

**A Critical Analysis of Gender Representation in
Primary School Textbook
The Case of First year, Second Generation Textbook**



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Summary:

Research in the field of gender studies has been thoroughly proliferating for decades. However, little attention has been given to examine textbook illustrations in relation to gender representations in the Algerian context. Thus, the present study attempts to investigate how gender is actually portrayed in first year primary school textbook (second generation). Quantitative and qualitative analyses were interchangeably used to examine gender representations in terms of visibility, firstness, character attitudes and gender stereotypes. The results revealed that males outnumber females in various illustrations and the differences are amply depicted. Moreover, gender imbalance and gender stereotypes in relation to the aforementioned criteria are outstandingly displayed and crept into language learning. Thus, primary school textbook mirrors our society in a way that represents a means of socialization whereby pupils' attitudes and orientations are affected. Therefore, it is used as evidence to incorporate at an early age these inherent stereotypes that stimulate such societal biased and traditional perception.

Keywords: gender imbalance, stereotype, textbook illustration

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that any language plays a crucial role in human being's life. Our ideas and feelings conceptualizations are unquestionably done through language. It also determines our behaviour, culture, thought and perceptions. Moreover, the relationship between language and the reality we are living in is sometimes misleading if not confusing. Therefore, language, reality, society are all under the umbrella of sociolinguistics which one of its main concern is the interrelation between language and gender.

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An ample number of studies have investigated gender biased items in textbooks (Porecca, 1984; Sunderland, 2000). They are meant to teach kids not only the language but also the socio-cultural aspects through which realities are constructed. Teaching materials consist of social features of gender representations which are manifested through visual instances (illustrations) that gauge visibility, dominance, roles, occupations and attributes.

Hence, the present study centers on gender and its representation in the Algerian primary school textbook (first year, second generation). The aim of the research paper is to analyse the aforementioned textbook with regard to gender representation and determine different patterns of gender representation from social and linguistic perspectives. The following objectives are set in this study:

- To analyse gender-biased use of visual and lexical items.
- To analyse the frequency of the occurrence of gender-biased instances in the textbook.

To achieve these objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How are gender characters represented in texts and illustrations in first year primary school textbook (second generation)?
- Are there any differences in gender representation?
- To what extent does the representation of gender reinforce gender bias and stereotypes?

The following hypotheses are tested:

- Gender gap is obviously shown in textbooks which results in gender inequality.
- Gender unseen instances show males dominance and females' subordinate roles.
- Gender bias is implicitly and explicitly demonstrated.

1.1. Gender Representation in Textbooks

Gender and sex are differentiated in terms of biological identity (sex) and socially acquired behaviours linked with sex (gender) (Chateris-Black and Seal, 2010, p.3). Gender differs among societies since this latter includes various languages, cultures, behaviours and so forth. Wharton (2012, p.9) explains gender as "a system of practices that are far-reaching, interlocked and exist independently of individuals". Hence, any society is culture-bound, related to one's norms and social roles and so is gender which is inseparably dependent on those social norms.

Languages are of paramount importance in society and mostly in children socialization. It is also "a primary factor through which gender biases are implicitly and explicitly perpetuate" (McClure, 1992, p.39). In fact, textbooks are not only teaching children the language but also transmitting secondary information which have to do with gender roles and social values. Gender roles depiction in

children's books, TV and movies affect children's socialization positively but negatively mostly. Gender roles "could restrict children's role behavior (Scott, 1981, p.136) and shortchange girls by limiting their horizons and expectations" (Macanlay and Brice, 1997, p.821).

Many researchers have investigated gender differences in various teaching materials and it has been clear-cut that the two genders have been represented discriminately, yet much more biased towards males (Porecca, 1984; Sunderland, 2000). Abdelhay et.al., (2015), in her study on gender stereotyping through middle school "spotlight on English 1" textbook illustrations, revealed that women are generally depicted stereotypically and circle them in domestic and indoor tasks as opposed to males who accomplish interesting jobs and outdoor activities. Female invisibility in literature is one of the most frequently investigated aspect of gender discrepancy. Sadker et al., (1991, p. 315) state that "invisibility is one of the most pernicious forms of bias... and gender equity will need to become a mainstream issue in educational research and efforts to reform and restructure schools".

1.2. Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotyping is another element researchers have taken into consideration and examined explicitly and implicitly. The very concrete example is the sentence from an English composition book written by Alt and Kirkland (1973, p.2) that intend to teach learners SVC (subject, verb, complement) pattern: dogs are animals; Tadpoles are frogs; Boys become men; Girls become housewives (cited in Hartman and Judd, 1978, p.387).

Admittedly, this kind of implicit gender role stereotyping is extremely remarkable and ever-lasting thorny aspect in the long-term children development. Thus, different teaching materials reflect how deeply any society thinks about gender that is subsequently acquired by learners of different ages and may affect their social behaviour. Textbooks are one among other sources that carry out the prevailing aspects of gender representation in society. These studies (Kim, 2012; Negatomo, 2010; Mustapha, 2012; Lee and Collins, 2006; Kobia, 2009) showed that females are underrepresented and belittled in relation to males. Their results revealed that social activities, occupations, lifestyles, family roles credited to women and men are stereotyped.

Inifiri (2012) states that gender stereotyping is constantly considering men and women as being different in relation to various societal tasks. Therefore, such stereotypes of gender roles escort to discrepancy in the society. Therefore, our society is patriarchal. Holmes (2007, p.2) contends that "... patriarchy, a social system in which men have come to be dominant to women".

More importantly, gender inequality or bias is the chauvinism of one gender towards the other; usually women are mostly affected by this worthlessness. Male's dominance and centeredness is plainly demonstrated.

Gender inequality is vividly expressed in the first place of any kid's socialization which is school. Kids are material-sensitive learners which means each lesson learnt and each picture seen are but ways to develop their imagination and understanding of their surroundings.

Gender bias in education is comprised of gender-bias curricula, gender-bias teacher's treatment of students and gender bias in textbooks which is the main concern of this study. Gender bias in textbooks is manifested in many ways. It can be through the use of language, lexis, images and texts. However, it is said to be a norm rather than a bias; it is, then, conventionally stereotyped. Such gender unseen, between lines, hidden, instances in textbooks can have negative effects on the learner's social behaviour and development.

II. METHOD

2.1. Textbook Identification

In this study, the textbook examined is *كتابي في اللغة العربية/kitaabi fi lluyati larabijati/*. It is written by different primary school teachers and inspectors (three females and two males). It consists of eight units, each of which deals with specific educational, social and environmental topics that develop children's language acquisition. Moreover, these units focus on the four skills i.e., speaking, listening, reading and writing.

2.2. Textbook Mixed-method Analysis from a Gender Perspective

The current study follows both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the textbook through focusing on the language and the pictures as well. These analyses are interchangeably used to examine gender representations in terms of visibility, firstness, character attitudes and gender stereotypes. Hence, the socially marked gender items in textbooks include gender roles, gender attributes, occupations, visibility and dialogues (initiation of dialogues, turn-taking and the number of words), all of which are going to be examined in this study.

Visibility is mirrored through the rate of occurrence of pictures representing males/ females, as defined by Stockdale (2006, p. 1) it is this number of occurrence of male and female illustrations in textbooks. It also involves gender attributes that are regarded to be activities stereotypically ascribed to one of the genders. Gender attributes may reflect the social reality as ascribed by Mustapha (2012, p.257).

The linguistic aspect of gender representation is reflected through semantic features such as nouns, pronouns, vocabulary and firstness to examine the prominence given to certain genders. Firstness refers to mentioning two genders where one gender is usually said first. Men always come first and women are subordinate to men. As stated by Porreca (1984, p.706), "the order of mention, termed firstness". Gender specific nouns or pronouns (like mother/father; he/she) appearing in the first position may be interpreted as having a higher status.

III. RESULTS

1. Gender Visibility

Visibility is considered as the most frequently studied aspect of gender imbalance in textbooks. Table 1 shows the number of females and males appearing in the textbook.

Table1. Number of Female/Male Characters in the Textbook

Gender	Number of appearance	Percentage	Total
Female	115	39,65%	290
Male	175	60,34%	

The total number of males and females characters appearance in the textbook is 290, 115 are females and 175 are males with a difference of 60 characters. Therefore, the textbook seems to favour males more than females, this confirms numerous studies that found males outnumber females in their appearance in the textbook. (Porecca, 1084; Abdelhay et.al, 2015). Hence there is no equal distribution.

2. Firstness

As mentioned before, firstness refers to the classification of one gender over the other, i.e, which one comes first in utterances. The following analysis reveals that the prominence in the text is for men. Masculine words always come first and women are subordinate to men.

My name is Ahmed, my name is Khadidja. (P.9)

My father is a carpenter, my mother is a teacher. (P.11)

I respect my father and my mother. (P.12)

This is my grandfather and this is my grandmother. (P.13)

My grandfather and grandmother are in the living room. (P.14)

Thank you dear father, I love you my dear mother. (P.24)

He plants a shrub; she waters the flowers. (P.53)

He practices cycling sport, she practices handball sport. (P.69)

Ahmed planted a lemon shrub, Khadidja planted a peach shrub. (P.85)

3. Character Attribute

Females and males characters attributes are examined in terms of their designation of studies, occupations, interests, lifestyles and roles in the family.

Table 2. Females/Males Number of Occupations in the Textbook

Gender	Females	Males
Occupations	Cook Teacher Housewife Nurse	Carpenter teacher Headmaster farmer Guard doctor Footballer imam Referee boxer
Number	4 Jobs	10 jobs

Here again more occupations are assigned to males rather than females and stereotyped ideas are plainly shown in these jobs allocations.

4. Interests

4.1. Sport

Table 3. Females/males Sport Activities

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
<i>Sport</i>	<i>Tennis rope</i>	<i>Football boxer</i>

The table shows that the textbook designers do not give much importance to sports; that is why we find that kids do not like practicing different kinds of sports except football.

4.2. Outdoors

Table 4. Females/males Outdoor Activities

Outdoor activities	Female	Male
Helping in the farm Playing in the garden Cleaning streets Playing in the forest Cleaning in the garden Going to the mosque	Both	

The table above shows that the textbook designers gave equal outdoor activities to both genders, except for going to the mosque which is devoted only to males.

4.3. Books

Table5. Kinds of Books Females/males Like Reading

<i>Genders</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
<i>Books</i>	<i>Like reading stories</i>	<i>Like reading scientific books, maths, sports</i>

Again, this table shows that attention is given to males more than females through mentioning the kinds of books both genders prefer reading. It is found that males like reading different books all related to scientific field; while, females prefer reading stories as if they only fit that kind of thinking.

5. Lifestyle and Family Roles

Table 6. Females/Males Lifestyle

Female	Male
Preparing food Setting up the table Doing wrong deeds Helping the mother in the kitchen Teaching good deeds Cleaning inside (floor, clothes, hanging them on)	Bringing food Breadwinners Teaching morals Cleaning outside Watching football with the father Doing to the mosque with his dad

Mother Caretaker Do the laundry, clean dishes, wearing an apron Taking care of the parents-in-law	
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This table shows gender imbalance of the characters. More roles are given to females than males and they are all stereotypically demonstrated.

IV. DISCUSSION

The primary school textbook shows that males outnumber females in illustrations in different fields. Besides, masculine roles are usually associated with dominance and strength. It is stereotypically revealed that men are seen as breadwinners, those who bring goods to home; whereas, women are mostly visible as homemakers, those who cook, do households, wear aprons, satisfy the parents-in-law’s needs, fix meals for children and the whole family. They are presented as caring, emotional, compassionate, dependent and maternal. Moreover, boys are depicted as being good at mathematics and sports, cleaning outside, going to the mosque, being in recreational places; however, girls like telling stories, cooking and helping their mothers at home. This is alike with both genders preferences about reading books as males like reading different books all related to scientific field; while, females prefer reading stories as if they only fit that kind of thinking. Therefore, such stereotypes show that women are suitable in domestic spheres; while, men are appropriate in public spheres.

Furthermore, females in the textbook are either unemployed, shown through household activities, or they are ascribed stereotypical jobs like nurses and teachers as if these are the only two jobs that fit them. On the contrary, men are depicted as having different jobs that describe their dominance and strength like a carpenter, farmer, headmaster, guards, boxer, etc.

More importantly, masculine words always come first, third person singular masculine pronouns and nouns as well always appear before third person singular feminine pronouns and nouns. Hence, such stereotypes are still disseminated in our society and gender imbalance is plainly demonstrated in primary school textbook illustrations and writings which will affect children’s psychological development and behaviour all along their lives.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper aims at analyzing the Algerian primary school textbook (first year, second generation) with regard to gender representation from social and linguistic perspectives. The study follows both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the textbook through focusing on the language and the pictures as well. These analyses are interchangeably used to examine gender representations in terms of visibility, firstness, character attitudes and gender stereotypes. The results revealed gender imbalance of the characters’ lifestyles and roles; males’

visibility over females; the social dominance of one gender over the other are all signs of gender stereotypes which are obviously taught and acquired at early ages and crept into language learning through textbooks. Therefore, textbook designers should revisit their illustrations and writings for that gender-biased attitude they portray so that they ensure equal representations of both genders and build up a generation free from any stereotypes.

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VI. APPENDICES











