



University of Tehran press

The Analysis of EFL Teachers' Attitudes on ELT Textbooks in Iran: The Case of Gender Representation and its Pedagogical Effects



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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the attitudes of English language teachers regarding the representation of gender in the Vision series in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades of senior high schools in Iran. To gather data, a questionnaire was adapted from Yaqoubi Notash and Nouri (2016) and some items were added to meet the purpose of the study. It should be noted that this questionnaire was translated to Farsi to enhance the participants' understanding with a reliability of .88 whose validity was confirmed by experts. Then, the questionnaire was distributed among 330 male and female teachers who had experienced teaching the mentioned textbooks. To obtain more accurate data, a semi-structured interview was also designed and implemented with 15 teachers. The data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The results of the analyses of the questionnaire and teachers' interviews showed that the majority of the teachers believed the representation of males is significantly more than females' in the textbooks which might be due to the traditional patriarchal and cultural views in this country. In addition, the teachers assumed that gender disparity creates gender stereotypes in the minds of the students affecting their future academic and career choices and leads to biased modeling of the genders' social roles. The results of the present study can raise the awareness of the materials developers, curriculum designers, and those who are involved in devising textbooks considering gender inequality and representation.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received: 18 March 2023
Received in revised form:
03 July 2023
Accepted: 08 July 2023
Available online:
Summer 2023

Keywords:

EFL Textbooks, Gender representation, Pedagogical effects, Teachers, Iran.

Hosseini Ahmadabadi, Z. S & Azad, M. ., (2023). The Analysis of EFL Teachers' Attitudes on ELT Textbooks in Iran: The Case of Gender Representation and its Pedagogical Effects. *Journal of Foreign Language Research*, 13 (2), 317-334. <http://doi.org/10.22059/jflr.2023.356924.1024>



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Publisher: The University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jflr.2023.356924.1024>

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1. Introduction

Educational institutions can be considered as influential spaces that inculcate certain gender-related values due to cultural, social, political, or economic powers in a society. In reality, both educators and learners who use these educational spaces are affected by gender identities, activities and discourses. Additionally, educational materials play a key role in shaping the stereotypes, indirectly teaching students about languages, beliefs, perceptions, behaviors, and cultural knowledge (Lee, 2019). While examining the materials, this aspect is called “societal curriculum” and can affect students’ understanding of gender identity (Stewart et al., 2018). Therefore, in recent years, countless studies have been reported on gender representation in English language textbooks in elementary and middle school in around the world.

According to Dahmardeh and Kim (2020), since language learners encounter the target language for the first time through English textbooks, so books play the prominent role in language classes, and if there include cases of gender bias, it would shape the students' consciousness of their roles in the society based on their gender. In effect, textbooks are the pillar of learning and support students’ developmental learning, and thus, they need to be evaluated from different perspectives (Liu, 2016). On the other hand, since teachers and students are the main users of textbooks, their opinions about textbooks should be collected and analyzed. Students use textbooks to learn better and teachers use them to support their teaching, thus, each of the two groups has a significant contribution to the process of

reviewing and evaluating textbooks. Of course, the contribution of teachers is more necessary due to their higher knowledge. Accordingly, the presence of teachers' views in the analysis and evaluation of textbooks to improve their quality makes it easier for teachers to use them (Tomlinson, 2013). As such, evaluating textbooks should a main part of teachers’ responsibilities and a constant part of a teacher's work (Ansari & Babaei, 2003). Consequently, it is obvious that knowing the principles of evaluation is essential for teachers. In this regard, teachers who are familiar with the principles of evaluation have the possibility to report the strengths and weaknesses of textbooks, which is very useful for textbook designers and developers as well as learners.

It is worthwhile to mention that language learning in Iran is mainly limited to the school environment and the most useful medium in this field is the textbook, hence, it seems necessary to evaluate the textbooks in order to improve the content level. One of the most essential aspects of evaluation is to examine the extent and manner in which females and males are depicted in textbooks, and the opinion of teachers who have experience in teaching the textbooks can be very helpful in examining this component. In effect, it is important to consider of gender representation in ELT/EFL materials (Hashemian et al., 2020). Therefore, this research examined teachers' attitudes about gender representation in English language textbooks (Vision series) employed in Iranian senior high schools as mandatory materials.

2. Statement of the Problem

Many textbooks around the world suffer from mis/under- representation of genders pointing to male-biased or higher male character representation in textbooks taught in countries such as Syria, India, Romania, China, and the United States (Blumberg, 2009). The same situation exists in Iran where women play an active role in all areas of education, society, and the workforce (Miri, 2019). Gender inequality in textbooks has devastating effects. Gender imbalanced textbooks can create feelings of marginalization, exclusion, devaluation and lowered expectations in female students (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012). Besides, this inequality leads to a loss in the self-confidence of female students calling for a serious reform in the field of gender representation. It is worth mentioning that none of the previous studies examined the attitudes of teachers about the pedagogical effects of gender representation of ELT textbooks (Vision series) on students. Therefore, this study tried to fill this gap with an attempt to investigate the representation of gender in aforementioned textbooks. To this end, the attitudes of the teachers who had experienced teaching the three textbooks were collected and analyzed on how males and females are portrayed in the textbooks.

3. Literature Review

English Textbooks in Iran

Since Iran's educational system is a centralized system, all students throughout Iran pass almost the same courses and textbooks in K-12 education and it is the same for English textbooks. After the Islamic Revolution of Iran until 2010, the teaching method in English language textbooks was based on GTM (Grammar Translation Method), but since 2010, the Ministry of Education decided to change the

teaching method of the English textbooks and changed to CLT (Kheirabadi and Alavi Moghaddam, 2016). They noted that in Iran, since 1938, the English language course was included in the official education program of schools and the textbooks were designed and used with no change until 1961, i.e. for 23 years. Until 1983, English to Path Right books took the place of the previous books which were taught in Iranian schools for 27 years, until finally, in the academic year (2011-2015), the series of Prospect and Vision textbooks with a new approach (CLT) gradually entered the junior and senior high school education systems (Kheirabadi and Alavi Moghaddam, 2016). Dahmardeh (2009) stated that the Ministry of Education is the only center authorized to design, compile, publish, and distribute textbooks and no supplementary textbooks are allowed to be taught and used in Iran schools. Currently, English language teaching starts from the 7th grade, and students are taught English in Iranian schools for 6 years, but these trainings have not been successful and students do not have enough confidence in communicating in English (Dahmardeh, 2009).

Based on Miri (2019), factors such as the 20-year vision program and the dissatisfaction of teachers and students with the English language teaching system led to changes in English teaching methods and as a result, the Ministry of Education (MoE) decided to produce new textbooks for teaching English in schools. The complaints of teachers, students, and families about the shortcoming of textbooks intensified the decision-making process of MoE. These changes caused the six-volume set of textbooks authored by Alavi Moghadam et al. (2015-2017) under the title "English for Schools" (EfS) to

replace the LSRW series of textbooks that were used in Iran high schools.

According to the research compared the two collections, including Afshar (2016), Ahour et al. (2014), Bahman and Rahimi (2010), Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010), as well as Riazi and Aryashokouh (2007), the new series including two three-volume sub-series called 'Prospect' for junior high schools (age 13-15) and 'Vision' for senior high schools (age 16-18), were designed based on the CLT approach. EfS textbooks series were completely different from LSRW textbooks in terms of appearance and content. The old books had a black and white appearance and did not have any additional educational materials such as teachers' books, workbooks, or any audio-visual supplements while the new series have a full color appearance and provide the aforementioned educational materials to teachers and students. In other hand, in LSRW textbooks, the focus was more on comprehension, grammar, and translation, and less attention was paid to speaking, writing, and listening but in the new textbooks, these shortcomings were tried to remove.

In the introduction section of the Prospect and Vision textbooks, the most important features of CLT as being active and self-confident and the general spirit governing the mentioned educational packages are based on the following principles:

- Paying simultaneous attention to all four language skills;
- Using a variety of learning activities in the language learning process;
- Emphasizing language learning through experiences;

- Using rich, meaningful, and understandable content in compiling educational content;

- Promoting language learning with participation and cooperation in the classroom;

- Providing appropriate corrective feedback to learners' mistakes; and

- Paying attention to the emotional aspects and their role in the language learning.

However, despite these goals mentioned in the introduction of the new English language textbooks, after six years of teaching English in schools, the students do not have sufficient mastery of the English language except for a few limited sentences (Sadeghi & Richards, 2014).

Gender Representation Studies of EFL Textbooks

The attention of researchers to examine the representation of gender roles in textbooks was first raised by Graham (1975) who after analyzing five million words in US children's textbooks concluded that the number of references to men and boys was more than double. Among women and girls, there were three times as many male protagonists and speakers as female. After that initial study, many studies on sexism, gender stereotypes, and lack of representation in ELT textbooks have been conducted by researchers around the world.

In the same vein, Curaming and Curaming (2020) investigated gender representation in the English textbooks used in Philippines primary school and found male dominance and gender gap in the textbooks which can have a worrying consequence for pupils. In the same vein, a study on Brazilian primary education showed gender-biased attitudes were even visible in physical and sports activities (UNESCO, 2022). In addition, Lee

(2019) investigated whether gender equality is addressed in current Japanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks. The findings of the study showed that men were displayed more active than women both physically and cognitively. Another study by Siren (2018) looked into gender representation in Open Road 1-7 designed for students aged 15-18 in Oulu. Gender bias was reported in favor of males in these books while females were portrayed more as housewives or nurses or as the weaker gender. Ahmad and Shah (2019) used the critical discourse analysis perspective to examine gender representation in English textbooks taught to fifth-grade students in Pakistani public and private schools. Finally, gender bias was reported in these textbooks, which highlighted the presence of males more than females. The same result was reported by other researchers (e.g. Aljuaythin, 2018; Al Kayed et al., 2020; and Saputa, 2019).

In Iran, Afshar (2016) conducted a survey based on the representation of gender in the first textbook of the EfS series, Prospect 1. The results showed that the percentage of men in the texts was 62% while that of women was 38%. In this study, teachers' responses to a questionnaire concluded that gender representation is not fair. Three years later, Javani and Tahriri (2018) examined the collection of English language textbooks in middle schools in Iran (Prospect 1, Prospect 2, and Prospect 3) using the Fairclough model (1989) to probe the representation of genders. They selected and analyzed five criteria: 1) men's and women's visibility, 2) their semantic roles, 3) social and domestic roles, 4) routine activities, and 5) visual representation. The results showed that in most cases gender disparity was presented in favor of men.

Moreover, Amini and Oj (2018) analyzed the Vision 1 and Vision 2 textbooks in terms of major gender-related issues: visibility of male and female, firstness, activities, social roles, and generic masculine construction. The results indicated the presence of male gender bias in both textbooks. This results confirmed the findings of the synchronic analysis of gender representation in the EfS series and the diachronic analysis of the EfS and LSRW series (Miri, 2019). The findings of this study revealed that although the representation of diachronic analysis has improved compared to the previous LSRW series, the synchronic analysis of EfS series shows that this partial improvement is still insignificant because there is still a significant gap in gender portrayals and the textbooks are significantly male dominated. Additionally, Dahmardeh and Kim (2020) conducted a study to investigate gender representation in five English language textbooks (Perspective 1-3 and Vision 1-2) in Iran. In order to examine the subject, all photos, images, names, roles and frequency of the appearance of female and male characters in conversations and reading passages were studied. The findings showed an imbalance in displaying genders in favor of males in Iranian English course books.

4. Method

Research Questions

The current study tried to find answer to the following research questions:

- 1) What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards gender representation in Iran ELT textbooks?
- 2) Does 'gender representation' in ELT textbooks cause any pedagogical effects on students?

Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods design to collect and interpret the data via a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Mayring (2014) stated that “mixed methods-design does not follow a new methodology but amalgamates different steps of analysis to come up with a pragmatic theory of science” (p. 8). Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to answer the research questions.

Participants

330 English language teachers (132 male and 198 female teachers) of the senior high schools from different cities of Iran (Tehran, Varamin, Shahryar, Islamshahr, Pardis, Karaj, Mobarakeh, Kermanshah, Kerman, Gilan, Bojnord, Larestan, Qazvin, Babol, Khuzestan, Mashhad, Rumeshkan, Shiraz) who had 1-4 years of experience in teaching Vision series textbooks, participated in this research and completed the questionnaire. The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 60. In this research, available sampling method was used to select the participants (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Also, fifteen teachers were randomly selected for a semi-structured interview.

Instruments

In the present research, different tools (a questionnaire and semi-structured interview) was used to accumulate the desired information. To collect quantitative data, the gender representation evaluation questionnaire (Notash & Nuri 2016) was used. According to the studies conducted, this questionnaire is the only questionnaire available in the field of gender representation which was the reason behind using the instrument. This questionnaire contained 20 items and four items were added to meet the purpose of the study. It included 24 items on five

points Likert scale (Completely Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Undecided = 3, Agree = 4, Completely Agree = 5) related to the degree of female and male characters’ representation, the degree of anonymity or indirect reference of women and men, etc. It should be mentioned that the questionnaire was translated to Farsi to enhance participants’ understanding and its reliability was shown to be .88 and the validity was confirmed by five experts.

In addition, a semi-structured interview with seven questions was designed to obtain more detailed information to answer the research questions. The interview questions were about the extent to which male and female were represented differently in the textbooks and the ideology behind these differences, as well as the effects of gender representation on students’ choice of field of study, pedagogical desire and aims, careers and learning motivation. In order to avoid possible ambiguities, the interview process was conducted in Farsi.

Materials

The Vision series designed by the Educational Research and Planning Organization (Alavi Moghadam et al., 2017) have been created since the beginning of the changes in the educational system of Iran schools. In the academic year 2021, the third edition of this collection was published. Each textbook has three lessons and each lesson contains such parts as: conversation, new words and expressions, reading, vocabulary development, grammar, pronunciation, listening, speaking, and writing. All the sections except the Vocabulary Development section in the 10th and Pronunciation section in 12th grade exist in the three textbooks.

The components of the training package for these textbooks include:

- Workbook
- Student's Book
- Teachers' Book
- Students' CD-ROM
- Teachers' compact disc is Teachers' CD-ROM

Regarding the study objectives, the Vision series (Vision 1, Vision 2 and Vision 3 textbooks) were selected for more analyses of gender representation.



Figure 1. Vision books (Vision 1, Vision 2, Vision 3)

5. Procedure

As the study was conducted during the COVID 19 Pandemic, all phases of the study were online. Therefore, after assuring the reliability and validity of the instruments, the purpose of the study was explained to the national group of EFL teachers on Telegram and WhatsApp applications, and 330 female and male teachers from different cities of Iran who had the experience in teaching the textbooks voluntarily participated in the study.

Then, the online version of the questionnaire was distributed among the teachers through WhatsApp and Telegram applications. Before completing the questionnaire, the purpose of the research was explained to the teachers and they were assured that their identities would be kept confidential and their responses will not have any

effect on their professional interests. In order to increase the validity of the data, the participants were given more time to answer the questionnaire on their convenience. After collecting the necessary data and information, SPSS software was used. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions. In addition to the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 15 volunteered teachers to obtain more detailed and accurate information to answer research question. The interview questions were sent to the teachers in the form of word files via the above applications through which the responses were received. Regarding qualitative data analysis, after collecting the interviews, common patterns were extracted and content analysis was used to calculate the frequency of responses.

6. Results and Findings

Analyses of the Questionnaire Responses

As mentioned before, the reliability of the questionnaire was already established with Cronbach's alpha as .887. This reliability index is considered appropriate as Tseng et al. (2006) and Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) stated that a Cronbach's alpha value of .70 is the adequate reliability index for an instrument.

As aforementioned, to investigate the teachers' attitude about the representation of gender in ELT textbooks in Iran's senior high schools, 330 school teachers participated in the study whose characteristics are shown in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Characteristics

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
	Male	132	40

Gender	Female	198	60
Age	20-35	132	40
	36-50	117	35.3
	50-60	81	25.5
Total		330	330

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 display the participants' mean percentages of responses to 24-item Likert-type questionnaire. Table 2 illustrates the percentage of responses of the teachers in the five levels of the Likert scale of the first six items of the questionnaire. The results of the descriptive statistics showed that a high percentage of teachers' agreement can be seen in item one: "It is generally perceivable throughout

the 'Vision textbooks' series that female characters are less present than the male characters", mentioned 50% by the male teachers and 48.28% by female teachers. This quantitative result revealed that the teachers agreed on the imbalanced representation of males and females in these textbooks. The same result has been reported by other researchers (e.g. Ansari & Babai, 2003; Lee, 2019). Moreover, a high percentage of teachers' disagreement belonged to item five: "Males are more often named informally compared to females" (responded 50% by male teachers and 44.83% by female teachers).

Table 2. Male and Female Teachers' Mean Percentage of Responses to 24-Item Likert-Type Questionnaire (Items1-6)

Item	Teacher Gender	SA*	A*	U*	D*	SD*
1. It is generally perceivable throughout the 'Vision textbooks' series that female characters are less present than the male characters.	Male	4.55	50	18.18	18.18	9.09
	Female	17.24	48.28	20.69	13.79	0
2. Female characters in the books are generally represented as powerful people with important social roles.	Male	0	27.27	36.36	31.82	4.55
	Female	0	24.14	34.48	27.59	24.14
3. There is usually an indirect reference to the male characters in conversations and readings.	Male	0	36.36	18.18	36.36	9.09
	Female	10.34	31.03	24.14	27.59	6.90
4. There are more anonymous references to females than that to males.	Male	4.55	40.91	31.82	9.09	13.64
	Female	17.24	37.93	20.69	20.69	3.45
5. Males are more often named informally compared to females.	Male	4.55	13.64	27.27	50	4.55
	Female	3.45	6.90	34.48	44.83	10.34
6. There is usually a more specific distinction allocated to males than to females.	Male	9.09	45.45	31.82	9.09	4.45
	Female	17.24	41.38	34.48	3.45	3.45

*SA: 'Strongly Agree'; A: 'Agree'; U: 'Undecided'; D: 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'

Table 3 is concerned with the percentage of the participants' responses to items 7 to 12 of the questionnaire. It should be mentioned that among the items in this Table, the highest percentage of agreement belongs to item 12: "Generally, men are represented as more powerful, independent, and distinguished than females" (59.09% for male teachers and 41.38% for female teachers). Eagly and Mladinich (2011) pointed out that gender-biased attitudes are perpetuated not only by the imbalanced distribution of men and women in textbooks, but also by prevalent gender stereotypes. Believing that men are more independent and distinct than women and that women are weak and less

competent compared to men are stereotypes that exist in societies (Eagly & Mladinich, 2011) and gender stereotypes refer to generalized ideas about men and women and the type of roles attributed to them (Amerian & Esmaili, 2014). Likewise, the highest rate of disagreement is related to item 9: "Females are mostly doers of action while males are recipients" (40.91% for male teachers and 41.38% for female teachers). The percentage of teachers' disagreement with this statement shows that women are mostly portrayed as receptive and passive in textbooks.

Table 3. Male and Female Teachers' Mean Percentage of Responses to 24-Item Likert-Type Questionnaire (Items 7-12)

Item	Teacher Gender	SA*	A*	U*	D*	SD*
7. Most typically males are generic characters. (The book uses male labels and nouns to refer to all humans).	Male	9.09	36.36	36.36	4.55	13.64
	Female	17.24	37.93	17.24	20.69	6.90
8. Males in the book have been shown to be more independent than females	Male	4.55	45.45	31.82	4.55	13.64
	Female	10.34	37.93	34.48	13.79	3.45
9. Females are mostly doers of action, while males are recipients.	Male	0	6.90	31.82	40.91	9.09
	Female	0	10.34	24.14	41.38	24.14
10. Verbs associated with male characters mostly involve 'thinking', 'calculating', and other abstractions.	Male	0	18.18	40.91	22.73	18.18
	Female	6.90	6.90	51.72	31.03	3.45
11. Verbs associated with females are mostly about 'appearing', 'showing', 'having', etc	Male	0	27.73	27.27	40.91	9.09
	Female	6.90	24.14	44.83	24.14	0
12. Generally, men are represented as more powerful, independent, and distinguished than females.	Male	0	59.09	18.18	22.73	0
	Female	13.79	41.38	24.14	20.69	0

*SA: ‘Strongly Agree’; A: ‘Agree’; U: ‘Undecided’; D: ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’

Table 4 displays that the percentage of teachers’ responses for items 13 to 18 of the questionnaire. It is worth mentioning that among the items in this table, the highest percentage of agreement belongs to item 16 “Males are more than females in pictures of textbooks” (with 40.91% for male teachers and 44.83% for female teachers). In effect, gender roles, stereotypes, social behaviors, cultural ideologies, and interpersonal attitudes are represented and

transmitted to those who are exposed to them through images in books, and ELT/ESL textbook images are no exception (Fatemi et al., 2011). So the way gender is represented in the pictures of the textbooks is very remarkable (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). On the other hand, the highest rate of disagreement is related to item 18 “There are general hints in the textbooks about females who are better problem-solvers and superior thinkers” (with 31.82% for male teachers and 37.93% for female teachers).

Table 4. Male and Female Teachers’ Mean Percentage of Responses to 24-Item Likert-Type Questionnaire (Items 13-19)

Item	Teacher Gender	SA*	A*	U*	D*	SD*
13. Powerful characters are equally distributed among males and females.	Male	0	36.36	22.73	31.82	9.09
	Female	0	24.14	31.03	24.14	20.69
14. Males are over-represented in the textbooks, while females are under-represented.	Male	18.18	40.91	22.73	13.64	4.55
	Female	13.79	31.03	20.69	31.03	3.45
15. Females all through the textbooks receive general referencing, while males are distinguished by their names.	Male	4.55	45.45	22.73	13.64	13.64
	Female	13.79	31.03	34.48	20.69	0
16. Males are more than females in pictures of textbooks.	Male	18.18	40.91	27.27	13.64	0
	Female	20.69	44.83	27.59	6.90	0
17. Females are pictures passive and vulnerable.	Male	19.09	13.64	40.91	21.82	4.55
	Female	3.45	13.79	34.48	37.93	10.34
18. There are general hints in the textbooks about females who are better problem - solvers and superior thinkers.	Male	0	9.09	50	31.82	9.09
	Female	0	10.34	41.38	37.93	10.34

*SA: ‘Strongly Agree’; A: ‘Agree’; U: ‘Undecided’; D: ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’

As shown in Table 5, the percentage of responses of the EFL teachers to items 19 to 24. It is noteworthy that items 20-24 refer to the

pedagogical effects of gender representation, and in all these 4 items, the level of agreement is much more significant than the teachers' disagreement. This finding reveals that the participants strongly agreed that the

representation of gender in the mentioned textbooks affects the educational purposes of the students, students' choice of their field of study, career, and learning motivation.

Table 5. Male and Female Teachers' Mean Percentage of Responses to 24-Item Likert-Type Questionnaire (Items 19-24)

Item	Teacher Gender	SA*	A*	U*	D*	SD*
19. Males are shown to be superior thinkers.	Male	4.55	45.45	22.73	18.18	9.09
	Female	6.90	34.48	31.03	20.69	6.90
20. Males possess a larger share of verbs indicating action and possession.	Male	13.64	45.45	27.27	9.09	4.55
	Female	13.79	34.48	31.03	17.24	3.45
21. Gender representation is effective in students' pedagogical desires and aims.	Male	18.18	54.55	13.64	13.64	0
	Female	27.59	48.28	10.34	10.34	3.45
22. Gender representation is effective in students' choice of their field of study.	Male	9.09	45.45	18.18	22.73	4.55
	Female	20.69	51.72	13.79	10.34	3.45
23. Gender representation is effective in students' choice of career.	Male	9.09	63.64	9.09	18.18	0
	Female	24.14	41.38	17.24	13.79	3.45
24. Gender representation is effective in students' learning motivation.	Male	4.55	50	31.82	9.09	4.55
	Female	31.03	44.83	10.34	10.34	3.45

*SA: 'Strongly Agree'; A: 'Agree'; U: 'Undecided'; D: 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'

Based on Onderwijsraad (2020), in any society, the educational and occupational careers of men and women show gender stereotyped patterns. Male students are still represented in technical and mathematical studies and occupations while female students are exemplified in education and health care occupations. The representation of gender in students' textbooks can shape development, influence career aspirations, determine attitudes about future roles in society, and influence personality traits (Caldwell & Wilbraham, 2018).

According to the results, regarding the first research question of the study investigating the EFL teachers' attitudes towards gender representation in the textbooks, it can be claimed that 86.3% of the teachers who have been teaching the materials believed that male representation was more than that for the females.

Analyses of the Interview Responses

In the second phase of the study, to investigate the second research question and add more validity to the findings, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 15 female and male teachers (8 females and 7 males) who volunteered to take part in this part of the study.

The participants pointed to the existence of obvious ‘gender in-equality’ in the textbooks represented by “more pictures of males than females”; “the presence of more male characters in conversations and reading texts”; and “the presence of fewer females in the social roles than males”. The results of the interview are directly related to the teachers' views in response to the questionnaire item one “It is generally perceivable throughout the ‘Vision textbooks’ series that female characters are less present than the male characters” and item 16 “Males are more than females in pictures of the textbooks”. With a high percentage of agreement in the selection of these two items, it can be claimed that the results of the questionnaire and the interview are aligned.

In addition, the participants attributed the bias to the point that “most of the textbook authors, designers, and stakeholders are male” or “because some believe in reducing the presence of females in the society and social roles”. Moreover, some ascribed the issue to “the patriarchal look and gender inequality in the society” and finally to “the traditional biased culture” in Iran presented in the textbooks. According to the high percentage of teachers' disagreement to item 9 in the questionnaire: “Females are mostly doers of actions while males are recipients” and item 18: “There are general hints in the textbooks about females who are better problem-solvers and superior thinkers”, it can be concluded that in addition to the low presence of females in textbooks, there is also a patriarchal view along with gender stereotypes, which was also confirmed in the interview. The responses of the teachers showed they believed in the strong pedagogical effects of gender representation in school textbooks and that this effect would be through the transmission of

“biased culture and customs” to the young which would affect students’ “mindsets” regarding the social roles of the genders. Furthermore, they held that this influence is more through creating gender stereotypes (patriarchy or feminism).

Moreover, the majority of the interviewees declared it would affect students’ motivation. They held that “less representation of a gender in social roles would have an inhibitory effect on the choice of scientific, artistic, and sports disciplines by that gender.” It would influence students’ choice of academic fields of study and future careers. According to the results, in response to the second question of the present study exploring the ELT teachers’ attitudes towards the pedagogical effects of gender representation in the high school textbooks, it can be stated that around 73.33% of the participant teachers believed gender representation has significant pedagogical effects. These results can be confirmed based on the agreement between the questionnaire and the interview responses in this inquiry.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The analyses of the responses to the questionnaire showed that approximately 86.3% of the EFL teachers (41.69% for male teachers and 44.61% for female teachers) believed the representation of men in the textbooks is more than that for women. On the other hand, the qualitative analyses of the data revealed gender representation would have significant educational effects on students’ learning motivation and create biased gender stereotypes. It would affect students’ educational goals, choice of field of study and future careers.

The findings of this study are in line with those reported by Javani and Tahriri (2018). They found that in most cases, there is a sexist attitude

in favor of males in the Prospect 1-3 textbooks. They also argued that this view originates from cultural bias and the inherent ideology in Iranian culture. Some good examples of this cultural bias in the society include but not limited to: “a woman is not welcomed in men’s gatherings, she still gets called using her eldest son’s name (by her husband) rather than her own, and even upon her death, on her funeral, her photo usually gets replaced with a flower” (Amini & Birjandi, 2012, p. 5). This invisibility expands to the domain of instructional materials and textbooks as well.

Moreover, the findings of the current study are well supported by those of Amini and Oj (2018), Miri (2019), and Dahmardeh and Kim (2020) who analyzed the English textbooks in terms of gender-related issues in Iranian high schools, reporting the presence of male gender superiority in the textbooks. The findings of Afshar (2016) also pointed to unfair representation of genders in the textbooks. Despite the fact that in the current population of Iran, women have occupied very important social roles in the society, they are obviously seen lower than men. It seems that the traditional biased view of women as inferior is also dominant in the textbooks which calls for cultural modification and education in this regard. To sum up, the studies conducted in recent years regarding gender orientation in ELT textbooks around the world as well as Iran illustrate that, unfortunately, sexism is still clearly visible in the textbooks.

The present study investigated gender representation in the English textbooks of Iran high schools. The qualitative analysis of the participants’ ideas revealed that unfortunately, gender disparity is still clearly discernable in the new ELT textbooks. Not only are females less present in the textbooks, but also their presence is

seen only in stereotypical female roles and activities. It seems that the gender representation reflects this implicit idea that women should stay at home and be less visible in social activities.

In other words, the gender inequality observed in the textbooks is rooted in traditional biased Iranian culture. This type of representation in the textbooks is in contrast with the reality of today's Iranian modern society, where women play a prominent role alongside men in various social, scientific, cultural, artistic, athletic, economic and political fields. It should be noted that this ideology is debatable in a country like Iran, which is Islamic and the Qur'an has repeatedly emphasized the equality of men and women and that the only criterion of superiority is piety: “*Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you*” (Surah Al-Hujurat, 13).

Therefore, the imbalanced representation in these books contradicts to the Islamic culture. Furthermore, the analyses of the participants’ responses in the interview illustrated that the gender representation does have long lasting pedagogical effects on students’ learning motivation, educational goals, and future careers. Therefore, cultural measures against gender discrimination should be extended to the duties of textbook authors and education officials.

This study was conducted to help improve cultural awareness in the Iranian educational society. Currently, in today's Iranian society, women have a strong and effective presence in various fields and this fact should be reflected in the textbooks to provide female students with a clear understanding of their place in the society. Therefore, it is suggested that educational policymakers and English language curriculum

designers take this issue into account while revising the next editions.

It is important to consider gender bias in the development of ELT/EFL materials. It can be claimed that teaching a language is not limited to teaching its linguistic content but it also involves the imposition of a particular ideology on learners by the material developers. This ideological imposition can, for instance, influence the minds and attitudes of these learners and affect the marginalization of a particular social group or the instillation of negative attitudes towards a gender. Therefore, it is up to English language teachers to identify these ideologies and reveal them to their students. In this way, EFL learners can become aware of the possible hidden agenda built in the process of reconstructing a particular perspective in textbooks and take appropriate precautions in interpreting them.

Eventually, this study focused only on teachers' attitudes. Other studies could investigate the students' attitudes towards gender representation in EFL or ESL textbooks. In addition, a similar study could be done on the textbooks used in the lower grades and the gender representation in those textbooks could be examined along with the analysis of the opinions of students or teachers.

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