

**In the Name of Allah,
The Compassionate,
The
Merciful**



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**Applying Transitivity Theory to Gender
Analysis of EFL/ESL Textbooks:**

**Locally Published Textbooks in Comparison to International
English Textbooks**

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents who with their love and unending prayers taught me how humility together with kind heart will lead to success.

To my husband who with his dedication, patience and unselfish love, has taken the load off my shoulder.

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Abstract

EFL/ESL textbooks have been regarded as essential Language Teaching Materials with which the learners spend about 70 up to 90 percent of their class time. The important role they play and their vast use make them not only influential in learning the language but also in shaping values and attitudes. Put it another way, textbooks socialize learners using their contents (i.e. texts, illustrations, pictures and even words) and this results in different ideologies. Therefore, they are valuable devices for shaping individuals' identities one of which is gender identity meaning how an individual perceives her/himself as a female or male in the society and world. Due to such significant impacts on learners' and readers' educational and social lives, policy makers, authors and publishers should be careful in choosing contents in order to include gender sensitive language in textbooks. For consciousness raising, there have been many studies on gender representation of EFL/ESL textbooks; however there exist very few gender analysis of textbooks based on the field of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The current study aimed to shed light on the equality/inequality of genders in Iranian (or in other terms local) and internationally published EFL/ESL textbooks. Because of almost close date of publication and since both series are the revised form of previously published textbooks, the Iran Language Institute (ILI) English textbooks, designed and published in Iran, was chosen as local EFL textbooks and Interchange Series

published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) was chosen as international EFL/ESL textbooks. Adopting Halliday's (1985, 1994) SFL and his Transitivity Theory the researcher focused on processes (Material, Relational, Verbal, Mental, and Existential) and participant types (Females and Males) to detect the underlying hidden gender orientation.

The results revealed that although there were no significant differences between local and international English textbooks regarding process types, the distribution of participants' types in International series were *almost equal*, whereas in locally published textbooks the distribution of female participants was *much* lower than male participants. The findings have implication for EFL materials developers.

Key Words: Gender Identity, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Transitivity Theory, Process Types, Participants' gender

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List of Abbreviations

SFL = Systemic Functional Linguistics

ELT = English Language Teaching

EFL = English as Foreign Language

ESL = English as Second Language

SPSS = Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

From the early days of their lives, individuals coming from different cultures learn to identify themselves as one of the two groups of genders, that is, whether female or male. Belonging to one of these two groups is a characteristic which the society and living in a social environment with different attitudes toward women and men affords to people. Wodak (1997, in Wardhaugh 2006) argues: "What it means to be a woman or to be a man [also] changes from one generation to the next... and varies between different racialized, ethnic and religious groups as well as for members of different social classes"(p.315). Elsewhere Wardhaugh (2006) points to the gender as a "key component of identity" (p.316). Such statements and claims propose that genders or in other words being woman or man, are roles and attitudes imposed on people by societies and cultures which take different views toward each gender in different eras. But from ancient times these attitudes or roles given to genders have not been fair enough and they mostly have been changed into gender stereotypes such as when women had been shown as housewives, and men in occupational labors outside home. In other words, there always has existed a sort of gender inequality among each generation from past times up to the current era, by which it is meant that in most societies, women in comparison to men have relatively been disadvantaged.

But this inequality of genders is not limited to social lives. In other words, unequal treatment of genders is not visible just in behaviors of people while communication or any other sort of relationships and this view has been published through media and written or spoken discourse. However, nowadays the world is moving toward understanding the existence of this inequality and different programs are being planned to move in the right direction. Consequently, currently in some societies, women appear in those jobs which up to now were occupied by men. Meanwhile their participations in the societal and even political issues have increased. Even more, women appear in the movies, television, radio, and advertisements and so on more than past though there maybe sexist attitudes in these situations too, for which one should be well literate to discover.

But as mentioned above, unequal or biased behavior toward genders have dominated every aspect of life, that is, social, political, cultural and even educational issues. The current study generally dealt with gender equality in *education* which, as Pesikan & Marinkovic (2006, p.384) point out, is a longtime process which has informative influences on attitudes, identities and views of educators in their everyday life and this is one of the reasons for its value and significance. Meanwhile, according to Lee (2011, p.1), educational materials as "key mechanisms of socialization", contribute to development of different systems of values and behaviors in young people, including

differentiated gender roles. This process therefore grows individuals with established values they give to women and men and affects their gender identity. So because of these long-lasting effects of biased attitudes on genders, great care must be taken at the educational level for gender discrimination and inequalities. To this end educational participants, that is, whether policy makers, curriculum developers, material designers and students in schools and learners in EFL/ESL classes, find it necessary to study different parts of the educational society, such as materials and to consider those parts which are relevant to gender discrimination or equality. Fennema (1990, in Pesikan & Marinkovic 2006) refers to gender equality as a "set of behaviors and knowledge" through which educators would be able to recognize inequality in educational opportunities, carry out specific interventions with equal educational treatment, and consequently ensure equal educational outcomes (p.383).

Materials, especially important in teaching and learning English or any other foreign language, which are essential means of delivering information and content matters to educators, are one of particular components of education. In language teaching, materials are of different sorts: Textbooks, Software, Movies, Television, Games, Media and so on. Among them textbooks have been the most influential instruments of language teaching from ancient times and educators deal with them most of their learning time. In a longitudinal research done with the aim of exploring the effects of textbooks on learners,

Stromquist et al. (1998, in Mustapha 2012) argue that textbooks and curricular content "leave lasting influences in learners' and educators' memories, as phrases and stories heard, read and written about men and women condition their minds" (p.6). McDonough and Shaw (1993, p. 74) state, "it is possible that the content of some materials will cause offence to some learners". Meanwhile, according to Sunderland (1992) if female learners are conscious of the female characters in their course book as relatively few, with limited roles, and are offended, alienated, or made to feel marginalized by this and subsequently demotivated, this is more likely to hinder than facilitate their learning (p.86). These were some of the reasons that emphasized the significance of focus on textbooks as particular components of education, and on sexism or gender bias as affective influences for tracing gender equality/inequality.

As mentioned above, nowadays, gender equality because of its considerable effect on shaping gender identity is an end in itself in any society especially those as Pesikan & Marinkovic (2006, p.383) assert, which are moving toward democracy. Therefore the manner in which genders appear in textbooks makes them important sources for developing such a value system in the minds of the individuals using them. For this reason they should be designed and developed in such a way that there are no imbalances in gender representation but once there is such an inappropriate positioning of gender or biased behavior toward genders, it is a responsibility for an educational

researcher to sensitize all stakeholders, that is, policy makers, material developers, practitioners, instructors and individual learners of these sexist attitudes and to give them awareness for further considerations and corrections.

Mustapha (2012, p.11) contends, "biased representation may directly or indirectly shape gender identities that will not augur well with the educational goals of our contemporary society, especially the need for gender equality in qualitative education." In other words achieving gender equality is important since the wrong representation of gender in textbooks have effects on the educational individuals involving women, men, boys and girls, who have not been given the right value they deserve. This study is not just a description of the current status, but it is an attempt for consciousness raising and a cause to move the educational world away from gender biased language and world view. Research on gender equality, representation and visibility (Chung 2000; Ansary & Babaii 2003; Kobia 2009; Soylemez 2010; Bahman & Rahimi 2010 , to name a few) have shown that although in some cases there were traces of attempts to make the language of the textbooks gender sensitive (as an instance refer to ZINEC-ANIMA, n.d.) still in most of the textbooks women figured less prominently than men and they were underrepresented as characters in lessons and illustrations and also as Blumberg (2008, p.347) puts it women were shown in highly stereotyped ways.

Along this line of investigation, the current study attempts to explore gender (in)equality through transitivity system within Systemic Functional Linguistics which is a powerful text-analytic tool.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Textbooks are not simply instruments for learning English grammar, vocabulary, syntax and so on. They are sources of communication among EFL/ESL learners which are used to learn different cultures, ideas and beliefs and individuals pass most of their learning time with them and refer to them as sources. This is why Kobia (2009, p.58) calls the textbooks as Gospel Truth.

So great care must be taken in the process of developing textbooks to make them free from every shortcoming which probably have vast effects on educators' and learners' belief system and identity. One of these drawbacks is gender bias language and unequal treatment of genders in textbooks which has been given much attention recently. There have been many studies based on different methods, whether quantitative or qualitative content analysis, text analysis, critical discourse analysis and so on (such as Chung 2000; Mirza, Kenan & Fakharuddin 2004; Ghorbani 2009; Amalsaleh, Javid & Rahimi 2010) which mostly take into account the frequencies of male's/female's images, names and pronouns, the occupational roles of both genders, the frequency of