

ESL Materials and Gender Representation: A Corpus-Based Study of Secondary School Textbooks in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates the representation of genders (female and male) in ESL materials taught to the students of Grades 9 and 10 in public and private schools in Punjab, Pakistan. For this purpose, a content analysis approach was applied to check for gender discrimination in the said materials using features like nouns, pronouns, tokens, titles, inclusion, and exclusion. The material was analyzed using AntConc 3.4.4.0. The results found that the materials represented the genders unequally and appeared to have been designed to maintain male dominance. These results lead to the conclusion that the said materials are gender biased, which may result in gender discrimination in the real world. The study therefore suggests that both genders should be represented equally.

Key words

content analysis, ESL materials, gender bias, male dominance, unequal gender representation

Introduction

The textbook plays a significant role in ESL education. It orients the students to their target language (TL) and its cultural values. In fact, students consider text-

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books as something of an authority. Therefore, the textbooks' ideas, information, images, and religious and socio-cultural contents shape the learners' basic thought-patterns (Mustapha, 2013). It is generally believed that instructional contents depict women as derogatory beings (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010). This derogation, according to Rahimi and Sahragard (2006), is commonly observed in the texts. In the view of Hartman and Judd (1978), whatever is taught to students in an ESL classroom, including grammar, lexicon, and individual topics, carries cultural connotations. That is why different behaviors and characteristics are expected from each of the sexes based on the cultures they live in. Thus, as we learn about cultures from research (see Bahman & Rahimi, 2010; Dworkin, 1989; Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000; Mills, 1995; Minow, 2000; Phillips, 1998; Stopleter, 2003; Sue, 1978; Vogel, 2013), particularly in relation to language, it becomes clear that men and women are unequally treated in most cultures and this unequal treatment permeates every aspect of human life. From Mills' (1995) point of view, it is always the language that shapes the ideas. Therefore, if the language treats men and women unequally, there is a possibility that it might affect the ideas of ESL learners also (Bravo Ibarra, Enache, Fernández Alarcón, & Simó Guzmán, 2010).

Different studies have investigated the question of gender from different perspectives. Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley (1983) studied gender with the help of different terminologies and found that male terms like *master*, *bachelor*, and *lord* have positive implications as compared to female terms like *lady*, *mistress*, and *spinster*. Porreca (1984) adds that the terms associated with men show respect and seriousness, whereas the terms related to women depict disparaging values. According to Thorne et al. (1983) and Weatherall (2002), linguistic terms ignore and belittle women and Baskan and Erduran (2009) add that the said terms represent women as inferior creatures.

Similarly, other studies by Bauer, Holmes, and Warren (2006), Lakoff (1973), and Thorne and Henley (1975) investigated gender through male-female title words. In English, the title used for a man is *Mr*. This title is used for a man whether married or unmarried. In contrast, the titles used for women are quite different. *Miss* is used for an unmarried woman whereas *Mrs.* is used for a married woman. Later on, *Ms.* was introduced as a title equivalent to the male title *Mr*. Yet, according to Bauer et al. (2006, p. 164) "Ms. is frequently interpreted as title [*sic*] for divorced, separated or widowed woman." In the views of Lakoff (1973) and Thorne and Henley (1975), sexist language emerges in response to societal gender discrimination. Hence, as long as the distinction between unmarried and married women is present in human societies, recognition of titles like *Ms.* appears almost

impossible. For, according to Thorne and Henley (1975, p. 29), “language and society cannot be easily separated.” Still another study (see Weatherall, 2002) investigated gender bias through male-generic items such as *he*, *man*, and *mankind*. According to some researchers like Bauer et al. (2006), Kramer (1974), and Parks and Robertson (2004), male generic items seem to refer to both genders but, in fact, they make woman indiscernible. To eliminate this difference, Kramer (1974) suggested using *human beings* instead of *men* and Graham (1974) proposed replacing *man* with *person*.

Poynton (1989) and Weatherall (2002) analyzed gender disparity through the main characters depicted in textbooks and stories and observed that such characters were usually male. It was interesting to note that even the toys had male names like “Thomas, the Tank Engine” and “Mister Train.” A dog was also found to have a male name i.e. *Joey*. Thus, Poynton (1989) added that EFL materials present things of interest to boys in the belief that boys will not tolerate things of interest to girls. Some researchers highlighted the concept of “firstness” to analyze gender bias. Firstness means placing male items before female ones. When gender-related terms appear in academic texts, the male terms usually precede the female terms. According to Mills (1995), the appearance of male terms before female ones is another example of unequal treatment which seems to prioritize men over women. In the view of Goddard and Patterson (2000, p. 57), the English language uses a fixed number of collocations “where the male referents occur first as in ‘he or she’, ‘husband and wife’, ‘men and women.’” Hartman and Judd (1978) add further that such an automatic ordering (with men appearing first) might be a trivial thing, yet it highlights the second-place status of women.

Research on language teaching materials reported biased and less representation of women (see Litosseliti, 2014). For example, Sigley and Holmes (2002) reported unequal use of collocates for boys and girls which further revealed women designated as male dependent (for emotional and financial needs), submissive, weak, and objects of male desire. Later, Lee and Collins (2009, 2010) analyzed English-language textbooks used in Australia and Hong Kong. They found that while women were associated with sickness, men were associated with national identity, politics, and success. Yang (2014) calculated 522: 733 as the ratio of female: Male tokens, further reflecting the greater visibility of males in primary textbooks in Hong Kong. Similarly, Litosseliti (2014) observed the poor representation of women in terms of visibility and their negative representation in terms of professional as well as personal roles (e.g., housewife, nurse, secretary) in contrast with men who were overrepresented in textbooks and associated with diverse and

powerful roles (e.g., bank manager, doctor, school principal) in the same materials. In fact, there has been a long history of depicting women and men in stereotypical ways in school textbooks (see, e.g., Bazzul & Sykes, 2011; Leo & Cartagena, 1999; Macleod & Norrby, 2002; Ullah & Haque, 2016). In Blumberg's (2008) view, studies highlighting the existence of gender bias in textbooks started shortly after the emergence of the Second Women's Movement in the 1960s.

Turner-Bowker (1996) opines that textbooks teach learners about which behavior is inappropriate or appropriate for them. In addition, they work as a source from which learners acquire gender stereotypes. These stereotypes of both women and men can clearly be seen in different domains such as economics and politics. Many measures have been taken to try and bridge the gap between male and female stereotypes. For example, suggestions were offered (see Florent, Fuller, Pugsley, Walter, & Young, 1994) to ensure gender equality in educational materials. However, it is evident from the observations of experts (see Litosseliti, 2014; Mustapha & Mills, 2015) and the results of a number of studies on gender, e.g. Hamdan and Jalabneh (2009), Islam and Asadullah (2018), Mahmood and Kausar (2019), and Shteivi (2003), that this gap has not so far satisfactorily been bridged in EFL/ESL textbooks (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010; Brusokaitė, 2013; Foroutan, 2012; Lee & Collins, 2009, 2010; Ndura, 2004; Nofal & Qawar, 2015; Siren, 2018; Stockdale, 2006).

Designing a textbook, especially an ELT textbook, requires consideration of a large number of different factors, such as ethnicity, age, class, mental level, gender, and purpose. However, a close examination of any textbook can unveil the patterns according to which its contents were included, or reveal what was excluded, to hide or highlight any particular factor. Thus, in light of the gravity of the claims contained in the above research findings, this study aims to apply a content analysis approach to examine the representation of men and women in ESL textbooks used in all public and some private schools to teach the students of Grades 9 and 10 in the Province of Punjab, Pakistan. "Representation" here means the signification of practices and symbolic systems to produce meanings (Woodward in Mustapha & Mills, 2015). It is done "with a level of intentionality or at least consciousness" in spoken, written, or visual materials by someone against something/someone else. It is deliberate and thus "can be seen as a matter of selection from a pool of possible choices being filtered through ideology." It is often seen as stereotypical i.e. limiting, traditional, and unnuanced (Mustapha & Mills, 2015, p. 20).

Aim

This study aims to explore:

- Whether ESL materials taught in different public and private schools in Punjab, Pakistan represent males and females equally or not.

Research Question

- Have both genders been equally represented in the ESL textbooks for Grades 9 and 10 used in public and private schools in Punjab, Pakistan?

Literature Review

A large number of studies have been conducted on school textbooks around the world employing content analysis to investigate stereotyping and gender imbalance in texts and illustrations. One of these studies on English language textbooks was conducted by Durrani (2008) to explore the ways by which textbooks as well as the national curriculum constructed Pakistani identities and gender reciprocally. She approached her study through the representation of a particular version of Pakistani identity. Her research revealed multi-dimensional aspects, including national identity, inequality, power, and socio-cultural heterogeneity. Gender discrimination was also the focus of her study and she observed that men were shown in superior roles regarding military and leadership whereas women were limited to subjugated ones. Moreover, girls were represented through two female icons only, whereas boys were represented through many religious reformers, conquerors, and martyrs. In addition, females were found to be excluded from paid jobs and their role was limited to being ideal women for care and nurture.

Ram (2008) examined gender biases in primary school textbooks used in public sector schools in Pakistan. He conducted a content analysis of textbook illustrations and the results indicated a reflection of gender bias as found in Pakistani culture. The proportion of female images (30.1%) was considerably lower compared to male images (69.9%) and women were presented in traditional professions (see 5.1). Khurshid, Gillaniz, and Hashmi (2010) conducted another study to examine gender representation in secondary school-level textbooks through image analysis and similarly noted that there were fewer images depicting women and that they were represented in a discriminatory fashion. So far as the activities were concerned, women were shown to be involved in religious and domestic activities.

Shah (2012) conducted research to explore gender inclusion in English language textbooks used at secondary school level (grades 9 and 10) in Punjab, Pakistan.

Using content analysis techniques to examine textbooks, as well as interviews and questionnaires, she observed that gender inclusion in the said books was almost indiscernible. Female representation was not equal in proportion to male representation, female roles appeared to be orthodox, and most of the female role models depicted in the textbooks were associated with Islam. On the basis of these findings, she concluded that although women formed more than half the total Pakistani population they were almost completely ignored.

Similarly, Ullah and Skelton (2013) studied gender bias in textbooks for different subjects, including social studies, Urdu, and English, used to teach students of Grades 1–8 in Pakistani schools. Their study revealed that these textbooks were full of stereotypical representations and gender-biased messages. Through this study, they invited concerned persons to focus their attention on the issue of gender-blinded curriculum and textbook design. Azhar, Khalid, and Mehmood (2014) conducted a corpus-based comparative stylistic analysis of British as well as Pakistani English fiction books with the aim of examining gender representation in terms of attitude and status. They based their corpus on the instances of *she is* and *he is* in connection with the complements coming after them. Using a corpus analysis process with the help of the AntConc software package, they found that gender depictions were relatively characteristic of the cultures they were related to. The appearance of *he is* and *she is* in British English fiction was balanced whereas the representation in Pakistani English fiction was based on the inferiority of women and the superiority of men.

In another study, Ullah and Haque (2016) analyzed 24 Grade 1–8 textbooks for Social Studies, Urdu, and English from a feminist point of view, particularly in the light of a social constructionist theory of “gender,” to study the representation of girls and boys. With the help of qualitative content-analysis technique, they reached the conclusion that the said school textbooks were replete with illustrations of gender bias which might adversely affect the children’s identity formation process. In her article reviewing various studies and reports, Masud (2017) concluded that the textbooks used in Pakistani schools were not presenting men and women in equal proportion. She regarded it a matter of serious concern that needed to be immediately addressed in the larger interest of posterity and suggested some measures in this regard (see 5.3).

Agha, Syed, and Mirani (2018) explored the depiction of men and women in the Sindhi textbooks used with primary (grades 1–5) school students in Sindh, Pakistan by applying thematic coding techniques. Textual and pictorial analysis revealed patriarchal dominance in the textbooks; women were shown as secondary

citizens, weak, less adventurous, male dependent, and inferior creatures born to perform familial duties (e.g., serving men and raising their children). Similar findings were reported in another study (Syed & Agha, 2019) on gender and citizenship in secondary-level (grades 9–10) Sindhi textbooks.

The study by Ahmad and Shah (2019) investigated the representation of female and male genders in an ESL textbook for 5th grade students employing critical discourse as well as content analysis approaches. This textbook was also prepared by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) for all public and some non-elite private schools in Punjab, Pakistan. Results showed that the textbook represented women much less than it did men. The study concluded that the textbook was highly gender-biased and appeared to reflect male dominance, explicitly and implicitly. The study warned that unequal representation of female and male genders might cause gender discrimination in real life and suggested that the two genders should be portrayed equally.

In the light of the above literature review, it is evident that the topic of gender representation has been attracting increased research attention for the last couple of decades. The studies conducted in this area focused on analyzing and investigating gender representation in school textbooks with the aim of exposing the presence of gender inequalities in order to make people aware of this issue and, as a result, decrease imbalanced gender representation in textbooks. Our current knowledge of gender representation in Pakistani textbooks has come from the above studies, which have highlighted the issue with great care. However, a gap exists in the above literature in that none of the above studies in a Pakistani context have approached this issue by discussing its effects, its contributing factors, and ways to control it.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The main focus of this research is to investigate the representation of gender in ESL textbooks at secondary school level in Punjab, Pakistan. For this purpose, a content analysis approach has been utilized. Because this study is concerned with the investigation of gender representation in textbooks, it falls within the domain of sociolinguistics. The content for this study was taken from the English language textbooks used with students of grades 9 and 10 for the academic year 2020–2021. These textbooks are prepared and published under the supervision of the PCTB.

The PCTB is under the authority of the Government of Punjab, Pakistan and its textbooks are used in all public and some private sector schools in Punjab Province, and therefore have great significance from educational, social, and moral perspectives. The PCTB (2018) stresses its commitment to conducting periodic reviews and revisions of the textbooks (in the light of the comments of the review committee). However, there is no specific schedule in this regard.

Fairclough's (1989, 2001) three-dimensional model has been adopted to investigate the representation of genders in the said textbooks and thereby reveal ideologies behind the ways in which gender is represented. Fairclough (2001) introduces three different kinds of constraints that are misused by powerful people to maintain their dominance over the non-powerful. These constraints are: (1) constraints on contents, (2) constraints on relations, and (3) constraints on subjects (p. 61). According to Fairclough (2001), these constraints are found to operate either in relatively concrete and immediate terms, or in relatively structural and long-term ways. It is however, important to mention here that power behind such discourse as marks "long term structural effects of a more general sort" (p. 61) is the concern of this research.

Fairclough (2001) further adds that to achieve commonality as well as coordination of practice in terms of beliefs, knowledge, societal identities, and relationships requires different mechanisms which vary from society to society. He classifies these mechanisms into three different types of discourse which are practiced across the world. These types are (1) inculcation mechanism, (2) communication mechanism, and (3) imposing power in a hidden fashion. This study primarily focuses on the third of these, exploring such mechanisms as are "imposed in the exercise of power in a largely hidden fashion" (Fairclough, 2001. p. 62). This is carried out using a content analysis technique to quantify the keywords related to the representation of gender in the textbooks with the help of the following factors: (1) features representing both genders; (2) tokens used for both genders; (3) inclusion or exclusion of genders; (4) titles; and (5) nouns and pronouns used for both genders. In this regard, different keywords were determined concerning both male and female genders in terms of their representation in the textbooks. Counting the frequencies of keywords involves a quantitative approach whereas defining the quantity of results involves a qualitative approach. Thus, this study utilizes both of these approaches: the quantitative approach enables the enumeration/quantifying of keywords related with the two genders while the qualitative approach facilitates a description of which gender is most prominently represented.

Corpus Development

To develop the corpus, the data was retrieved from the English 9 textbook available online on the PCTB official website. However, English 10 was not available online. Therefore, a hard copy was scanned and then processed using OCR to Word 7.8.1 software, thereby converting the scanned version of the textbook into MS Word. Both textbooks (English 9, and 10) contained a variety of different units, theme-based texts of varying page lengths. English 9 contained 12 units (2 poems, 10 prose lessons) while English 10 consisted of 13 units (3 poems, 10 prose lessons). Each lesson (in both textbooks) was followed by exercises based on different language skill activities. As mentioned earlier, the PCTB revises its textbooks from time to time, and these two textbooks were last revised in 2012.

This study focused on the text of the main chapters/units/lessons as well as the exercises given at the end of the chapters. Additionally, the “Dengue Fever Awareness Campaign” as well as the “Introduction” sections from English 10 were included in the study’s corpus. The Introduction section included a number of sub-topics, including grammar, guidelines for teachers, oral communication skills, pre-reading, reading comprehension, reading material, writing skills, vocabulary, while-reading, and conclusion. Similarly, the “Dengue Fever Awareness Campaign” consisted of a comprehensive essay which discussed control, dengue vectors, the dengue virus, diagnosis, government’s effort to control dengue, history, patient management, preventive measures, and symptoms, followed by the chapter review exercise.

The distribution and length of the corpora is given in Table 1. It should be noted that this study sets itself apart in considering certain sections (e.g., index, introduction, and exercises) for analysis purpose, sections left unexamined by all previous studies. This study is, therefore, unique. However, it was difficult for the researchers to process the images contained in the textbooks. Therefore, the images were omitted from this study.

Table 1
Corpora Distribution and Length

Textbooks	Word Tokens	Word Types
English 9	27,448	4,052
English 10	32,410	4,124

The corpora arrangement involved five stages: (i) it was collected in electronic version, (ii) it was recorded in Microsoft Excel, marking file number, word types, and token types; (iii) the files were renamed; (iv) the corpora files were converted into Notepad for processing; and (v) the corpora were arranged in two separate folders named as “Compiled up Files” that were further arranged into “One File.” The corpora saved in Notepad files were later analyzed using AntConc 3.4.4.0 by (a) tagging through a CLAWS tagger to obtain grammatical terms via tags i.e. proper nouns (*Car, Ali, London*), reflexive nouns (*herself, himself*), and personal pronouns (*he, his, him, she, her, hers*); and (b) observing grammatical terms through the tags like reflexive pronouns (PNX), proper nouns (NP0), and personal pronouns (PNP). Finally, the frequencies were counted manually and interpreted, as described in the Results section.

One limitation of the study is that the analysis is based on only two English language textbooks taught at secondary level in Punjab province. Therefore, its results are not necessarily generalizable to the entirety of teaching/learning materials in Pakistan.

Results

The major findings of the study are given below.

Features Representing Genders

After the analysis, it was observed that both of the textbooks, i.e. English 9 and English 10, contained features representing both genders. However, there were considerable differences in their representation in that male references exceeded female references. English 9 used 17 male and 13 female features. Similarly, English 10 used 15 male and only 8 female features. As a whole, both of the textbooks represented women less than men through the features representing both genders, though the difference was significantly greater in English 10. Table 2 presents the clear picture of the representation of both genders through features.

Frequency of Male Tokens/Types in English 9

English 9 used 17 cluster types and 264 cluster tokens for the male gender: *he, his, man, him, grandfather, son, brother, uncle, boy, father, male, men, Mr., nephew, sir*, and husband. Of these, the male token *he* was observed to have the maximum

frequency, i.e. 123, whereas *himself* and *husband* had the lowest frequency, i.e. 1. *His* and *man* came second and third in terms of maximum frequency occurrence (66 and 20 respectively). For details about the frequencies of other tokens, see Table 2.

Frequency of Female Tokens/Types in English 9

English 9 used 13 cluster types and 220 cluster tokens for the female gender: *her*, *she*, *female*, *sister*, *mother*, *woman*, *women*, *daughter*, *madam*, *girl*, *aunt*, *herself*, and *wife*. Of these, the female token *her* was observed to have the maximum frequency, i.e., 87, whereas *herself*, *girl*, *aunt*, and *wife* had the lowest frequency, i.e., 1. *She* and *female* came second and third in terms of maximum frequency occurrence (85 and 11 respectively). For details about the frequencies of other tokens, see Table 2.

Frequency of Male Tokens/Types in English 10

English 10 used 17 cluster types and 264 cluster tokens for the male gender: *he*, *his*, *him*, *man*, *father*, *men*, *Mr.*, *son*, *brother*, *himself*, *boy*, *boys*, *husband*, *sir*, and *uncle*. Of these, *he*, as was the case for English 9, was observed to have the maximum frequency, i.e., 132, whereas *sir*, *husband*, and *uncle* had the lowest frequency, i.e., 1. *His* and *him* came second and third in terms of maximum frequency occurrence (84 and 31 respectively). For details about the frequencies of other tokens, see Table 2.

Frequency of Female Tokens/Types in English 10

English 10 used 8 cluster types and 83 cluster tokens for the female gender: *her*, *she*, *sister*, *mother*, *woman*, *aunt*, *Mrs.*, and *women*. Of these, *she* was observed to have the maximum frequency, i.e. 42, whereas *aunt*, *Mrs.*, and *women* had the lowest frequency, i.e., 1. *Her* and *sister* came second and third in terms of maximum frequency occurrence (20 and 9 respectively). For details about the frequencies of other tokens, see Table 2.

Comparison of Frequencies of Female and Male Tokens/Types in English 9 and 10

Comparative analysis shows that both of the textbooks i.e. English 9 and 10, used features/tokens for female and male genders. However, a considerable difference between the frequencies of the features of both genders was seen.

Differences in the Use of Gender Pronouns.

The frequency of the male third person pronoun *he* is 132 in English 9 and 123 in English 10. In comparison, the frequency of the female third person pronoun *she* is 42 in English 9 and 82 in English 10. Similarly, the possessive form *his* occurs 84 times in English 9 and 66 times in English 10, whereas the possessive form *her* occurs 20 times in English 9 and 87 times in English 10. These frequencies clearly show the unequal representation of both genders in the said textbooks as feminine pronouns are used less frequently compared to their masculine equivalents.

Differences in the Use of Gender Nouns.

Both of the textbooks included nouns for both genders. However, as mentioned earlier, there were significant differences in the presentation of male and female nouns. The total number of male nouns found in both textbooks collectively was 12 (*man, father, men, son, brother, boy, boys, husband, uncle, nephew, male, and grandfather*) while the total for female nouns was 9 (*sister, mother, woman, women, aunt, female, daughter, girl, and wife*).

In terms of individual frequencies, the male nouns *man/men* occurred 60 times, while the equivalent female nouns *woman/women* occurred a mere 14 times. While *father* occurred 14 times and *mother* 13 times, the frequency for *son* was 10 but for *daughter* only 4. *Boy(s)* occurred 6 times, *girl(s)* only twice. Similarly, the frequencies for *uncle* and *aunt* were 5 and 2 respectively. The male noun *grandfather* appeared 5 times, while *grandmother* did not appear at all. All these results from both textbooks show that females are much less represented in the material.

Some instances were noted where women were either represented equally or more than men. For example, the frequency of *wife* was equal to that of *husband* (though the value for each is only 1) and the frequency of *sister* was 17, significantly higher than *brother* (8). However, these are isolated instances compared to the dominance of the male terms in the other examples.

Differences in the Use of Gender Titles.

So far as the titles of both genders were concerned, it was observed that both textbooks used the male title *Mr.* and it occurred 9 times. In contrast, the female title *Mrs.* was used only once, in English 9, and other titles used for women i.e., *Ms.* and *Miss*, were not found in either textbook.

Gender Exclusion/Inclusion.

This refers to the significant inclusion of one gender and consequent exclusion

of the other. It implies that the behaviors of the excluded gender are not worthy of consideration. Such an unequal and biased treatment of genders influences behaviors negatively (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015).

Both of these textbooks were found to exclude female genders from their materials. For example, the female titles *Ms.* and *Miss* are absent from both textbooks, while *Mrs.* only occurs once, in English 9. Similarly, *daughter*, *female*, *girls*, and *wife* are missing from English 9. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, both of the textbooks used fewer features for women as compared to those for men, another instance of the exclusion of the female gender. For details about the frequencies of genders in both textbooks, refer to Table 2.

Table 2
Frequencies of Female and Male Cluster Types and Tokens in English 9 and 10

English 9				English 10			
<i>Male</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Freq</i>
He	132	She	42	He	123	Her	87
His	84	Her	20	His	66	She	85
Him	31	Sister	9	Man	20	Female	11
Man	28	Mother	7	Him	16	Sister	8
Father	11	Woman	2	Grandfather	5	Mother	6
Men	9	Aunt	1	Son	5	Women	6
Mr.	6	Mrs.	1	Brother	4	Woman	5
Son	5	Women	1	Uncle	4	Daughter	4
Brother	4			Boy	3	Madam	3
Himself	4			Father	3	Girl	2
Boy	2			Male	3	Aunt	1
Boys	1			Men	3	Herself	1
Husband	1			Mr.	3	Wife	1
Sir	1			Nephew	2		
Uncle	1			Sir	2		
				Himself	1		
				Husband	1		

Discussion

Gender Representation in the Textbooks

Analysis of the ESL materials for Grades 9 and 10 reveals that gender discrimination is deeply rooted in them. The representation of men and women is not equal i.e., women are far less represented. Inequality has been observed through all indicators, whether it is features, titles, nouns, pronouns, inclusion/exclusion, or tokens. All these indicators showed male over-representation and female under-representation. In the view of Amerian and Esmaili (2015), this represents an organized and systematic manipulation of the materials, in which both sexes, particularly women, have been presented in a certain way and one which makes women appear inferior. The results show that gender bigotry is quite evident in the textbooks. Thus, not only can it be said that men and women are not equally been represented in the textbooks, in fact the textbooks seem replete with examples of male dominance (Foroutan, 2012). This situation conforms to the belief of Bahman and Rahimi (2010) that educational materials are manipulated to exalt men and present women as derogatory creatures, and also validates the findings of Masud (2017) that the textbooks used in Pakistani schools are not presenting men and women equally. Rather, the textbooks (see Azhar et al., 2014) are based on notions of male superiority and female inferiority.

In Pakistan, gender discrimination in textbooks is prevalent (Durrani, 2008; Masud, 2017; UNESCO, 2004) and national identities (as presented in the textbooks) create an “understanding of the relative positioning of religion and gender in relation to nationhood” among the children (Durrani, 2008, p. 599). A study on 194 textbooks taken from all four provinces of Pakistan found that the national curriculum at school level mirrored gender to a great degree (UNESCO, 2004). The study also revealed that textbooks contained only 7.7% representation of women, most of which were taken from Islamic history. As a whole, according to Shah (2012), there is significantly less representation of women in textbooks than men.

The contexts in which women are generally depicted in Pakistani textbooks is also gender biased. Women are usually represented as being powerless, tolerant, dependent, and pious, caring for and nurturing children and husbands (Durrani, 2008; Ullah & Skelton, 2013). In addition, they are depicted in typical womanistic roles like cooking, washing dresses, cleaning, and raising the children. Similarly, in the professional sphere, the role of a woman is restricted to limited fields e.g.,

teaching (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Durrani, 2008; Masud, 2017; Ullah & Skelton, 2013; UNESCO, 2004). Ram (2008) adds that the occupational roles of women are restricted to traditional “women’s professions,” such as nursing, and household work is typically shown to be a woman’s only domain.

Possible Effects on Learners

According to Masud (2017) and Smith (1991), education has the power to structure the behavior, attitudes, and opinions of human beings. It is used as an instrument to promote national identity and boost the privilege of some social groups over others, including that of men over women. These privileges, particularly inequalities, are defined, reproduced, shaped, reinforced, and promoted through education, both implicitly and explicitly. Materials used for educational purposes, say Britton and Lumpkin (1977), not only provide learners with information, but also inject negative or positive attitudes into the children’s minds about different aspects of life, such as life chances, life expectations, occupations, religion, race, and sex. And gender bias, according to Rahimi and Sahragard (2006, p. 29), is “rife in the ideological manipulations of the texts.” In addition, educational materials, according to Thorne et al. (1983) and Weatherall (2002), contain linguistic terms (like *lady*, *mistress*, and *spinster*) that ignore and belittle females, while Baskan and Erduran (2009) add that the said terms represent women as inferior creatures. And according to some other researchers, like Bauer et al. (2006), Kramer (1974), and Parks and Robertson (2004), male generic items (like *man*, *boy*, *mankind*) apparently seem to refer to both genders but in fact, such terms make women indiscernible. As education plays a vital role in mapping young learners’ minds (Biswas, 2017), such texts with their biased projections of genders might negatively affect the minds of the learners (Ullah & Haque, 2016).

The discriminatory positioning of women and privileged positioning of men, both implicitly and explicitly, can raise them as gendered subjects (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Durrani, 2008). Such depictions in textbooks indicate what it means to be a child in a particular context, which includes the learning of gender identities in the process of socialization (Kereszty, 2009). Textbooks are specifically more critical as they present themselves as embodying a realistic account of things it is assumed children need to learn; such unequal and discriminated representations of both genders can result in gender stereotyping in young minds (Kereszty, 2009).

Such a discriminatory representation of genders might condition young children to grow up as gender-conscious individuals. It is interesting to note Durrani’s

(2008) study on children in this context. She asked some boys and girls to draw an image of *us*. She found that none of the male participants drew female images. Female participants, on the other hand, drew female images but they were shown carrying out domestic activities. Then, she asked the participants to pick icons of their choice from the textbooks: Most of the boys selected male icons and girls opted for female icons. When she asked about the reason for their choosing the specific female icons, female participants replied that they opted for “good wives or good mothers.”

Unequal gender representation might create a limited understanding of the societal role a woman plays and reduce the opportunities available to female learners to practice the target language compared to male learners (see Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Brusokaitė, 2013; Ebadi, Salman, & Marjal, 2015; Gershuny, 1977; Nagatomo, 2010; Nofal & Qawar, 2015; Siren, 2018). In addition, tolerating unequal gender representation and gender-specific conditioned learning and development of children in our country where women form more than half of the total population cannot be justified: It may lead to the children growing up as gendered subjects (Durrani, 2008) and have a negative effect on the personalities of the female students. As a result, they may fail to realize their potential (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015). Moreover, it may also adversely affect the children’s identity formation process (Ullah & Haque, 2016), shaping gender identities that will negatively affect the achievement of educational goals regarding gender equality in education, and women’s empowerment in terms of economic, national, and social development (Mustapha & Mills, 2015).

Factors behind Unequal Gender Representation

According to Azhar et al. (2014), the depiction of gender in learning materials is characteristic of the culture it is related to. They confirmed this notion through a comparative analysis of British and Pakistani works of fiction in English which indicated a balanced representation of both genders in British English fiction but quite the contrary for Pakistan. This imbalance is not confined to works of fiction. The reality is that men are regarded as superior to women in Pakistani culture, and this is clearly reflected in textbooks. In particular, the appearances of *he* and *she* in textbooks can be based on the notions of the inferiority and superiority of the genders in Pakistani culture.

Poor economic conditions can be taken as another factor in the biased treatment of women. In Pakistani culture, men are responsible for social and domestic

expenditures, and women depend on men for their economic needs. That is why the participation of women in the Pakistani labor market is low (55: 100 is the female: male ratio) as compared to men (Islam & Asadullah, 2018). In addition, women in Pakistan tend to be restricted to limited jobs like housework. This restriction can be seen as limiting their representation in the learning materials.

A patriarchal mindset is another factor that can cause biased representation of women in the learning materials. Such a mindset has, in fact, already influenced pro-women policies in many countries e.g. denunciation of women as second-class citizens in Malaysian family law (Kent, 2006), the practice of honor killing in Pakistan (Londergan, 2013), virginity tests for Indonesian female police recruits (Watch, 2014, and reforms in marriage laws in Bangladesh and Malaysia in favor of child marriage (Amin, Asadullah, Hossain, & Wahhaj, 2017; Chowdhury, 2010). The patriarchal mindset (particularly in Pakistan) has resulted in limited women's participation in the economic and political spheres, resulting in men being shown as dominant over women in learning materials. This dominance of men over women is quite characteristic of, and grounded in, Pakistan's culture (Islam & Asadullah, 2018).

The World Bank Development Report (2012) highlighted gender equality as its core objective, stressing that gender equality can enhance productivity and economic growth for the current generation, and improve development outcomes for the next. Therefore, efforts should be made to represent both genders equally. It must be ensured, as proposed by Britton and Lumpkin (1977, p. 41), that "the values and societal roles suggested in instructional materials be positive ones, and be as free as possible from bias, stereotypes, and career-role restriction." This can be achieved, if male and female distinguishing terms are replaced by *human beings* (Kramer, 1974); *man* is replaced by *person* (Graham, 1974); and gender-neutral terms such as *people* are used (Sunderland & Litosseliti, 2002). In addition, effective changes are required at institutional and personal levels (see Litosseliti, 2014), particularly an increase in the number of female writers; the sensitization of teachers as well as writers regarding gender bias; reflection of dynamic female roles such as professionals and income earners as well as caregivers and mothers (Islam & Asadullah, 2018); and the inclusion of more female characters (Mahmood & Kausar, 2019) which would be helpful in balancing gender representation in school textbooks (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Durrani, 2008; Masud, 2017). According to the findings of Ullah and Skelton (2013), current textbook design exhibits all the signs of gender blindness.

Conclusion

Gender representation in textbooks, particularly ESL textbooks used to teach Grade 9 and 10 students in public and private schools in Punjab, Pakistan, is not equal. Men are over-represented, women under-represented. All of the features i.e. titles, tokens, nouns, pronouns, inclusion and exclusion, similarly reflect male over-representation in the textbooks. This indicates an intentional or subconscious manipulation of the textbook contents in a way that favors men. As clearly shown earlier, (see 5.2) a myriad of factors are responsible for this outcome. However, this practice (unequal presentation) undermines the principle of fair treatment of the genders. Therefore, special measures should be taken to eliminate this gender bias from textbooks to help create a sound society where the genders are treated equally. This might be achieved by eliminating bias, career-role restrictions, and stereotypes from ESL materials. Furthermore, gender bias might also be eliminated by replacing male-female terms like *man* and *woman* with *human beings* or *persons* as well as by increasing the number of female authors represented and raising awareness among both students and teachers.

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