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GENDER-IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE ALGERIAN SECOND GENERATION ELT MATERIALS: THE CASE OF MY BOOK OF ENGLISH MIDDLE SCHOOL YEAR ONE

Abstract

Scholars in the field of education stress the importance of gender equality in children textbooks for the negative impact of sexism on learners from both sexes. As the title implies, the present paper attempts to qualitatively and quantitatively examine "My Book of English Middle School Year One" in order to find out whether or not gender biases issue is avoided in the textbook. Based on the results of previous studies conducted in the field of textbooks analysis, which had revealed a considerable amount of sexism being imbedded in the First Generation EFL textbooks, it was hypothesized that the currently used textbook, which was recently produced with the implementation of the Second Generation of the Algerian Educational System, also incorporates gender stereotyping. We used Michel's (1986) criteria of analysis to investigate the way males and females are represented in the meant textbook. Analysis results indicated that gender bias still exists in the Algerian ELT materials.

Key words: Second generation program, ELT textbook; young learners; social values

1. Theoretical Framework

Postmodern workplaces and social organizations need new kinds of workers and citizens: and these in turn call for new forms of schooling, new types of leadership and new ways of teaching. At the same time, issues of gender that had long been ignored in educational policy research have moved increasingly into the mainstream. (Blackmore: 2005, p. 180)

1.1 Introduction

According to Brugeilles and Cromer (2009, p. 14), textbooks do not only provide learners with the needed linguistic competencies, but they also transmit the social behaviours, norms and values one should have. Similarly, Kalmus (2004, p. 470) regards it as being an effective means for transmitting the various social values. Consequently, textbook analysis has been the scope of many studies in many countries. In fact, many applied linguists stress the necessity of textbook evaluation to indicate its strengths and weaknesses (Cunningsworth 1995, p. 14). Ellis (1997) also points to "the urgent need for the empirical evaluation of teaching materials" (p. 41). Weir and Roberts (1994, p. 11) argue that evaluation helps teacher decides if the textbook is suitable for learners.

Gender bias and sexism are among the main items of textbooks evaluation. Gender is defined by Healy (2009) as "what society expects and molds of each person into what is accepted and thought of as being feminine or masculine in her part" Michel (1986) in her part explains sexism as "practices, prejudices and ideologies that treat one sex as inferior to the other in worth and status" (p 11).

Historically speaking, Talvik (2014, p. 11) states that the study of gender stereotyping started as early as the 40's of the past century and among those who were interested in this field are Child, Potter and Levine. Since then, Talvik adds, investigation on sexism has been receiving more and more attention from academics (Talvik, p. 20). However, researchers in the area of sociology argue that gender stereotyping has its roots in history prior to the twentieth century. Michel (1986, pp. 17-18) traces it back into the emergence of the bourgeois family in the fourteenth century in France where the father was exclusively pointed as manager of the family financial affairs as woman was viewed as incompetent. Michel further explains that this gender bias was legalized on the strength of a roman law known as *fragilitas sexus* or the weaker sex. With Capitalism, Michel goes on, sexism against women was so strengthened that they were labeled housewives. Gender bias still exists till now in developed and developing countries as well. Accordingly, Pakuta, Pawelczyk and Sunderland (2015) state: "Gender stereotyping appears to be still alive and (fairly) well. There is progress, but there are also sticking points" (p. 95).

In the educational context, gender stereotyping might be conveyed through teaching materials used at school which is just a part of the society (Pakuta, el., 2015, p. 25). Michel further explains that sexism can be transmitted through textbook's illustrations and texts which unequally depict man and woman in social, familial and professional roles (Pakuta et al., p. 27). Florent and Walter (1989, p. 182) also hold the same view. They argue that textbooks my convey sexism through texts and visuals. Moreover, Miroiu (2004) clearly indicates: "Textbooks are a stronger promoter of the gender stereotypes than curriculum, which is rather gender neutral" (p. 99). These claims are supported by the findings of several studies carried out in Algeria and abroad, which reveal a considerable amount of sexism being imbedded in the tackled
textbooks. Using the content method analysis, Porreca (1984) examined ESL textbooks used at school in the USA with regard to gender discrimination. She examined the representation of females in texts and images, occupations, male and female nouns frequency, firstness, the types of adjectives used for males and females and their frequencies generic masculine nouns (man) and pronouns (he). She found that "sexism continues to flourish in ESL textbooks" (Porreca 1984, p. 718).

As for the Algerian case, Boukheddad (2011) carried out an evaluating study which involves the three EFL textbooks intended for the secondary level. The results of the study reveal that the used textbooks are biased in terms of all the dimensions picked to evaluation. EFL textbooks incorporate prejudicial representation against females, ethnic groups and elders. Additionally, such aspects as occupations and personal traits are stereotyped. In his study, Selama (2016) qualitatively and quantitatively examined the four EFL textbooks used at the Algerian Middle School in terms of gender presentation through the textbooks' texts and visuals. Research findings prove that the four textbooks analysed foster gender stereotyping in several levels through texts and illustrations.

To sum up, textbooks transmit diverse social values and norms and therefore if the authors are not aware of sexism then the textbooks they write may carry gendered presentations that may pave the way for learners to treat people on the basis of gender discriminations, which may, in turn, hinder their educational and professional achievements.

1.2 Why Investigating Gender Bias in Textbooks?

Sunderland (1992, pp. 86-87) maintains that the convincing reason for change in materials that must be given to the authors has nothing to do with teachers but with learners who use and learn from the textbook and therefore get affected by its gender discrimination. Textbook, Sunderland explains, influences learners in three ways:

One: considering the fact that such tools of socialisation as TV, games, newspapers... affect people's perception, EFL textbooks can also do the same to learners. Hence, female learners are not cognitively and communicatively empowered if they are unconsciously affected by the textbooks' characters who are stereotypically depicted as having limited social and linguistic roles. Second: if female learners notice that their textbooks portray females less frequently in proportion to males and that they play restricted roles and, eventually lack motivation to study, their learning will be hindered rather than facilitated. Third: if textbooks corporate dialogues which are frequently initiated by male characters, they, in fact, give "the whole class a model of conversational discourse characterized by 'male firstness'". There is a high probability that this model of conversation will be adopted and later on applied in and outside the classroom.

Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus and Young (2006, p. 757) also explain that the unequal treatment of female characters in textbooks has a negative effect not only on learners' educational achievements but they also "contribute negatively to children's development, limit their career aspirations, frame their attitudes about their future roles as parents, and even influence their personality characteristics". Furthermore, Michel (1986, p. 23) argues that gender stereotyping has negative influence on both sexes. She believes that the stereotyped portrayals of male characters as dominant on roles related to strength and competition may result in "cutting boys and men off from their emotions and natural feelings". Michel even asserts that the cruelty of nowadays world might be the consequence of "one-dimensional socialization of boys and men in the mould of harshness, competitiveness, aggressiveness and insensitivity".

It is clear from the above mentioned stances that the way characters are presented in textbooks may affect learners in the educational, professional and social levels. Hence, revealing sexist manifestations in textbooks might be a vital step to abolish them for promoting gender equality in the Algerian school.

2. Methodological Framework

2.1 Corpus

The material tackled in this study is the Second Generation EFL textbook designed for learners of the middle school first grade. The textbook is entitled:

My Book of English Middle School Year One, written by Algerian authors. Two males; HAMMOUDI Abdelhak and SAMARA Abdelhakim and one female writer; BOUKRI Nabila. The head of project is also a male; TAMRABET Lounis. The textbook consists of five sequences. Each sequence encompasses communicative objectives and linguistic objectives.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims at checking if the recently authored EFL textbook promotes gender stereotypes. The prime objective is to increase Algerian EFL teachers' awareness of the gender stereotyped presentations in the textbook to help them deal with the issue since they use the textbook in teaching. Needless to say, the findings might be used to revise, update and improve the textbook.

2.3 Research Questions

This paper addresses the following questions:

1- What are the differences and similarities between the First and the Second Generation EFL textbooks in terms of gender stereotyping?

2- How are male and female characters verbally and visually depicted in My Book of English Middle School Year One?

3- To what extent does My Book of English Middle School Year One reinforce gender bias?

2.4 Data Analysis Procedures

This study is primarily a quantitative content analysis. The analysis was done throughout both texts and visuals to reveal any imbalance in a) the proportion of roles attributed to male and female characters, b) the frequency of male and female characters appearance. Such method of analysis is supported by Pakuta, Pawelczyk and Sunderland (2015) who claim that: "If there is a quantitative imbalance of represented girls and boys, women and men, in language textbooks, this may adversely affect students' self-image" (p.13). Gender inequality analysis was carried out based on Michel's (1986) criteria. She outlines three categories to be used in the examination of gender bias. These categories are:

a- *Analysis of sexism in the social references to male and female characters, in both texts and illustrations;* this category involves many items but only three were found in the tackled textbooks. The three items are *family status*, occupation and *level of employment*.

b- *Analysis of sexism in the activities of male and female characters;* this heading also includes many items but only two were presented in the textbook. They are *leisure activities and sportive activities*.

c- *Comparing the number of male and female characters who appear both in the body of the text and its illustrations.* (Michel, pp. 49-52)

3. Results

The findings are presented in tables along with their descriptions. The frequencies are shown by means of numbers and sometimes percentages to give a clearer overview of the results. The following is a presentation of the findings of the content analysis of the textbook.

3.1 Results of Analysing Sexism in the Social References to Male and Female Characters, in Both Texts and Illustrations

Table 01:

The Social References to Male and Female Characters offered in <u>My Book of English Middle School Year One</u>

Category	Page	Variety of features contributed to male characters		Frequency	Variety of features Contributed to female characters		Frequency
		Text	Visual		Text	Visual	
Family Status	9	Father	Father	2	Mother	Mother	2
	48	/	Father/ grandfather	2	/	Mother/grandmother	2
	49	/	Father/ grandfather	2	/	Mother/ grandmother	2
	51	/	grandfather	1	/	/	/
	53	/	/	/	/	Grandmother	1
	61	/	Father/ grandfather	2		Mother/ grandmother	2
	65	/	Father/ grandfather	2	/	Mother/ grandmother	2
	66	/	Father	4	/	Mother	4
	67	Father	Father	3	Mother	Mother	3
	68	/	Grandfather	1	/	Grandmother	1
	152		/		Mother	/	3
	156	Father	/	1	/	/	/
	158	/	/	1	Mother	/	1
	Total			21			23
Occupation	6	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
	7	/	Architect/carpenter	2	/	/	/
	8	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
	15	/	/	/	/	Nationalist	1
	16	/	Football player	1	/	/	/

19	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
20	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
24	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
34	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
39	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
47	/	Teacher	1	/	/	/
50	/	Surgeon/ doctor/mechanic/ vet/ electrician/ lawyer/ carpenter/ dustman/ farmer	11	/	Painter/ nurse/	3
51	/	Architect/ teacher/ farmer	3	/	Nurse	1
56	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
68	/	Architect/ carpenter/ electrician/ farmer/ lawyer/ mechanic/ painter	7	/	Nurse	1
69	/	Teacher/ vet	2	/	/	/
79	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
113	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
115	/	Thinker	1	/	/	/
116	/	Thinker/ nationalist	2	/	Nationalist	1
117	/	Thinker/ nationalist	2	/	Nationalist	1
137	/	/	/	/	Teacher	1
Total		<u>13</u>	<u>32</u>		<u>4</u>	<u>19</u>

Level of employment		
	62.74%	37.25%

According to the findings presented in table 01, <u>My Book of English Middle School Year One</u> equally portrays male and female characters as father and mother.. Male characters are presented as fathers or grandfathers twenty-one (21) times while the depiction of women as mothers or grandmothers occurs twenty-three (23) times. As far as occupation is concerned, we could notice that the male dominance is obvious. Almost two-thirds (62.74%) of the textbook's working population are male characters. Moreover, female characters are

attributed with only four (4) types of occupation while male characters are given thirteen (13) varieties of jobs, which means three times more than the kinds of jobs given to females.

3.2 Results of Analysing Sexism in the Activities of Male and Female Characters

Table 02:

The Activities of Male and Female Characters in <u>My Book of English Middle School Year One</u>

Traits	Page	Variety of features Contributing to male character	Frequency	Variety of features Contributing to female characters	Frequency
Leisure activities	24	/	/	Singing	1
	30	/	/	Playing	1
	10	Singing	1		
	Total		1		2
Sports	16	Football	1		
	55	Basketball	1		
	69	Swimming	1		
	70	Handball	2	Handball	2
	Total	4	5	1	2

As illustrated in table 02, results of content analysis indicate that though the tackled EFL textbook does not depict characters of both sexes in leisure activities so much, yet they are presented in a stereotyped way. The textbook portrays one female character singing and another character playing whereas it depicts only one male character singing. The findings indicate also that the textbook exhibits sexism in sportive activities. It visually presents five (5) male practicing four (4) types of sports while only two (2) females are depicted playing only one kind of sports. To sum up, sportive activities in <u>My Book of English Middle School Year One</u> are stereotypically presented as being practiced by male characters.

3.3 Results of Comparing the Number of Male and Female Characters who Appear Both in the Body of the Text and its Illustrations

Table 03:

Male and Female Characters Presence in Texts in <u>My Book of English Middle School Year One</u>

Unit	Pronouns		Total	Proper nouns				
	He	She		Masculine nouns	Total	Feminine nouns	Total
One	/	/	/	Djemal, Akram, Rafik, Younes.	<u>4</u>	Meriem, Rania, Razane, Lina, Rania, Margaret, Houda, Diana, Maria, Susan.	<u>10</u>
Two	16	15	<u>31</u>	Omar, Peter, Khaled, Yacine, Mustapha, Kamel, Jack.	<u>7</u>	Leila, Soraya, Sara, Adaku.	<u>4</u>
Three	5	17	<u>22</u>	/	/	Amel.	<u>1</u>
Four	3	6	<u>9</u>	Abdelhamid.	<u>1</u>	Amira.	<u>1</u>
Five	7	7	<u>14</u>	Amine, Chen, Steve, Michel, Arlos, Santos, Harry.	<u>7</u>	Kathleen, Bonnie, Annitah.	<u>3</u>
Total	<u>31</u>	<u>45</u>	76	Total	<u>19</u>	<u>19</u>	
Percentage	<u>40%</u>	<u>60%</u>	100%		38		

Results shown in table 03 indicate that women visibility is balanced to that of men through the tacked textbook's texts, women are even more present than men through pronouns. The textbook includes seventy-six (76) pronouns forty-five (45) of which are the feminine pronoun "she" while thirty-one (41) present the masculine pronoun "he". As far as proper nouns are concerned, the textbooks contains 38 names, nineteen (19) are male and the other nineteen (19) are female nouns.

Table 04:

Characters' Presence through Visuals <u>My Book of English Middle School Year</u>
<u>One</u>

Unit	Pictures			Photographs		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
One	57	48	<u>105</u>	2	2	<u>4</u>
Two	77	50	<u>127</u>	4	1	<u>5</u>
Three	30	2	<u>32</u>	6	3	<u>9</u>
Four	65	33	<u>98</u>	9	7	<u>16</u>
Five	9	4	<u>13</u>	1	3	<u>4</u>
Total	<u>238</u>	<u>137</u>	375	<u>22</u>	<u>16</u>	38
Percentage	<u>63.46%</u>	<u>36.53%</u>	100%	<u>57.89%</u>	<u>42.10%</u>	100%

As indicated in table 04 the proportions of males and females in the visuals are rather different to those in the texts. Throughout the textbooks' illustrations, female characters appear less frequently than their male peers do. Concerning pictures, the textbook contains three hundred and seventy-five (375). Two hundred and thirty-eight (238) of them are male characters whereas one hundred and thirty-seven (137) are female characters. In photographs, we can see the same trend as in picture. The textbook includes thirty-eight (38) photographs, twenty-two (22) of which present male characters and sixteen (16) depict female characters.

4. Discussion

The textbook is an essential tool of educating and socializing, in that it transmits linguistic knowledge as well as cultural and social values. Thus, it is expected to be neutral when presenting the roles and responsibilities that males and females share in a society. This paper, therefore, aims at investigating the depiction of gender in the Second Generation EFL textbook designed for Algerian learners of the middle school year one. To achieve this objective, the textbook was quantitatively analysed using Michel' (1986) criteria which involve three categories: analysis of sexism in the social references to male and female characters, in both texts and illustrations; analysis of sexism in the activities of male and female characters and comparing the number of male and female characters who appear both in the body of the text and its illustrations.

Based on the analysis results displayed in table 01, it can be noticed that the males are equal to females in terms of family status. Man has been verbally identified as a father three (3) times and has been visually presented as father or

grandfather eighteen (18) times. In the same vein, the word mother is mentioned four (4) times and the visuals, which depict mother or grandmother, count for twenty-three (23). Overall, we can conclude that compared to men, women in My Book of English Middle School Year One have been fairly depicted in family status as mothers or grandmothers. However, when it comes to the area of occupation, we notice that men outnumber women thirty-two (32) to nineteen (19). Moreover, male characters in this domain have stereotypically portrayed as having thirteen (13) varieties of jobs: they are architect, carpenter, football player, surgeon, doctor, mechanic, vet, electrician, lawyer, nationalist ... But, jobs distributed to female characters fall in four (4) categories: teacher, painter, nurse and nationalist. This suggests that My Book of English Middle School Year One illustrates female characters with very restricted roles which may, as already mentioned, negatively affect the female learners' careers aspirations. These results do not contradict the findings of the several studies that have found "few references to the changes taking place in woman's roles" (Burstyn and Corrigan 1974, p.11). As far as level of employment is concerned, the obtained data indicate that male characters present 62.74% that is almost two thirds of the working population of the textbook. These statistics suggest that the EFL textbook analysed does not reflect the development of society towards equality between men and women.

After the analysis of sexism in the activities of male and female characters, we noticed that the textbook includes two (2) female characters and one (1) male character engaged in leisure activities. These findings prove that the gender differences are too small to be significant. The sportive activities in which male and female characters are portrayed were also analysed. The analysis results indicate that the proportion of male characters is higher than that of female characters in all the sportive activities suggested in the textbook. As shown in table 02, five (5) male characters are depicted practicing four (4) types of sports: football, basketball, swimming and handball, whereas only two (2) females are portrayed participating in one type of sports which is handball. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Ingeborg Bjerke et al where they conclude that "there clear tendency to show only men in by far the majority of sports, not only in weight-lifting but also in such disciplines as running and long-jumping" (Ingeborg Bjerke et al., 1983 cited in Michel 1986, p. 27). Based on these findings, we can conclude that the impression My Book of English Middle School Year One may give is that sport is a masculine domain.

As far visibility is concerned, we notice that the visibility proportion of males to females is equal throughout the textbook's texts, but great imbalance in appearance was detected in the visuals. Concerning appearance in texts, the obtained data show that of the seventy-six (76) third singular pronouns, forty-five (45) are feminine and thirty-one (31). In other words, the pronoun "she" constitutes 60% of all the third singular pronouns mentioned in the textbook. As for proper nouns, the textbook incorporates thirty-eight names. They are equally divided between both sexes: nineteen (19) are male nouns and the other nineteen (19) names are female. However, male characters are still the majority throughout the textbook's visuals. The number of pictures, which portray males,

amounts to two hundred and thirty-eight (238) that is 63.46% of the whole pictures included in the textbook depict male characters. In addition, there are thirty-eight (38) photographs; twenty-two (22) of them present males while sixteen (16) portray females. Previous studies in this regard show similar results. Miroiu (2004), for example, found that "The percentage of pictures illustrating girls/women are very low: 12.8%" (p.91).

All in all, the tackled textbook includes four hundred and thirteen (413) visuals; two hundred and sixty (260) are males whereas only one hundred and fifty-three (153) are females. To sum up there is more gender equality in the texts than in the images in terms of male and female characters visibility.

5. Conclusion

Previous studies in the field of gender presentation in teaching materials proved that gender stereotyping is verbally and visually reinforced in textbooks in Algeria and abroad which would lead us to hypothesize that the newly designed EFL textbook My Book of English Middle School Year One still, in a way or another, foster gender inequality. To test this hypothesis, a content analysis was carried out to determine the way male and female characters are treated in the tackled textbook. The findings are in support of the hypothesis that the content of the EFL textbook examined contains gender biased in many contexts. It was found that male characters are exclusively shown in domains such as agriculture, surgery, engineering and they are more frequently portrayed practicing sports than their female counterparts. Women are mainly engaged in teaching. Similarly, the results indicate that despite the fact that there is gender equality in the texts, with regard to the visuals, however, males count account for the larger proportion. To conclude, Burstyn and Corrigan (1974) insist that textbooks "provide one means of judging what a society wishes to pass on to its children" (p. 1). Hence, the question that could be raised here is: what sociocultural values shall we hand out to the next generation through teaching materials.

6. Recommendations

As previously mentioned, the underrepresentation of females in textbooks has a negative impact on the female learners who are always exposed to these textbooks. Therefore, recommendations are to be made to:

- One: textbooks writers. Incorporating more female references in all the economic, social, and political fields. Moreover, male and female characters should be equally depicted as having occupational roles. Last but not least, visibility proportions of males and females should be balanced in both texts and visuals.

- Two: teachers who should critically assess the contents of the textbooks they use and take into consideration the issue of gender representation.

- Three: researchers. This study covers only a content analysis which is based on scrutinizing texts and illustrations to discover the visibility and presentation of both sexes in the domain suggested in the textbook. Therefore, a further

research is needed through adopting other criteria of analysis with the focus on other aspects of sexism which were not encompassed in this paper.

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