

## چکیده

کتاب ها و مطالب درسی مربوط به آموزش زبان انگلیسی در همه ی موسسات اعم از مدارس دولتی، دانشگاه ها و مدارس زبان در سراسر دنیا نقش مهمی را در محیط کلاس ایفا می کنند. شایان ذکر است که در بررسی کتاب های درسی مفهوم جنسیت بحث برانگیز است و نحوه ارائه آن در کتاب های درسی ممکن است بر شیوه فکر کردن زبان آموزان در مورد جنسیت تأثیر گذارد و هم چنین همیشه معیارهای فرهنگی-اجتماعی و ایدئولوژیکی محل انتشار را بازگو می کند. مساله جنسیت یکی از مهم ترین موضوعاتی است که این گونه مطالب را تحت تأثیر قرار داده است. بدیهی است که سیستم آموزشی هر جامعه نقشی اساسی در شکل گیری ماهیت جنسیت در اشخاص ایفا می کند. با در نظر گرفتن موارد فوق، این تحقیق به بررسی یک سری از کتاب های درسی زبان انگلیسی یعنی تاپ ناچ از نظر رویکرد به مساله جنسیت پرداخته است. هدف این تحقیق آشکارسازی ایدئولوژی نهفته در این سری از کتاب ها در مورد مساله جنسیت است. برای این منظور مدل تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی فرکلاف (مدل سه بعدی: روابط موقعیت و محتوا) مورد استفاده قرار گرفته است. این تحقیق نشان می دهد که مکالمات این سری کتب رویکردی مناسب و متعادل در مورد جنسیت دارند بطوریکه معیارهای کلیشه ای نهادینه شده در ذهن زبان آموزرا پاک میکند. هم چنین به نظر می رسد که گفتمان کتاب های تاپ ناچ بر پایه ایدئولوژی نظام سرمایه داری و بازاریابی و با بهره گیری از هر دو جنسیت بویژه جنس مونث تهیه و تدوین شده است.

**واژه های کلیدی:** تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی، ایدئولوژی، جنسیت، کتاب درسی، تاپ ناچ.



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**IN THE NAME OF GOD**



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Title:

**Gender Representation in ‘Top-Notch’ Series:  
A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective**

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## ***Dedicated to***

***All teachers who try to enrich my learning as  
My beloved family***

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## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgement	II
List of Tables	III
List of Figures	IV
List of Abbreviations	V
Abstract	VI
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Preliminaries .....	.....2
1.2 Statement of the Problem .....	3
1.3 Significance of the Study .....	5
1.4 Objectives of the Study .....	7
1.5 Research Questions .....	8
1.6 Research Hypotheses.....	8
1.7 Definition of key terms .....	9
1.8 Organization of the study .....	11
<b>Chapter Two: Review of Literature .....</b>	<b>...13</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 Language and socio-cognitive factors .....	15
2.2.1 Language and culture.....	15
2.2.1.1 Language and Culture: Pragmatic and Semantic Perspective .....	15
2.2.1.2 Language and Culture: Macro-contextual Perspective.....	16
2.2.1.3 Language and Culture: Discourse Perspective.....	17
2.2.2 Language and identity .....	17
2.2.3 Language and power .....	18
2.2.3.1 Power.....	18

2.2.3.2 Power modalities.....	19
2.2.3.3 Power in discourse.....	21
2.2.4 Language and Ideology.....	21
2.2.4.1 Ideology.....	22
2.2.4.2 Locus of ideology .....	24
2.2.4.2.1 Relationship between language/discourse and ideology.....	24
2.3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) .....	26
2.3.1 Directions of CDA.....	26
2.3.1.1 Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model.....	26
2.3.1.2 Wodak's Discourse Sociolinguistics Model.....	27
2.3.1.3 Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model of CDA.....	28
2.3.1.4 Fairclough's Model of Critical Analysis.....	28
2.4 CDA and ELT .....	29
2.5 The Role of Gender in ELT textbooks .....	30
2.6 The Necessary Information about Top Notch Series .....	34

**Chapter Three: Methodology.....35**

3.1 Overview .....	36
3.2 Materials.....	36
3.3 The Model of Critical Analysis .....	38
3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures .....	39
3.4.1. Dimensions of meaning .....	39
3.4.2 Relations.....	39
3.4.3 Subject Positions.....	42
3.4.5 Contents .....	42

**Chapter Four: Results and Discussion .....45**

4.1 Introduction.....	46
4.2 Findings on 'dimensions of meaning.....	46
4.2.1 Relations .....	46
4.2.2 Subject position .....	62
4.2.3 Contents .....	64
4.3 Discussion .....	66
4.3.1 Top Notch Series and the Roles Played by Genders.....	66
4.3.2 Social roles, subject positions and content in the conversations of Top Notch series .....	67
4.3.3 The perspective or ideology of the Series regarding Gender Representation .....	69



<b>Chapter Five: Conclusion</b> .....	71
5.1 Introduction.....	72
5.2 Summary.....	72
5.3 Conclusions .....	73
5.4 Pedagogical Implications.....	74
5.4 Suggestions for Further Research .....	75
5.5 Limitations of the Study .....	76

References	77
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Appendix : A sample conversations from Top Notch Textbooks	86
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## List of Tables

Table 3.1: Number of conversations in the Top Notch series	37
Table 3.2: Relations in the Top Notch textbooks	40
Table 3.3: Types of gender relations in the Top Notch series	41
Table 3.4: Content categories in the Top Notch series	43
Table 4.1: Frequency of relations and position of females & males (Fundamental A & B)	47
Table 4.2: The Results of Chi-square test (The relations and position of females & males) (Fundamental A & B)	48
Table 4.3.: Frequency of relations and positions of females & males (1A & 1B)	
Table 4.4.: The results of Chi-square test (The relations and positions of females and males) (1A & 1B)	50
Table 4.5.: Frequency of relations and positions of females & males (2A &2B)	52
Table 4.6.: The results of Chi-square test (The relations and positions of females & males) (2A &2B)	53
Table of 4.7: Frequency of relations and positions of females and males (3A & 3B)	53
Table of 4.8: The result of Chi-square test (Frequency of relations and positions of females and males (3A & 3B)	55
Table 4.9: Frequency of equal relations	56
Table 4.10.: Frequency of unequal relations	57
Table 4.11.: Relations in the Fundamental A & B	59
Table 4.12: Relations in Top Notch (1A &1B)	60
Table 4.13: Relation in Top Notch 2A & 2B	60
Table 4.14: Relations in Top Notch 3A &3B	61
Table 4.15: Total relations in Top Notch series	61
Table 4.16: Female Subject Positions in the Top Notch series	62
Table 4.17: Male subject positions in the Top Notch series	63
Table 4.18: Content categories in Top Notch series	63

## List of Figures

iii

Figure 2.	29
Figure 3.1: The Model of Analysis designed based on Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model	38
Figure 4.1: Percentage of relations and position of females & males (Fundamental A & B)	48
Figure 4.2: Frequency of relations and positions of females & males (1A & 1B)	50
Figure 4.3: Frequency of relations and positions of females & males (2A & 2B)	52
Figure 4.4: Frequency of relations and positions of females and males (3A & 3B)	55
Figure 4.5: Frequency of relations of females and males	62

**List of Abbreviations**

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis  
CL: Critical Linguistics  
CP: Critical Pedagogy  
CLS: Critical Language Study  
EFL: English as Foreign Language  
ELT: English Language Teaching  
FL: Foreign Language  
ILI: Iran Language Institute  
MR: Member Recourses

### **Abstract**

Text books play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions- public schools, colleges, and language schools- all over the world. It is worth mentioning that in textbooks evaluation and analysis, the concept of gender is a controversial one and its representation in textbooks may influence the learners' way of thinking about gender and has always been reflective of ideological, social and cultural norms of the society where they are published.

As a result, this study was carried out to investigate and explore aspects of gender as represented in one of the currently used English language series, namely, "Top Notch Series". In effect, the study analyzed the series in terms of three major aspects of gender (relations, positions and content). To this end, Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model was adopted in order to extract the ideologies comprising the foundation of these series. This study revealed that the series represent both genders in a balanced way. In addition, these series present both genders equally in such a way that stereotypical norms ingrained into learners are removed. Furthermore, these textbooks adopt the discourse of marketing and advertising by exploiting both genders, especially the females.

*Keywords:* Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Ideology, Gender, Textbook, Top-Notch series.

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## 1.1. Preliminaries

The world of large-scale commerce, industry and technology like the world of certain human sciences, is an international world and it is linguistically dominated by English almost everywhere, regardless of how well-established and well-protected local cultures, languages and identities may be (Nazeri, 2010). The spread of English as a global language has been viewed as both a blessing and a curse. From one view, it has connected people, but at the same time, it has resulted in cultural and linguistic leveling (Baily, 1991). This phenomenon obviously occurs in ELT materials including textbooks, as the primary resources for exercising power to manipulate learners' opinions and beliefs regarding different socio-cultural issues. However, the investigation of ELT materials is a demanding task and in Skelton's (1997) words, a kind of 'hidden curriculum' might be imposed on the learners. He defines the hidden curriculum as:

That set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behavior and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational processes. These messages may be contradictory, non-linear and each learner mediates the message in her/his own way. (p. 188)

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is able to uncover the hidden and implicit ideology in various texts. It unveils the underlying ideological preconceptions and as a result the exercise of power in texts (Widdowson, 2000). The apparently innocuous words turn out to be quite different under the scrutiny of CDA (Rogers, 2004). CDA is a domain of critical applied linguistics that studies "the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (VanDijk, 1997, p. 352). CDA aims primarily at identifying socio-political inequalities that exist in society.

English language teaching is in the forefront when it comes to questions of value and ideology. This way of looking at language and English language textbooks

is seriously considered by Fairclough (2001) into what he called critical language study (CLS). This is where the Critical Pedagogy (henceforth CP), as an approach with the predilection for making learners think critically, came into the scene to show the constitutive effects of the curriculum in making up normative perspective of social issues such as gender, class, etc., and in constructing subjectivities and identities.

Thus, critical thinking, according to Ansari and Babaii (2003), is crucial for everyone who lives in a world loaded with high-tech industries in which huge expansion of information is a natural and normal thing. In effect, every individual needs to be a critical thinker in order to discover "biases, prejudices and misinformation" (Ansari & Babaii, 2003, p. 67). Recently, critical thinking as an important issue in educational contexts attracted the attention of many researchers. It seems that Iranian students reluctantly accept ideas and the issues presented in the textbooks. Therefore, with assistance of the teachers, learners should be guided to develop skills to think and read more critically; also, they should be instructed on how to unmask texts laden with values as social norms and ideologies. Readers who think that the articles and books are going to be a lot of discussion about a few sexist pronouns will be surprised about what they actually find (Marllis & Hadmumod, 2002; cited in Nazeri, 2010). Obviously, representation of gender in language cannot be adequately described unless cultural and sociopolitical specifics of individual languages are considered. It is pointed out that even for countries where rapid social changes have been accompanied by rapid linguistic changes; gender-related linguistic problems may not receive much attention (ibid.).

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

According to Skolvert (2006), when English teachers were asked about their use of textbooks, three out of four stated that they used the textbook almost for every lesson and they also felt that the textbook controls their teaching. Therefore, ELT textbooks can be considered as a major part of any English language curriculum to which



language learners have the most access. It is worth examining how the hidden curriculum covered behind the preparation of ELT materials and how this issue influences both learners' perspective, as well as their understanding of language. In effect, Textbooks, in all their aspects, have the power of altering learners' opinions and beliefs regarding many socio-cultural issues from gender and popular culture to religion and social class.

The problem with internationally distributed textbooks is that they have not been designed for learners with particular ideology and culture in specific learning situations but for global market where one general model of English is considered to fit all. It is stated that "textbooks and other materials used in language learning generally present certain ways of looking at the world, presumably, through the cultural lens of the authors. They fulfill a crucial role in the process of education, and English language teaching is no exception" (Aliakbarian, 2002, p. 8).

It is often said that there is an imbalance in the representation of characters in ELT textbooks as they appear in conversations, reading passages, activities, or visual materials (Singh, 1998). Therefore, gender representation and its possible imbalances can be ideologically investigated in ELT textbooks as they may influence the learners' way of thinking about gender. Hence, critical investigation of ELT textbooks seems to be important because teachers need to consider both what the choice of a certain textbook might entail and the consequences this might bring about. Teachers also have to make learners aware of these issues and help them becoming the critical respondents to the texts.

It is worth mentioning that based on cultural differences, different characteristics and behaviors are expected from each gender. Contemplating the culture and its relationship to language, we find out that in most cultures, women have been treated oppressively (Mills, 1995). Unequal treatment of women and men is not limited to textbooks; rather, it can be extended to other aspects existing in a society because according to Mills (1995), it is through language that ideas are shaped.

Therefore, if language treats women and men unfairly, it will affect the thought and ideas of the EFL learners, too (Bruno, Enache, Fernandez, & Simo, 2010). Consequently, if there is any sexism or gender bias in any textbook, there is the possibility of the pitfall that learners internalize this biased information and their learning may be negatively affected.

Therefore, all aspects of schooling including teachers and textbooks designers, along with attitudes of all members of a given school transmit a huge number of values to the students. In such a pedagogical realm, values resting in text books seem to be important because students are in interaction with them both inside and outside the classrooms.

Thus, students are exposed to values both societal as well as ideological ones through many aspects of the textbooks including the pictures, examples, conversations, reading passages, discussion questions, and many other skill-based activities

Moreover, perspectives toward gender are closely related to ideology. After feminist movement, many linguistic scientists and authors tried to present women and men equally in different realms like occupational opportunities, domestic roles, social and political statues, etc. As a result, English learners in Iran face different ideologies inculcated in different ELT textbooks taught in ELT institutes.

The present study is an attempt to examine gender representation in the conversations of *Top Notch* series, taught in some private institutes of Iran.

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

It is obvious that evaluating the materials used in EFL classrooms is a demanding job since materials and especially textbooks comprise the second main resources after the teacher that language learners have access to. Therefore, there is no doubt regarding the crucial role played by textbooks in language learning (Ansari & Babaii, 2003;

Nazeri, 2010; Esmaili, 2011). One of the issues recently attracted the attention of researchers, especially the critical discourse analysts, is the investigation of gender bias or sexism in different domains including textbooks.

Sexism is something learnt from childhood expressing the ways in which some unconscious cultural biases are communicated through females and through which some negative traits are ascribed to females and the stereotyped roles are reinforced for female characters (Mineshima, 2008). In this regard, Gershuny (1977) warned against sexism and stated that although textbooks are supposed to instruct some discipline; in fact, these textbooks view secondary information that is "gender roles or social values"(p. 150). Consequently, if there is any sexism or gender bias in any textbook, there is the possibility of the pitfall that learners internalize this biased information and their learning may be negatively affected.

Therefore, all aspects of schooling including teachers and textbooks designers, along with attitudes of all members of a given school transmit a huge number of values to the students. In such a pedagogical realm, values resting in text books seem to be important because students are in interaction with them both inside and outside the classrooms.

Thus, students are exposed to values both societal as well as ideological ones through many aspects of the textbooks including the pictures, examples, conversations, reading passages, discussion questions, and many other skill-based activities. Similarly, gender as closely related to ideology, has different representations in different ELT textbooks on the basis of cultural, societal, and ideological norms and values of the society where they are published, and English language learners are exposed to these representations through different aspects of schooling. However, there have been few studies on gender representation in English discourses on the basis of ideological differences with regard to gender.

Another aspect of the significance of the present study is that the findings of the study clarify the critical roles of teachers and learners. As mentioned earlier, good

language teachers in order to compensate for the shortcomings of textbooks with regard to gender representation, need to adopt some more critical approaches in their classrooms. They can create language classrooms atmosphere so that they can provide a forum for critical analysis in which both learners and teachers can question issues related to gender, culture, and ideology. Likewise, learners need to be reflective; that is, they should think about their own intentions to challenge and question their own practices, and to be responsible as participatory agents for the construction of societal ideals, values, and structures.

The findings of this study can also be of interest to textbook designers and policy makers. Textbook designers should help learners develop critical awareness toward different subjects like values, norms, and pattern of ideology represented in the textbooks. Similarly, the findings of this study are of interest to policy makers because they can warn them against the influence of market ideology and values of the Western modern society.

Finally, the findings of this study will also hopefully offer some insights to educators and language researchers, especially critical discourse analysts.

#### **1.4. Objectives of the study**

One of the main issues represented in any textbook including ELT textbooks is the issue of gender and the way these textbooks consider this issue. In effect, ELT textbooks among other textbooks are the places of portraying and challenging gender. In other words, inculcating gender biases shapes the mental models of both genders, transmitting the sexism to learners by which their learning might be affected negatively. Accordingly, wrong and even harmful “gender roles and social values” (Gershuny, 1977, p. 150) are perpetuated.

Admittedly, investigating this issue may demystify the perspectives and ideologies behind the way gender is formed. In achieving this goal, three main