



Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

***Gender Representation in Foreign Language
Textbooks: A Case Study of English
High school Books and the English Pre-
university Book of Iran***

By: Zahra Heidarian

Supervisor: Dr. Azar Hosseini Fatemi

Advisor: Dr. Reza Pishghadam

A thesis Submitted to the English Department of the Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Mashhad, Iran

Jan. 2011

I n the name of God



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We hereby certify that we have read this thesis written by Zahra Heidarian, entitled Gender Representation in Foreign Language Textbooks: A Case Study of English High school Books and the English Pre-university Book of Iran, and that it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of M.A. in teaching as a foreign language.

Supervisor

Dr.

Advisor

Dr.

Examiner

Dr.

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

Jan. 2011

Zahra Heidarian

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Declaration

No portion of this work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to this or any other university or other institution of learning.

Dedication

To my mother & father

,

To my husband

Acknowledgement

First, I have to thank God who has willed me to study and educate to this double end: my perfection as a member of the whole body of the society and my perfection in myself as an individual being.

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List of Abbreviations

CILAS	Centre for Iberian and Latin American Studies
ETF	European Training Foundation
ESL	English as a Second Language
F	Female
M	Male
MENA	Middle East & North Africa
NOW	National Organization for Women
USCD	University of California, San Diego

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Abstract

Gender Representation in Foreign Language Textbooks: A Case Study of English High school Books and the English Pre-university Book of Iran

Zahra Heidarian

The attention given to the gender discrimination and imbalance especially in developing countries has made the issue a worldwide concern.

This study addressed "Gender imbalance and gender stereotyping in educational textbooks (high school and pre-university English textbooks) following Rifkin's model (1988). The study was set in a qualitative paradigm based on criterion-driven studies; using feminist's approaches as the underlying theory, however, to enrich the findings both quantitative and qualitative techniques were utilized for data collection. Descriptive and chi-square statistics were used to analyze data quantitatively and Content analysis was used to analyze the representation of both sexes qualitatively in four English textbooks.

Owing to the fact that the overall representation of women in these textbooks is low and the traditional view of gender stereotyping is confirmed; the findings suggest the books are biased toward males.

Key words: egalitarianism, gender stereotype, gender equality, discrimination, chi-square.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0. Introduction

In this section, background of the study, the problem of gender imbalance in education, significance, purpose, research questions and hypotheses of the study will be presented.

1.1. Background

The issue of inequality of men and women has always been widely practiced in human society. Generally, women have been seen as inferior to men in terms of their qualities, capacities and their roles in society. According to Tilak (2007), women earn less than they should, get hired or promoted less often than they should. According to the Human Development Report (1994), women perform approximately two-third of the total world's total work, but only ten percent of the world's income and one percent of world's lands. With the passage of time, however, women's role is increasing in different fields of life and women proved themselves. Even in some cases, women perform better than men. Therefore, women should be given equal rights. According to Council of Europe, (2008) "Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life" (Counsel of Europe, 2008, p.1).

Accordingly, many projects have been done on the equality of genders and social roles of women. These projects were not only done in the social realm, but also in the educational one. These studies were done on two dimensions: first, the literacy rate, and second, textbooks and curricula used in schools.

First, According to ETF (European Training Foundation), a conference held on the eve of the International Women's Day: a) governments should realize to train women for their jobs and become sensitive to gender equality, b) women should make effort to create their own business and help each other to become independent. Four countries participated in this program and were studied in terms of "engender" education or equal literacy rate: Morocco, Japan, Serbia, and Turkey. All of these countries showed a great degree of progress toward gender

equality and increase in literacy rate, but complete equality was not discovered in any of them (European Training Foundation, 2009).

Second, The process of producing and teaching textbooks all reflects the social view toward each topic, including gender. To explore the representation of women in textbooks a project was done in (CILAS), the centre for Iberian and Latin American studies at the university of California, San Diego (USCD) in which 8 fellows from around the Pacific Rim were invited to participate in that project "Building New Societies: Women in Asia and Latin America; China, Thailand, Korea, Japan, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil. In all these countries, the real social roles of women were not represented in textbooks and most women were portrayed in their traditional roles as mothers or teachers (Firestone, 2000).

This exclusion of women and girls according to Rifkin (1998) impairs their ability to learn. Rifkin found in his research that gender representation in textbooks can be grouped into three categories: 1) Text-driven studies, 2) Stereotype-driven studies, 3) criteria- driven studies. In text driven studies the authors first examine the textbooks and then drive the list of criteria, but these studies have limited data and lack the rigor in the selection of data. In stereotype-driven studies the author first establishes a series of stereotyped images or attitudes in the books and then counts their frequency. The problem in these kinds of studies is the difficulty of establishing such stereotypes beyond the context in which they occur. In the third type, which is the most reliable one according to Rifkin, researchers first establish the criteria and then examine the books. In these studies inconsistency or unsystematicity in results can cause problems.

So this thesis was done on the basis of the third type which was also used in Rifkin's research.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The socialization of gender within schools assures that girls are made aware that they are unequal to boys. Teachers socialize girls towards a feminine ideal. Girls are praised for being neat, quiet, and calm, whereas boys are encouraged to think independently, be active and speak up. Girls are socialized in schools to recognize popularity as being important, and learn that educational performance and ability are not as important (Bailey, 1992).