

GENDER'S VISIBILITY IN TEXTBOOKS

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***Abstract:** The problems of gender are occurred in almost all aspects of social real-life. In fact, discourse is also reflected in textbooks used by schools. In a specific talk, there are various perspectives presented to address gender particularly gender bias in textbook suchas through typology (initiated dialogues, turn-taking, number of characters, word used, and by analyzing text, illustration and pictureswhich coin with gender representative available in textbooksinvolving gender visibility (male or female) and gender stereotype. Accordingly, this paper is aiming at presenting and elaborating on kinds of over-representation of female and male characters that might be occurred and its pedagogical impact after understanding the issue of gender in textbooks.*

***Key words:** Gender bias, stereotype, characters, textbooks*

INTRODUCTION

Understanding gender bias or sexism is not a hard thing to do. If we take a look at closely to textbooks used by schools at which the one of only sex representative appeared in terms of character frequency be it girls or boys, man or women, not in equal way, we come to see precisely the issue of gender bias.

The issues of gender bias were emerged in addressing the common

condition illustrated in textbooks. Mineshima (2008:2) posits that If sexism or gender biases are present in the learners' text, therefore, that harmful information couldalso be conveyed to them without their knowing it. In accordance with that, Brugielles and Cromer (2009: 19) put forward that the representation of both gender in textbook, reinforced through teacher/pupil interaction with the teacher, continue to put girls at a

disadvantage. For that reason they argue that gender representation must be changed and teacher must also be trained to avoid contributing to the transmission of representations that convey inequality, whatever the textbook is used.

To get involved in promoting gender equality, it is therefore, at the first place, very important to get to know and reveal the features of gender bias existing in textbooks spread generally in further description.

DISCUSSION

It is essential to get started this session by elaborating definitions of specific terms related to gender features defined by ZENEC-ANIMA on their investigation on gender stereotype (2000:3). The detail descriptions about gender and other terms related are clearly presented in the following explanation:

Gender/Sex

Sex means biological differences between women and men. These differences are mostly permanent and universal.

Gender relates to socially constructed roles of women and men. In what way a society sees the roles of women and men and what is expected from them (social expectations connected with gender roles) depends on a number of factors: cultural, political, economic, social and religious ones. They are equally affected by customs, law, class and ethnic background, as well as prejudices spread in the given society. Attitudes and behavior towards gender are learnt and may be changed.

Gender roles are activities assigned to men and women on the basis of presumed differences. The term 'labor segregation' is used to refer to roles and tasks associated with women and men on the basis of presumed characteristics and attributes, instead of skills and competences.

Prejudices

Prejudices are attitudes in which it is evident that they lack justification and logic, and are accompanied by intensive emotions. Prejudices are beliefs that are easily acquired, consistently perpetuated and are difficult to change; they usually express

a negative, hostile attitude towards a group one does not belong to.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are generalized beliefs about certain groups of people based on their belonging to certain gender, ethnic group, religion, and race. These are generalizations based on contacts\ or images we internalize through upbringing and education, i.e. socialization.

Further Discussion

School text books are manual educational instruments in printed format which are used in every school as per their educational syllabus. Among different text books social studies text books is one which is probably the common text books in every school. In contemporary society, school text books have come on different kind of criticism and biasness during the recent years due to various both visible and non-visible components in school text books. Particularly, social studies textbook is the one which deals about the social and cultural issues, is more vulnerable on biasness or criticism. Gender stereotypes are

general phenomena in contemporary world but illustration of gender stereotypical themes, paragraphs, characters or words in text books is different phenomena in academia.

There a number of ways in revealing gender intervention illustrated in textbooks. By looking at various studies we will how gender bias is likely occurred in many ways. Some researchers have categorized the discussion of gender in textbook in a variety of perspectives; there are mentioning that talking about gender bias means talking about female invisibility(appearance) and gender stereotype; some focused on elaborating gender characters and stereotype respectively, others talked about typology at which gender feature are commonly found at the part of books discussed such as initiated dialogues, turn-taking, number of characters, word used, and the rest concerned on text and illustration of textbooks observed.

To address those discussions, it is wise to discuss them briefly one after another for the sake of a good comprehension on gender in textbooks. The explanations are as follows.

Female Invisibility

Probably one of the most frequently discussed aspects of sexism is female invisibility in literature. Weitzman et al. (1972: 1128), for example, examined prize-winning picture books for preschool children and reached the conclusion that women were simply invisible. They were underrepresented in the titles, central roles, pictures, and stories of every sample. Similar findings of scarcity of females were also reported by, among many, Kyle (1978:11) on preprimary and six-grade readers, by Scott (1982:12) on two elementary basal reading series, and by Abraham (1989:13) on three mathematics course books.

It would not be too difficult to imagine that these materials in which males far outnumber females in many respects would affect learners (especially females) negatively in their long-term development. Sadker et al (1991: 315) asserts that invisibility is one of the most pernicious forms of bias and gender equity will need to become a mainstream issue in educational research and efforts to reform and

restructure schools'. Female invisibility, which hence must be of primary concern to all educators, should naturally be the main focus of investigation in any research of linguistic sexism.

Gender Stereotyping

Knell and Winner note that stereotypical representations of male and female characters influence children to act in stereotypical ways. For example, after reading stories in which characters were depicted in traditional roles- females as caretakers of children, librarians, or secretaries and male as fire fighters, doctors. Accordingly, girls preferred to play with a nurse's kit than a doctor's kit

The following is an example of gender stereotyping that has crept into language learning. These sentences are from an English composition book written by Alt and Kirkland (1973:2) cited in Hartman and Judd (1978:387) intended to teach learners the SVC construction.

Dogs are animals.

Tadpoles become frogs.

Boys become men.

Girls become.

The missing word in the last sentence is not *women* but *housewives*. Obviously girls were expected to become housewives just as much as boys were expected to become men. This kind of implicit conditioning of learners toward gender-role stereotyping is dangerous because, as Porreca (1984: 723) [5] warns, children can quickly and easily integrate such gender biases into their own value systems

Prejudices and stereotypes help us:

1. make sense of and understand the world around us: in a situation which is not clear enough, where we do not have enough information, stereotypical thinking, fills in the gaps, provides missing information and gives us the feeling of certainty and clarity;
2. Evaluate the group we belong to;
3. Evaluate other groups, their characteristics and functioning; and
4. Justify discrimination of those belonging to other groups.

Creating prejudices and stereotypes is a usual way of thinking; it is the fastest method of processing information about a person. When we meet people, we focus on characteristics

that are most conspicuous to our mind at the moment, neglecting others, and we make conclusions only on the basis of these conspicuous attributes. Some generalizations may prove to be right; others may be far from truth. Prejudices and stereotypes lead to miss generalizations about individuals when we believe that the groups they belong to are homogenous. We, thus, sometimes speak of exceptions, like a woman who is a good driver or a tender man. Discrimination comes when, on the basis of wrong judgments, i.e. prejudices, we start to act towards people we are prejudiced against. Thus, discrimination is actually a prejudice in action.

Research conducted by Chukrai Irena (2010: 1) is interesting to be taken into consideration. She noticed the article published in 1979 on, "Effects of Reading Content on Occupational Sex Role Stereotypes," written by Knell and Winer. They noted that stereotypical representations of male and female characters influenced children to act in stereotypical ways. For example, after reading stories in which characters were depicted in traditional

roles—females as care takers of children, librarians, or secretaries and males as firefighters, doctors, and other similar masculine careers—girls preferred to play with a nurse’s kit than a doctor’s kit, saw themselves in typically feminine jobs in the future, and preferred to read stories portraying female and male characters in typical masculine and feminine roles.

Conversely, in their 1979 article, “Children’s Reactions to Textbook Stories in Which Females are Portrayed in Traditionally Male Roles,” Scott and Feldman-Summers reported that depiction of female characters in non-traditional roles for girls and women broadened children’s perceptions about which activities girls could participate in and challenged their stereotypical assumptions.² After reading each story, the children were asked “Who do you think can do what the main character did in the story?”. The children chose between five options: (1) only boys, (2) mostly boys, some girls, (3) same number of boys and girls, (4) mostly girls, some boys, and (5) only girls. The results indicated that after reading stories with mostly female main

characters, children were more likely to choose the last option. These findings indicate that books contain the potential to influence young minds. Accordingly, analysis of children’s books is needed so that parents, teachers, and other educators will be able to identify negative influences in books and provide children with more progressive reading material. Children are potential feminists of the future. Therefore, by influencing their minds, one influences the progression of society in general and of women in particular.

Gender Characters

Frequency of male and female characters

As research study conducted by Mineshema (2008: 5) elaborates frequency of male and female character on these two tables on the textbooks whose title is ‘*Birdland Oral Communication I*’

The number of female and male characters in textbook:

Gender of characters	Numbers	
	Total	%
Female	29	46,8
Male	33	53,2
Difference	- 4	-6,4

The number of female and male character in each lesson:

	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	L11	L12	Total	%
F	7	5	4	5	4	5	4	3	5	2	5	6	55	47,4
M	7	7	5	4	3	5	6	3	7	3	5	6	61	52,6
Diff	0	-2	-1	1	1	0	-2	0	-2	-1	0	0	-6	-5,2

Pictures in textbooks

Behavioral attitudes of characters. In 1974, Hillman analyzed children's books by looking at behavioral attitudes of characters, such as aggression. Hillman found that male characters were mostly portrayed as physically aggressive while females remained dependent. Hillman's analysis explores "societal concerns" in relation to children's stories.

Firstness (one of gender bias criteria posed by Porreca (1984:8)

1) Dialogue Situation: [**Lisa** and **Shin** are talking in the classroom.]

2) Dialogue: Lisa: *You look a bit pale, don't you? What's the matter?*

Shin: *Actually, I have a slight fever. I played soccer in the rainyesterday.*

Lisa is mentioned first in the Dialogue Situation and then initiates a conversation in the Dialogue, so she has had two opportunities to be presented first. Although it may seem natural that

the first person in 1) will automatically be the first in 2), it is not necessarily the case.

Analysis based on Typology

In the study conducted by Sara Johansson and Kim Bachelder Malmsjö(2009:2) of four EFL textbooks series (happy, time, what's up and wings base books) that gender bias can be analyzed based on four categories: initiated dialogues, turn-taking, number of characters, word used by using those four categories we can see the level of either male or female quantity appear in the observed books. So for others, if we want to investigate how good the representative of gender quality of certain book, we could also use this typology which elaborating four categories.

Analysis based on Text, Illustration and Picture

In the research investigated by ZENEC-ANIMA, the proposed format to get to know the gender bias is by using text, illustration and picture. It is also used to get to know the gender stereotype available in a text. The analysis of gender from the frequency and activities of characters appears in the textbook illustrations and the role of adults.

There is often more than one character in an illustration. At this time, the most direct influences on the socialization of children's gender roles are the grown-ups' family roles and the professional roles. The gender role stereotypes of adult males and females still exist. First, the males and females' traditional family roles have not been broken through, which are specifically demonstrated in the activities of "father", "mother" and other family members engaged in. In the illustrations which appear in the form of family (besides the illustrations using "height", "age" and other data as question backgrounds), the masculine family roles mainly appear in traveling,

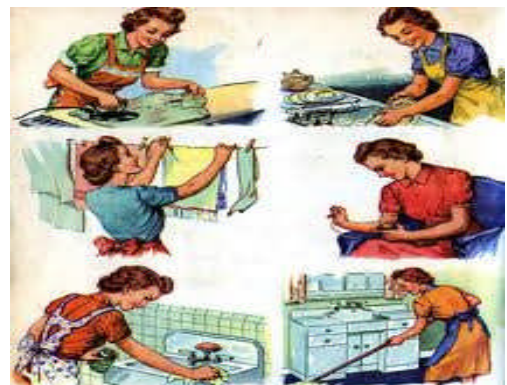
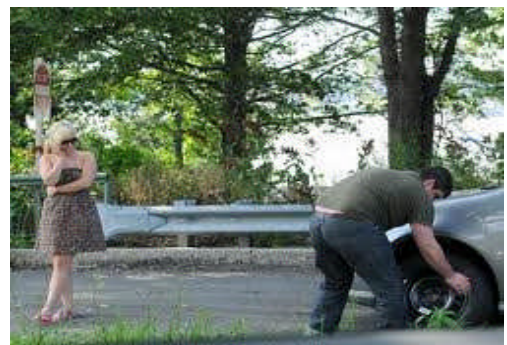
dividing the inheritance, making dumplings, and shopping; however, the feminine family roles mainly appears in shopping, feeding chickens, traveling, accompanying child at home, and making dumplings. Obviously, the frequency of male appearance in the illustrations is less than that of the female. Moreover, the feminine actions such as shopping, accompanying child at home are consistent with the traditional concepts.

Study conducted by Weitzman et al. (1972) on "Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children." This study found that books for preschoolers, even award winners, characterized males and females in a traditional stereotyped manner. The investigators found, for example, that males were depicted far more often than females, and in close to one-third of the books they examined there were no women at all. Furthermore, when they were shown, female characters tended to be presented as insignificant or inconspicuous, passive, immobile, and indoors. Whether human, duck, or frog, females participated in the traditionally "feminine" roles of pleasing and serving

males. Males, on the other hand, were more often presented in adventuresome and exciting roles, outdoors, and engaging in camaraderie with others.

Furthermore, both genders are assigned with approximately the same number of school subjects, occupations, interests and family roles. In picture representations as well, they are treated almost equally. Although gender imbalance was observed in the number of pictorial and the quality of textual professions, all in all, there seems to be ample evidence to suggest that the textbook examined exhibits fairly egalitarian representations of the two genders.

Occupational and Job visibility in text and illustrations



Sexism in Grammar

Sexism can be found in English grammar as well. Macaulay and Brice (1997: 800-15), for instance, analyzed a grammar reference book and discovered that females appeared slightly more often as direct objects (43%) than as subjects (41%), while males appeared much more often as subjects (84%), hence concluding that 'gender bias and stereotyping are widespread in syntax textbooks'.

One particularly controversial area of English grammar is the use of generic masculine of *man* and *he*, which can denote not just males but the whole human race as well. Here is an example which is grammatically correct but obviously funny: 'Man, being a mammal, breast-feeds his young' (Martyna, 1980:489). Many researchers have attacked this masculine-as-the-human-norm usage because it 'reflects and maintains social sexism significantly distorts children's understanding of events (Scott, 1980:50). Although the author has long taught such a sentence as 'everyone should do his duty', 'his' may need to be changed to 'their' or 'his or her'. (In

fact, the textbook examined has these sentences: '...ask *a classmate* about *his/her* favorite...subject. Then, present *their* answers to the class' (p.19)

Pedagogical Implication

Expected Textbooks: Ongoing Process towards Equity and Equality in Textbooks

As what has been pointed out by Brugiellles and Cromer (2009: 38), on the basis of existing work and research done by the International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in textbooks, a number of suggestions have emerged for developing textbooks that can promote egalitarian gender relations. These suggestions form a complete framework of action.

Criteria for promoting gender equality: The elimination of stereotypes and the most blatant sexism is insufficient. All representations of men, women, boys and girls must be monitored.

Characters embody representations of male and female, and it is on characters that action must be taken.

All characters form part of the gender system presented in a textbook, but the

system is not present in the same way throughout the textbook. All gendered representations of males and females must therefore be monitored accordingly, taking into account:

Every part of the textbook such as passages of text, lessons, exercises and appendices;

Both texts and illustrations. While it may seem easier to monitor illustrations (especially in terms of the number of characters), which are scarcer and take up more space than text, this does not imply more balanced representations. In addition, the connection between text and illustration must be analyzed carefully. A gender-neutral text may be accompanied by an inconsistent illustration. Texts and illustrations may be redundant or conflicting; they may reinforce or, conversely, weaken each other's messages.

Choice of characters in a textbook

A number of options – not mutually exclusive – exist regarding the choice of characters. Although this choice may depend on educational considerations, it should be realized that

this can have an impact on gender equality.

Character or no character

There is no obligation to use characters. Abstract ideas (such as distance and speed) and examples drawn from various subjects (life sciences, technology, geography) for the purpose of teaching and demonstrating the usefulness of mathematics can be used without recourse to a human being and can still enrich the pupils' world. Non-recourse to characters avoids the issue of gendered representation. Use of characters, on the other hand, requires thought to be given to the gendered representations that they may convey.

Gendered or engendered character

As well as male and female characters, it is possible to use an "engendered" character, such as "pupil", "child" or "person", or to include an element of uncertainty, for example, by using a first name that could belong to either sex.

Recourse to engendered characters emphasizes the universality of characteristics and behavior patterns, by regarding them as neither male nor female. Use of gendered characters

automatically raises the question of equality.

Individual or group character

A character may be an individual or a party of individuals, a group, either gendered (“the girls”) or engendered (“the class”, “the family”).

Use of a group character creates a group identity conducive to generalizations and the production and reproduction of stereotypes. Care must therefore be exercised when presenting gendered group characters. An engendered group, in addition to its collective identity, implies a mixture of men and women, which is often a factor of gender equality.

Gendered Characters: two basic questions

If it is decided to use gendered characters, two core principles must be taken into account.

Few representations are status-enhancing or status-eroding in themselves. But if a representation is not to be status-eroding or negative, it must be conveyed by both sexes. All representations must be “embodied” by characters of either sex, and role models must be diversified for each sex: both

male and female characters can do housework and have an occupation.

Textbooks do not reflect reality but rather structure a representation of society that they legitimize. They can offer social behavior models, individual and collective identities, and gender-sensitive values.

Two non-mutually exclusive options are available:

–The first option is to relate textbook representations to reality, that is, situations actually observed in the countries concerned. This is useful if these situations indicate progress in terms of gender equality: the number of individuals of both sexes is roughly equivalent, the number of women in certain professions has increased dramatically, etc.

– The second option is to use situations in other countries, for although gender bipolarization exists in all societies, it does not always take the same form: the diversity of male and female role models shows that there is no such thing as a natural or universal role for men and women. However, the models offered must not seem absurd to the Population because they mark too great

a break with behavior considered being acceptable by that society. These models would then be counterproductive.

How to have gender equality in text

A character's sex is indicated by the grammatical gender of the pronoun, proper noun or common noun. These different designations also define a character's social identity and immediately place the character in the public or private sphere. Therefore, language (grammar and vocabulary) plays a vital role here.

Various types of designations can be combined:

- a pronoun: he/she;
- a first name: male/female/unisex;
- a surname;
- a family relationship;
- another relationship: friend, neighbor, colleague;
- a profession or occupation;
- a political or religious office;
- another status: landlord, tourist, and so on.

Use the same type of designation for male and female characters. For example, the term “housewife”, which has no proper masculine equivalent,

should be avoided. If the word “mother” is used, then so too must “father”.

✓ Vary the designations of male and female characters while taking care to place them in a variety of spheres and social functions.

✓ If characters of both sexes appear in the same text, do not automatically start with the male

Character.

✓ Avoid sexist language:

– use the masculine and feminine forms in the case of a masculine plural, for example, “sportsmen” and “sportswomen”;

– use a neutral or feminine form of titles and functions if one exists, for example chairperson;

– pay attention to the meaning of the words employed, which must not ridicule, demean or imprison a character in a role.

How to have gender equality in illustrations

The question of how to gender characters in illustrations is complex and calls for careful thought. It is a matter of knowing which symbols to use to indicate male and female. This must

resolved with reference to the cultural context while bearing in mind the gulf between tradition and modernity. Choices may consistently convey bias, for example, if female characters are shown wearing traditional African garments while male characters wear European clothes, if girls are never shown in trousers, and so on.

Furthermore, on the basis of issues raised in the present text it can be said that reforms proposed in NCF (2005) is welcoming but still a lot has to be done to reduce the gender stereotypes in the textbooks. Following are the suggestions which may be helpful in this regards:

The curricula and textbooks need to be revised especially where the role of female is portrayed only as good house wives. There is a need to include achievements and heroic instances of the female gender in equity to the men. Teachers need to undergo gender sensitive course in classroom behavior and interaction with student. Teachers should try gender sensitization technique with their students to correct this misconception. For this teachers have to be trained on these lines.

It needs to be advertised with the help of textbooks that the human brain is not just any muscle tissue and that causes brain cells to form new connections with each other, the more synaptic transmission the better the thinking process irrespective of gender is. Textbooks should go through a gender committee comprising of academics, feminists, historians etc. before issuing them to students to make sure that the textbooks have a gender focus.

Teachers have to choose those textbooks for children that can help children recognize gender-stereotypical messages. For this, they have to choose those books in which girls/women are portrayed in a positive light with active, dynamic roles as well as in which individuals are portrayed with distinctive personalities irrespective of their gender, the language used in the text is gender free, occupations are represented as gender free, achievement are not evaluated on the basis of gender etc.

Gender sensitive materials at the primary and secondary levels require inputs from those who have struggled to bring women's voices narrative,

experiences and world views into the academic main stream.

We all accept that textbooks play a significant role in transmitting a society's culture to children and gender roles an important aspect of the culture. How gender is portrayed in books thus contributes to the image children develop of their own role and that of their gender in society. Therefore it must be taken into consideration with full accountability while producing textbooks for the future citizens of globe.

CONCLUSION

As future teachers we need to be aware of gender-biased teaching materials. It is our responsibility to ensure that all the teaching materials we use in the classroom provide an equal opportunity for learning for all students. We decide if a biased text will be used in a biased way or un-biased way. Another dimension of this is that we can determine which texts are used and can, therefore, avoid texts which are not in accordance with the steering documents. Even though we as teachers have an enormous responsibility for upholding

equality, authors and publishers also have a responsibility to ensure that textbooks also uphold equality. In addition, Johansson also emphasizes that educators need to be aware of gender-biased textbook dialogues in order to be better equipped to ensure equal opportunity for all.

Although linguistic contents would naturally be of primary concern, the potential effect of explicit and implicit sexism in the textbook should not be underestimated because it can affect the long-term development of the learners. If a goal of the teaching of English is to help students not merely to gain more personal power over the language but also to fulfill their human potential eventually, the teachers should always be cautious of sexism and gender bias in their teaching environment. By sharing the results of analyses of other EFL textbooks, language instructors can further pursue more gender sensitive and fair materials suitable for the development of learners as individual humans.

In brief, the gender equality is one of the important aspects of educational fairness, and education is

the primary factor in forming children's gender roles. Therefore, we need to cultivate an educational environment for students which convey gender equality. The most important thing is that teachers and textbook editors should pay attention and reflect gender issues in the current textbooks.

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