

**Examination of Gender Representation
in Texts in First Intermediate School Textbook**

Prepared by :

Jamal Muhammad Abbas

mujamal574@gmail.com

Abstract

Textbook considers one of the essential tools in which gender is socialized in schools . Men and women share various roles that share various in each society that students should have them represented fairly in their teaching materials . The current study investigates how men and women are represented in English textbooks and the way in which language is used in the first intermediate textbook. This study utilizes mixed method of analysis. The collected data is analyzed by counting the number of occurrences of both genders in the selected textbooks quantitatively. Then this study provides a qualitative analysis to words and sentences of the texts. Thus, the data is analyzed in relation to Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (2001) in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that encompasses three stages; description, interpretation, and explanation.

The results of both qualitative and quantitative analyses indicate that inequity in teaching materials whereas gender- bias and stereotypes are still present in EFL textbooks in Iraqi intermediate schools.

According to the results of this study, it is clearly evidenced in the first intermediate textbook that males are overrepresented than females. Thus, this study highlights some important pedagogical implications regarding the issue of gender inequality in teaching textbooks.

ملخص الدراسة

يعد الكتاب المدرسي وسيلة أساسية للتثقيف بالتنوع الاجتماعي في المدرسة. لذلك ، يجب عرض الأدوار والمسؤوليات التي تقوم بها الذكور و الإناث في المجتمع بشكل متوازن. الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة هو التعرف على طريقة تمثيل التنوع الاجتماعي في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية المدرسية التي تدرس حاليا في المدارس الحكومية في العراق و الكيفية التي استخدمت بها اللغة في الكتاب المدرسي للصف الأول متوسط.

هذه الدراسة استخدمت كلا التحليلين الكمي والنوعي . لذلك فقد تم جمع البيانات من خلال التركيز على إحصاء وتيرة الحوادث لكلا الجنسين في الكتاب المدرسي ، و توفير مُعَاينة نوعية للكلمات ، و الجمل . هذه الدراسة استخدمت نظام فيركلوف (1989) للتحليل النقدي للخطاب وذلك بالاعتماد على ثلاث ابعاد : الوصف , التفسير , و الشرح .

من خلال النتائج لكلا التحليلين الكمي و النوعي تبين بأن التحيز الجنسي و الأفكار النمطية لا تزال موجودة في الكتب المدرسية لطلاب اللغة الإنكليزية في المرحلة الأولى في المدراس المتوسطة العراقية .

من خلال نتائج الكتاب المختار فقد تم اثبات بأن اعداد الذكور فاقت الاناث. علاوةً على ذلك , الدراسة ايضاً توفر بعض التوصيات المهمة التي تساعد في تقليل من مسألة عدم المساواة بين الذكور و الاناث في مواد التعليم .

Introduction

Educational institutions such as textbooks are recognized as the first place in which gender is interacted. Language is the medium whereas contact and interaction occur. Language also enhances learning and fosters particular beliefs and attitudes in a certain society. Language has a fundamental humanistic role in establishing and maintaining any type of social link between members of different cultures. One of the most significant issues in school textbooks is the selection of words or language in writing textbooks. The information that are written in teaching resources may instill either positive or negative viewpoints of the society in the minds of young students regarding various issues of life. The values and roles in society show in educational materials must then be free of gender biases, gender stereotypes and career-role constraints.

Goddard and Patterson (2001:6) state that whenever “we acquire a language; we are acquiring new ways of thinking”. Sydney(2004:12) claims that authors should write textbooks that teach students "about what people do and how they relate to one another." It is extremely important to identify the hidden curriculum that is related with the way in which gender

construction in the textbooks of schools may include biases that are passed on to students that have a negative impact on their cognitive and behavioural development. The perceptions of gender can have a strong influence on children's behavior (Odhiambo,2012:25- 30). School textbooks are a vital resource for presenting instructional material of schools which are the primary socializing institutions where students begin to grasp their social identities in relation to one another and to institutions (Freeman and McElhinny , 1996 :218). Pierce (1995:105-112) notes that the role which students can play in their own lives in a specific society is regulated by their use of English; thus, both the language and societal roles which students face are important elements of the way in which the language of the curriculum should be selected with great care.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

It is important to point out that the contemporary discourse analysis movement began early in 1970s (Van Dijk, 1998: 17). Early in the 1990s, many scholars of discourse use discourse analysis intensively to investigate concepts such as power, ideology, and inequality, whereas other scholars focus on how meaning and structure are presented in texts. CDA is a multi-functional approach. Its applications are diverse and can be found in a variety of fields and sectors. It examines the distinctive characteristics that are associated with speech, discourse structures and cognition of a certain society. CDA addresses social issues like gender inequality, gender bias, racism, power abuse, hegemony and ideology .

Fairclough (1989: 4) establishes a framework of three dimensions for analyzing discourses/texts. Fairclough (ibid:4) defines CDA as having three levels that correspond to the three levels of discourse: description, interpretation, and explanation. According to Fairclough, discourse is a form of social interaction which indicates social structure. Discourse is made up

of "context, interaction, and text." Text which can be considered the product of interaction, is located at the least of the three steps stated above. Fairclough (2001: 21) emphasizes the importance of context in both the production and interpretation processes.

According to Widdowson (2004; 8) texts are capable of being written or spoken , and they must be identified through depending on the use of language and their intended meaning.. Discourse which is basically text in context, is determined through its impact on the receiver. According to Widdowson, discourse "is the pragmatic process of meaning negotiation," and text is its output (ibid, 2004: 8). Text cohesion is dependent on discourse coherence, whereas co-textual interactions are concerned with text. It is stated that critical reading extends beyond what is obviously hermeneutic (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258). According to them, CDA seeks to demystify texts ideologically that are influenced by power relations and it focuses on the oblique relationship that exists between discourse and social structure as well.

3. Methodology

This section includes data collection and description , research design and the adopted model that is utilized in analyzing the data of this research.

3.1 Data collection and Description

To fulfill the aims of this study, *English for Iraq Textbook* that is taught in first intermediate school which is published in 2021 . This textbook consists of eight chapters and is under the supervision of ministry of education of Iraq .

3.2 Research Design

In light of CDA, the current study combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches that assist in identifying, interpreting and

explaining the collected data. The quantitative analysis is utilized for determining the number of frequency of male and female characters in texts, conversations and captions is recorded in respect to the three aspects whereas gender is manifested. Then, the results of analysis are presented as percentages with sufficient explanations. The exploratory qualitative analysis focuses on the description of textual characteristics that are found in the three selected textbooks. To that end, the quantitative analysis examines the selection of specific words and sentences in the three selected textbooks and the results are discussed.

3.3 Adopted Model

In this study, Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model is used to investigate how gender is presented in the three-selected textbook with a focus on text structure. The analysis begins with text description that provides a background knowledge about the content of three textbooks to identify the textual features that reveal how gender is represented. The findings from the first process of data analysis (description) are then used in relation to the two data processes of analysis (interpretation and explanation) that are performed in relation to context of a specific society . Three steps of CDA are supposed by Fairclough's model of analysis: " text description and interpretation of the relation that exist between text and interaction, and explanation of such relation with both interaction and social context".

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Visibility in texts

The researcher examines all units of the three textbooks and collects the ratio of frequency of proper nouns and pronouns that are used in each one which refer to males and females. As it is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1 Overall ratio of frequency and percentage of male and female haracters in texts in the first intermediate textbook.

Textbooks	Males		Females		Total Frequency	Total Percentage
	F.	P.	F.	P.		
First Intermediate	331	54%	283	46%	614	100%
Overall Total	331	54%	283	46%	614	100%

According to the results in table 1, the total number of gender visibility is 614. Males appear 331 times in the first intermediate textbook with 54% making them the dominant gender , whereas females appear 283 times with 46%. Thus, Males are roughly more frequent than females.

The findings of the First Intermediate textbook show that gender is portrayed inequitably. Males are the predominant characters, whereas female characters are significantly underrepresented. The results demonstrate that most reading passages include at least one male character, but other texts do not have a single female character. That reveals the influence of traditional beliefs that are still prevalent in Iraq, whereas males get extensive attention of the culture and females get a minor care.

4.2 Topic Domination

The researcher reads all texts in order in order to figure out if the main focus of the texts is on male or female characters. The focus is to examine the title of the texts and the content of a story or conversation are clues for determining the central character's identity. There are, in fact, two major subcategories: "male only" and "female only".

Table 4.2 Distribution of male and female characters in terms of Topic Domination in First Intermediate Textbook.

Textbook	Male		Female		Total	Total
	F.	P.	F.	P.	Frequency	Percentage
First Intermediate	15	60%	10	40%	25	100%
Overall Total	15	60%	10	40%	25	100%

The overall results in Table (4.2) show that the first intermediate textbook comprises 25 reading texts. Ten of the twenty five topics are female-centric, whereas the other fifteen topics are male-centric. This reveals that males are the protagonists in the majority of the reading passages. These findings clearly show that males outnumber females in this textbook. Statistically males obtain 67% of the total percentage, while females gain 33%. Thus, the results indicate that male characters get the main focus of reading texts in the first intermediate textbook as they are usually seen as protagonists.

4.3 Character Activity

Men and women are frequently involved in various leisure activities in actual life. So, the researcher checks both kind and number of activities (like hiking, watering plants and fishing) that are assigned to each gender and the extent to which certain activities have any association to a specific gender or the other.

Table (4.3) The ratio of frequency of Characters in Leisure Activities in the First Intermediate Textbook

Textbook	Male		Female		Total	Total
	F.	P.	F.	P.	Frequency	Percentage
First Intermediate	17	33%	27	67%	52	100%
Overall Total	17	33%	27	67%	52	100%

As indicated in Table (4.3) the distribution of characters participation in leisure activities in the first intermediate textbook is clearly unequal. The chosen textbook contains 52 different leisure activities; men are involved in only 17 of them (33%), while females are involved in 27 of them (67%). It is worth noting that the activities in the fifth preparatory textbooks favors females over male characters which indicates that gender is represented unequally.

In terms of leisure activities, the study's findings indicate that women engage in more activities than men. Critically, Women's activities are restricted to indoor passive ones that include staying home, taking photographs, listening to music, cooking, tidying gardens, and watering plants, though men typically engage in a variety of outdoor activities like playing tennis, sailing, travelling, fishing, swimming, and camping, among others. Although women participate in more activities than men but scarcely these activities are mostly stereotypical indoor passive ones with few exceptions.

5. Conclusions

Gender Bias has both cultural and biological roots, as it illustrates the notions that females are seen as the reproductive and weaker sex in terms of intrinsic qualities that they have. Females are culturally expected to be

solely responsible for domestic tasks and home chores. Men, on the other hand, are physically stronger and have the authority to make decisions, and they are socially the suppliers, supports, defenders, and financially responsible for women and children. This condition confirms the status quo that exists in Iraqi society in real life.

According to the textual analysis, the overwhelming dominance of male characters in all of the aforementioned textual features indicates that Iraqi society is primarily masculine. This study suggests that texts can be used to gain access to socially rights that are worldwide. These texts capture the feelings of people (particularly women) who desire equality with other members of society (particularly men). Texts demonstrate males' superiority over females in all parts of life, and this is one of the fundamental ideological principles pursued by Iraqi society for a long time. Men are given major attention and priority over females, who are shown in marginalized and inferior roles in real life.

Males are the dominant characters in the selected textbooks that indicate several underlying beliefs such as unfairness, prejudice, gender biases, stereotypes regarding gender and religious constraints . This kind of representation is a helpful device for a variety of goals, including raising cultural awareness, teaching members of society about such issues, and attracting change to detrimental customs.

References

- Fairclough, N. (1989). **Language and power**. London: Longman
- Fairclough, N. (2001). **Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research**. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Fairclough, Norman and Ruth Wodak. 1997. “Critical Discourse Analysis.” Teun A. van Dijk, ed. **Discourse as Social Interaction, Vol 2**. London: Sage. 258-284.
- Freeman, R. and McElhinny, B. (1996). Language and Gender. In Mckay, S.L. &Hornberg, N.H. (Eds.), **Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching**. (pp 218-280) USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Goddard, A. and Patterson, L. M. (2001). **Language and Gender**. London: Routledge.
- Odhiambo, C. (2012). **The name game: Using insults to illustrate the social construction of gender**. College Teaching, 60(1), 25–30.
- Pierce, B. N. (1995). Social Identity, Investment, and Language Learning. **TESOL Quarterly**, 24, pp.105-112.
- Sydney, G. (2004). **Gender Roles in Textbooks as a Function of Hidden Curriculum in Tanzania Primary Schools**. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. University of South Africa.
- Van Dijk, T. .(1998).**A Multidisciplinary Approach**. London; Thousand Oaks,Calif:Sage.
- Widdowson, Henry G. 2004. **Text, Context, Pretext. Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis**. Oxford: Blackwell.