 2 was attributed to males whereas 32.36% to females, and in Vision 3, the presence of males in the images was 68.97% while it was 30.03% for females. Only 5.9% of the images in Vision 2 showed an equal share for both genders whereas there was no equal share of images for two genders in Vision 3.

Table 9 – Frequencies and percentages of gender pictorial representation in Vision 2

			Pictorial representation			Total
			Only	More	Equal share	
Gender	Male	Count	31	2	1	34
		% within Gender	91.2%	5.9%	2.9%	73.91 %
	Female	Count	11	0	1	12
		% within Gender	91.7%	0.0%	8.3%	26.09%
Total		Count	42	2	2	46
		% within Gender	91.3%	4.3%	4.3%	100.0%

Table 10 – Frequencies and percentages of gender pictorial representation in Vision 3

			Pictorial representation			Total
			Only	More	Equal share	
Gender	Male	Count	18	2	0	20
		% within Gender	62.07%	6.67%	0.0%	68.97 %
	Female	Count	8	1	0	9
		% within Gender	26.69%	3.33%	0.0%	30.03%
Total		Count	26	3	0	29
		% within Gender	89.7%	10.3%	0.0%	100.0%

In a nutshell, the results showed a statistically substantial difference between genders' pictorial depiction showing the dominance of male over female and gender disparity in both textbooks.

The results of the chi-square test and the frequencies and percentages of overall gender visibility, semantic roles, social and domestic roles/ activities, and pictorial representation in Vision 2 and Vision 3 are summarized in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11 – Chi-Square of overall comparison of the five elements in Vision 2

Category	Male/Observed N	Percent	Female/Observed N	Percent	χ^2	df	Sig
Visibility	112	67.06	55	32.94	19.455	1	0.000*
Semantic roles	51	63.75	29	36.25	6.050	1	0.014*
Social and domestic roles	21	65.63	11	34.38	3.125	1	0.077
Activities/ roles	28	60.87	18	39.13	2.174	1	0.140
Pictorial representation	34	73.91	12	26.09	10.522	1	0.001*
Total	246	66.3	125	33.69	39.464	1	0.000*

* P < 0.05

Based on the results, male characters' visibility and pictorial representation in Vision 2 were significantly more than that for the females (p < .05). Also, males'

semantic roles was significantly more than the females' ($p < .05$). However, the results indicated that there is no significant difference between the representation of both genders in social and domestic activities/roles in the book ($p > .05$). Though, the overall representation of males ($n = 246, 66.31\%$) was more than that of females ($n = 125, 33.69\%$). The results ($\chi^2 (1) = 39.46, p < .05, \text{Cramer's } V = .326$ representing a moderate effect size) indicated that males' representation in Vision 2 was significantly more than females.

Table 12 – Chi-Square of overall comparison of the five elements in Vision 3

Category	Male/Observed N	Percent	Female/Observed N	Percent	χ^2	df	Sig
Visibility	195	73.03	72	26.97	56.663	1	0.000*
Semantic roles	46	61.33	29	38.67	3.853	1	0.050*
Social and domestic roles	35	64.81	19	35.19	4.741	1	0.029*
Activities/ roles	44	74.58	15	25.42	14.257	1	0.000*
Pictorial representation	20	68.97	9	30.03	4.172	1	0.041*
Total	340	70.25	144	29.75	79.37	1	0.000*

* $P < 0.05$

The results showed that male characters' visibility and pictorial representation in Vision 3 were significantly more than that for the female characters ($p < .05$). In addition, their semantic, social and domestic activities/roles representation were significantly more than those of female characters ($p < .05$). Moreover, the overall representation for male characters ($n = 340, 70.25\%$) was more than that for females ($n = 144, 29.75\%$). The results ($\chi^2 (1) = 79.37, p < .05, \text{Cramer's } V = .528$ representing a large effect size) indicated that the males' representation in Vision 3 was significantly more than females.

3.2 *The interpretation and explanation stages*

The results of the first stage clearly revealed that there is a significant presence of gender inequality in Vision 2 and Vision 3 textbooks. The number of nouns, proper nouns and pronouns was investigated to probe on the extent of the representation and expression of genders. In vision 2, generally, 167 cases of gender have been presented of which 112 cases related to male characters were presented in the nouns, pronouns and proper nouns while female characters were assigned 55 cases. These cases in Vision 3 were 195 to 72 in favor of males. The males' visibility were significantly more than the females' ($p < .05$) in both textbooks. According to Porreca (1984), when women don't show up as much as men, the implied message is that they aren't as important as men, or that their achievements are not as valuable as men's or they are not important enough to be counted.

The second issue examined in the study was the semantic role of both genders in the textbooks. To this aim, four semantic roles were adopted, i.e. actor, recipient, experiencer and beneficiary. Examining the semantic roles indicated that males were assigned more semantic roles than females illustrated through the abundance of males compared to females in these textbooks. In fact, the results revealed that 63.75% of cases was related to males and 36.24% to females in Vision 2 and this amount equaled to 61.33% and 38.67% in favor of males in Vision 3.

Examining social and domestic roles was another factor that shed light on the differences between female and male portrayal. Gender biased attitudes are not only perpetuated by the imbalanced distribution of females and males within textbooks, but also with common sexual stereotypes. Sexual stereotypes refer to generalized ideas about female and male and the type of roles that are attributed to them (Esmaili & Amerian 2015). In contrast to the 21 times males were shown in different social and domestic roles in Vision 2, females were presented in 11 cases. Females' social roles and domestic roles included: students, poets, craft women, nurses, mothers, daughters, and sisters. In Vision 3, males were significantly more than the females: 35 (64.81%) males and only 19 (35.19%) females. Males were present in a range of social roles such as doctors, students, teachers, writers, firefighters, pilots,

and poets while females mostly played domestic roles such as mothers, sisters, daughters, or stereotypical social roles such as nurses and students.

'Activities' were investigated as another manifestation of gender representation. The results indicated that the number of activities performed by male compared to female was 28 to 18 in Vision 2 and 44 to 15 in Vision 3. Among activities, watching TV, reading the newspaper, fixing the car, and playing football were monopolized by males while doing house chores like washing the dishes and cooking was dominated by females. Both men and women have the ability to perform different activities such as making household repairs, washing clothes, and taking care of children and if a textbook classifies them as masculine or feminine activities, they will misrepresent the reality (Mineshima 2008).

Finally, the pictorial illustrations of both genders were examined in the textbooks. The results showed that the percentage of males to females was 73.91% to 29.9% in Vision 2 and 68.97% to 36.03% in Vision 3 which indicates a statistically substantial difference between genders' pictorial representations in both textbooks. The dominance of male over female can be clearly understood in the pictures used in these textbooks. The results of the description and interpretation of the data revealed that the presence of male was significantly more than female's and females had considerably lower share in the mentioned textbooks. The schematic demonstration of the data is displayed in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2 – Overall gender representation in Vision 2

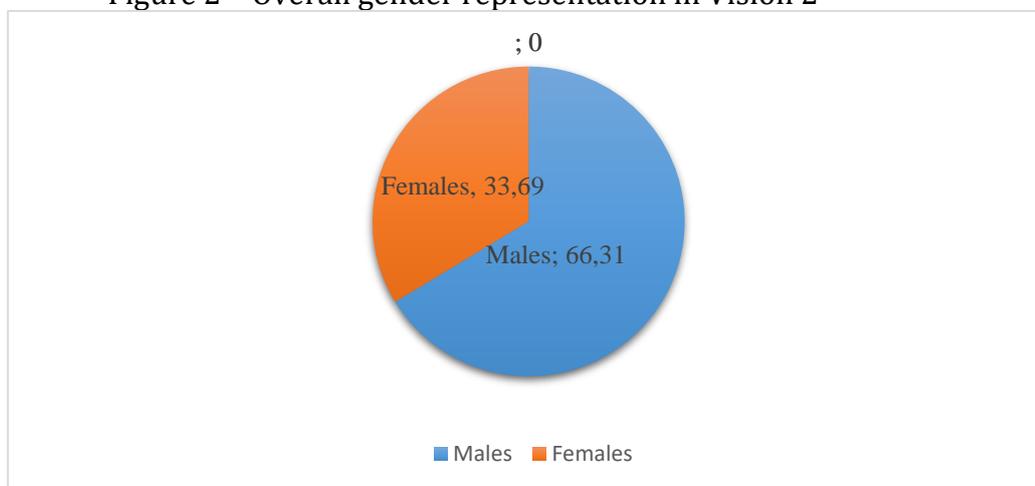
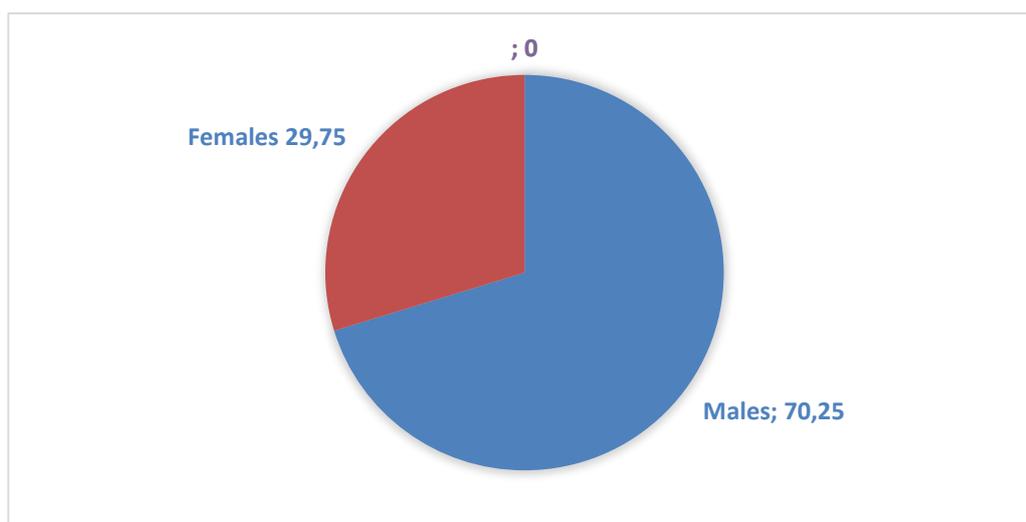


Figure 3 – Overall gender representation in Vision 3



Regarding the findings, it can be explicated that unfortunately, sexism is still clearly visible in the textbooks. Females were mostly assigned stereotypical female roles and activities. Female characters were assigned such activities and roles as students, poets, nurses, mothers, daughters, and sisters, secretaries, and cooks. This is while males were present in a wide range of diverse activities and roles such as doctors, firefighters, policemen, authors, translators, teachers, pilots, athletes, fathers, and sons. Females were seen less than males, and a significant difference in

the number of male-female images was also evident. Moreover, discrimination was shown through visual representation in various subjects in the textbooks.

To investigate the educators' perceptions, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 30 female and male high school teachers (17 females and 13 males). Seven questions concerning their perceptions on how genders are presented in the ELT textbooks, the pedagogical impacts of gender bias in ELT books on students' motivation, future fields of study and careers, and whether they see any particular ideology underlying the issue. The interview responses were analyzed qualitatively and the conclusions are presented in accordance to the interview questions as follows.

The participants stated that there is an obvious "gender bias" in the textbooks depicted through images, conversations, passages, social roles and activities, etc., in favor of male representation. In general, the educators believed how genders are represented in the textbooks is critical since it "creates gender stereotypes (patriarchy or feminism)". The interview responses revealed that the educators believed in the strong pedagogical effects of gender representation in school textbooks and that this effect would be through the transmission of "biased culture" to the young which would affect their beliefs and mindsets regarding the social roles of the genders in the society. They added that "marginalizing one gender by further representing the other gender" will impact students' pedagogical aims and desires, and even their choice of future occupation.

The educators asserted in view of the male and female equal rights in the society and the fact that the goal of education is to "cultivate" the right socio-cultural attitudes in students, the way genders are portrayed in the textbooks is important. In addition, in response to the question investigating whether they perceived an implied ideology underlying 'gender portrayal' in Iran ELT textbooks, the majority of the participants attributed the issue to the traditional biased culture dominant in the society.

According to the results, considering the goals of the study probing to see how genders are represented in the textbooks and whether there are any significant

difference in the representation of each gender, it can be claimed that there does exist a disparity in the way genders are portrayed in the textbooks signifying males' prominence and gender inequality in the textbooks. It seems that the gender inequality in these textbooks represents an ideology rooted in traditional biased Iranian culture supporting male dominance and superiority in the social contexts.

4. Discussion

The present study investigated gender representation in the ELT textbooks that are mandatory taught in the 11th and 12th grades of Iranian high schools. In this study, the pictures and written texts were examined in two textbooks employing Fairclough CDA framework to see how genders were displayed. To this end, the number of nouns, pronouns, proper nouns, the number of social and domestic roles, semantic roles and activities, and the number of pictures in which both genders were present were counted and analyzed. In each category, the evidence indicated the existence of gender discrimination in Iranian EFL textbooks.

The exploratory core of this inquiry included the assessment of gender bias in ELT materials and how the concept is perceived by EFL educators. The results showed how the male/female gender binary possibly remains a default mindset for learners. Most of the educators held similar views on the issue of gender bias in the ELT textbooks reflecting the traditional belief is Iranian culture. These findings are in line with the findings of recent empirical research revealing gender inequality in ELT textbooks, Afshar (2015), Amini and Oj (2017), Ahmad and Shah (2019), Aljuaythin (2018), Al-Kayed *et al.* (2020), and Javani and Tahriri (2018). In addition, the findings are in line with those of Miri (2019) who concluded that while there is some improvement in the representation of genders, there is still a noticeable gender inequality (in favor of males). Additionally, the findings are in agreement with those reported by Lestariyana *et al.* (2020) and Setyono (2018) examining female portrayal in ELT textbooks used mandatory in Indonesian high schools

displaying that male-female stereotypes dominated in the society still exist in the textbooks.

The female invisibility in social role models in textbooks would affect learners' identities, restrict female learners' self-efficacy and expectations and influence their future fields of study and professions. Ward and Lucas (2023) highlighted how a non-binary gender portrayal helps identity development and understanding of oneself in educational contexts. The results of this inquiry highlighted that EFL/ESL materials should be carefully examined in terms of gender-issues to probe whether certain practices enforce specific ideological values of which both educators and learners may be unaware.

To sum up, despite the studies and research conducted in recent years regarding gender orientation in English language textbooks around the world as well as Iran, unfortunately, gender disparity and discrimination still exists in the new English language textbooks of high school. Females were not only underrepresented in the textbooks, but their presence was limited to stereotypical female roles and activities while males were present in a wide range of activities and roles. This discrimination was also visible in visual representations of the genders in the textbooks.

It appears that the gender inequality in these textbooks represents an ideology rooted in traditional biased Iranian culture. According to this ideology, women should stay at home, nurture their families, and participate less in social and professional activities. This kind of portrayal is in stark contrast to Iranian society today, where females coexist peacefully with males in a variety of social, scientific, cultural, artistic, athletic, economic, and political contexts. Women have demonstrated that their abilities extend beyond traditional house chores and can have an effective presence in professional jobs. Furthermore, women comprise a high percentage of the workforce in any society which should be reflected in ELT textbooks so that female students can have a correct understanding of their place in the society.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that gender stereotypes and inequality are still present in ELT education mainly rooted in biased traditional standpoints in the society. As gender stereotypes affect male and female students' future paths and career choices, the ultimate goal of this inquiry is to eradicate gender inequality in the societies and educational settings. Thus, it is recommended that stakeholders all around the world may reconsider the gender- biased education systems to build socio-cultural knowledge of the young (Michelis 2023). Moreover, it is essential to probe if high school educators have the opportunity to assess curriculum content regarding gender issues and provide suggestions to inform pedagogical practices. Additionally, future EFL and ESL educators should be trained to effectively evaluate educational materials in terms of gender equality and non-discriminating materials.

Furthermore, ELT educators may educate students about gender orientation and gender stereotype, teach gender-oriented materials in a non-discriminatory manner, and if necessary, replace gender-biased materials. They can help language learners not to develop any gender preconceptions and prevent associating any special social or cultural roles with any particular gender. Future studies can examine other ELT materials focusing on gender-related issues. More comprehensive gender studies are indispensable for materials developers and curriculum designers to achieve more unbiased ideologies regarding genders.

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