Gender Identity in Verb Type Occurrences:
A Study of '*Active*' Series

Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi *   **Fatemeh Mahdavirad** **

Abstract

The present research was an attempt to investigate gender portrayal represented in EFL reading textbooks. Using Johnson and Young's (2002) verb taxonomy, the reading passages of the four books of the *Active Skills for Reading* series were selected as the corpus. Qualitative content analysis was employed to identify the type and frequency of verb categories including, *action*, *competition/destruction*, *agency/control*, *limited, state, feeling and nurturing*, and *negative* verbs. Based on the results of statistical analysis, no significant difference was demonstrated in frequencies of verb types assigned to each gender other than in *Action* and *Limited* verb elements which were biased toward males. Moreover, it was revealed that males were assigned to some social roles which were traditionally attributed to female characters. In addition, the findings revealed that there was no significant difference between doer vs. receiver roles allocated to male and female characters. The results of the study can shed more light on micro and macro policymaking in the area of education, language teaching, curriculum development, and materials preparation for EFL courses.

Keywords: Gender identity, Gender role, Reading, Verb types

It is important to know how gender identity is addressed in language teaching materials. Learners, consciously and subconsciously, internalize textbook authors' gender views through regular exposure to the texts and visual elements (Lee, 2016). In fact, learners tend to trust printed words (Porreca, 1984). It has been emphasized by the previous research that any gender bias represented in textbooks may have life-long effects

* M.A. in TEFL, English Language and Literature Department, Yazd University, sedighehebrahimi.vu@gmail.com
** Assitant Professor, English Language and Literature Department, Yazd University, fmahdavirad@yahoo.com, Corresponding Author

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Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
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30

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

on learners, such as reminding and perception of content, comprehension of social equality, academic and career choices, and development of social values, norms, behavior and self-esteem (Lee, 2016).

In the EFL context, many other research works indicate the problem of gender inequality in textbooks. According to the studies by Otlowski (2003), Mustapha (2012), and Sunderland (1992, 2006), if female learners become aware of the low status of the female characters in their course books by observing few and limited roles assigned to them, they will become upset, alienated and consider themselves to be marginalized and subsequently will be demotivated which, in turn, the textbook is more likely to hamper rather than facilitate their learning.

Moreover, Ansary and Babaii (2003), Levine and O'Sullivan (2010), Bahman and Rahimi (2010), Fatemi, Pishghadam, and Heidarian (2011), Nakamura (2002), Freeman and McElhinny (1996), Giaschi (2000), Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2008) and Martín (2011) highlight the problem related to some textbooks that present learners with an unfair picture of women, show females in low-status occupations, and show women as emotional, and lacking greatness.

As biased content of textbooks can indoctrinate and internalize a set of false beliefs and values in the mind of learners which in turn may affect different aspects of an individual's life including the process of learning, examining this content before applying it to teaching is necessary. The previous research indicates the negative effects of biased language and the way bias is realized via different linguistic and nonlinguistic elements. One of the linguistic elements examined is verb type. Before the development of the taxonomy by Johnson and Young (2002), the systemic functional framework (Halliday, 1985) was used by some researchers (e.g., Emilia, Moecharam, and Syifa, 2017) for the study of verb types to reveal the biased nature of texts. Since the introduction of the new model by Johnson and Young (2002), a very limited number of studies have been conducted to investigate gender bias in some text types (e.g., stories) and EFL textbooks have not been studied within this framework so far. Thus, the present study aims to investigate an EFL textbook series content in terms of its role in constructing and reinforcing learners' cultural and social beliefs about gender reflected via verb usage. More specifically, the verbs used in the corpus will be examined to determine if the different verb types used are biased. Also, the roles assigned to female and male characters are scrutinized in terms of subjects being in an active or passive status.

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

31

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Review of The Literature

Gender refers to the biological sex of individuals which corresponds to a set of established ideas of male and female in a society. As Shafiee-Sabet and Rabeie (2011) put it, gender is different from feminism "in that feminism usually has something to do with politics and in fact, it is a political movement rather than merely a social one, while 'gender' frees itself from such a political sense" (p. 143). On the other hand, the construction of identity in writing is important as "it emphasizes the value-laden nature of written discourse which rejects viewing the fundamental resources of evaluation and interaction in writing as merely factual, neutral, and impersonal" (Karimi, & Asadnia, 2014, p. 50). There is a massive body of investigation on gender in educational materials. For example, Stern (1976) explored the content and photographs of EFL coursebooks published from 1970 to 1974. She realized that in all the books, whether written by a female or male author, revised or a first edition or assumed non-sexist by the publisher, women were assigned restricted roles. Porreca (1984) reported that women were depicted only half as often as men in both texts and visual elements of EFL textbooks. In a similar study, Gupta and Lee Su Yin (1990) reported that there were imbalances in the female vs. male ratio, role representation, and amount of speech considered for characters, and also as the level of reader increased, the significance of male characters was increased. Also, in the research by Samson (2000) negative and minimal representation of the female gender was indicated. Tietz (2000), Gooden and Gooden (2001), and Ansary & Babaii (2003) found that men were depicted as more active and powerful than females and held a greater variety of occupational roles, whereas women were more emotional and engaged in household or family tasks.

In research performed by Dominguez (2003), gender representation in New Interchange indicated that the author fulfilled a desirable attempt to avoid linguistic and visual bias. Ndura (2004) analyzed ESL textbooks and suggested three major forms of bias in the analysis of these textbooks: stereotyping invisibility, and unreality. Mirza, Keynan & Fakharuddin (2004) tried to investigate gender disparities in the textbooks and it was realized that the present curriculum was heavily male-biased both numerically and qualitatively and the female characters were gradually removed from the books as the grade progressed. Also, Harashima (2005) and Holmqvist and Gjörup (2006) mentioned a tendency toward the promotion of male and diminishing female roles in EFL textbooks. The study conducted by Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2008) on gender found gender bias with male characters outnumbering female characters and certain nouns used for males outnumbering some other nouns referring to female characters, but males seemed

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

32
Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

to represent most of the negative characters. Moreover, Lee and Collins's (2008) research revealed the greater use of gender-inclusive pronouns.

Jorfi & Amirian (2022) suggest that gender identity is related to L2 culture and is reflected via different linguistic elements. In the research by Consolo (2009), the analysis of the reading material proved gender bias in illustrations, characters, and genres of the passages. Furthermore, the studies by Lee and Collins (2010), Bahman and Rahimi (2010), Hamdan (2010) and Khurshid, Gillani, and Hashmi (2010), and Birjandi and Amini (2012) reflected the sexist attitudes and values in the textbooks. The results of the research by Hosseini Fatemi et al. (2011), Sari (2011), Al-Saleem (2011), Ullah and Skelton (2012), Barton and Sakaw (2012), Ena (2013) and Foroutan (2012) suggested that EFL textbooks were embedded with stereotypical and gender-biased representations of female and males.

Yaghoubi-Notash and Nariman-Jahan (2012) addressed gender representation in the Interchange series and the results remarked a balanced gender representation in quantitative terms. Parham (2013) applied critical discourse analysis for evidence of gender bias. The findings showed that females and males have an equal presence. Lee (2014) conducted a diachronic study of gender presentation. Though the results revealed less gender bias in the more recent books in terms of the number of characters and mentions, there was still some stereotyped portrayal of genders. Applying Halliday's (1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) frameworks, Marefat and Marzban (2014) investigated EFL textbooks and reported gender bias in favor of male characters. Following the same framework, the Interchange series were examined and the inequitable representation of genders in favor of males was revealed by Bakhtiari and Saadat (2015). Furthermore, the research on EFL textbooks by Baghdadi and Rezaei (2015), Abdelhay and Benhaddouche (2015), Lee (2016) Islam and Asadullah (2018) indicated a high degree of gender bias in the EFL textbooks.

On the contrary, the investigation of more current EFL textbooks by Dominguez (2003), Lee and Collins (2008, 2010), Clark and Nunes (2008,) Karasiak (2010), Amalsaleh, Javid and Rahimi (2010) Parham (2013) and Lee (2014), indicated remarkable improvement in the unbiased representation of gender in EFL textbooks.

Johnson and Young's (2002) verb taxonomy was employed by Mante-Estacio, Dumalay, and Rentillo (2018) and studied gender portrayal depicted in Filipino storybooks for children. The results showed that male characters in all verb types even in *limited* and *feeling* verbs which were traditionally more attributed to female characters outnumbered females. Their results, however, revealed an asymmetrical picture of

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

33
Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

genders, but it can be also considered as a sign of proceeding toward the elimination of stereotyped beliefs on gender where female characters, as well as males, were more depicted in active roles, males were represented as more emotional genders and more engaged in limited activity verbs compared to females.

In sum, a review of the related literature revealed that few studies have examined the educational content of textbooks based on Johnson and Young' (2002) framework which shows gender bias. In fact, despite the prior research concerning gender representation in educational materials, it remains unclear how gender is portrayed in EFL course books based on Johnson and Young' (2002) model. Consequently, these factors need to be examined in more detail. The following research questions were addressed in the present study:

Research Question One. How is gender represented based on verb types commonly associated with males and females in the Active series?

Research Question Two. How is gender represented based on actor/ receiver roles commonly associated with males and females in the Active series?

Method

Corpus

In the present study, the second edition of the *ACTIVE Skills for Reading* series written by Neil J. Anderson (2009), was selected as the corpus. It is a five-level reading series, including *INTRO,* and *Books 1-4*, which employs thematically arranged non-fiction passages to teach reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. In this study, four textbooks, namely Books 1-4 were selected because they are used for reading courses in some universities and language institutes in Iran. For data collection, only the main reading passages of the four books (n=99) were analyzed and other texts were excluded.

Theoretical Framework Applied in the Study

Johnson and Young (2002) developed a framework to examine the role of verbs in developing a gendered identity in ads addressed to children. They classified verb elements into five categories: 1. *action* verb elements, 2. *competition/destruction* verb elements, 3. *agency/control* verb elements, 4. *limited activity* verb elements, and 5. *feeling and nurturing* verb elements.

According to Johnson and Young (2002, p.472), *action* verbs are related to physical movement or motion caused by an agent. The verbs "fly" and "jump" are examples of

	Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**34** Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

this category. *Competition/destruction* verbs are defined as action verbs related to competitive action or damaging movements or behavior; such as "crush" and "fire on". *Agency/ control* verbs are those verbs that refer to the exercise of power over someone or something or those which function as a cause or catalyst to make a change. The verbs "*control*" *and* "*defeat*" are examples of this category. *Limited Activity* verbs such as, "watch" and "know" indicate an activity or state of being that does not entail specific physical movement even though some motion may be involved. *Feeling and nurturing* verb elements are a special case of limited verbs that are related to emotions and caring; for example, in this last category, the verbs "cuddle" and "love" are mentioned.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was employed to examine whether there is gender bias in EFL course books. Verb elements attributed to characters were analyzed using Johnson and young's (2002) framework. The roles of characters being doers or receivers of verbs were also investigated. In the first stage, the verbs of 10 percent of texts selected randomly were coded by two researchers as a pilot study. After creating individual lists of verb elements classification, the results were compared and the interpretations were discussed. As a result, it was decided to modify Johnson and Young's (2002) framework. In fact, for better and easier identification of verb elements belonging to the fourth category i.e., *limited activity* verbs, referring to the state of being verbs or those involving restricted movement, they were divided into two distinct categories of *limited* verbs and *state* verbs. In addition, negative verbs suggesting limitation of action or agency were considered as a discrete category as was done in Mante-Estacio, Dumalay, and Rentillo (2018). Thus, in the modified framework, verbs were classified into seven categories. The definition of each category and the related examples taken from the texts under investigation are mentioned in the following:

1. ***Action*** verb elements: which are verbs with the agent(s) causing physical movement as in:

- *We <u>went</u> to the river and <u>brought</u> lots of sand to the village wat.* (Book 1, Unit 9, Chapter 2)

- *At the Sydney Olympic Games, Steve Redgrave and his team <u>rowed</u> to victory, and his fifth Olympic gold medal.* (Book 2, Unit 5, Chapter 2)

- *Later that afternoon, Gigabyte <u>walks</u> around the computer room her grandparents have set aside.* (Book4, Unit 2, Chapter 2)

	Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**35** Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

- She <u>climbs</u> into the back seat of his car because the front seat is crowded with golf clubs, and tells him an address to take her to. (Book 4, Unit 4, Chapter 2)

2. ***Competition/Destruction*** verb elements: which signify an act directly related to movements or behavior damaging a person or thing, or competitive action as in:

- She can <u>kick</u> you in the pants and <u>wipe</u> your hard drive cleaner than a dog's dinner plate. (Book 4, Unit 2, Chapter 2)

- Sure enough, tradition says, the Bells <u>were tormented</u> for years by the malicious spirit of Old Kate Batts. (Book4, Unit 4, Chapter 1)

- She <u>threw</u> furniture and dishes at them. (Book 4, Unit 4, Chapter 1)

- In the Tarahumaras version, the central character is either a big bear or a large hairy man who <u>descends</u> on a valley and <u>steals</u> a child. (Book 4, Unit 10, Chapter 2)

3. ***Agency/Control*** verb elements that indicate power relations_ someone or something being controlled by another_ or refer to someone who functions as a cause or catalyst for change as in:

- The boys <u>could control</u> their movements from outside the pool. (Book 1, Unit 2, Chapter 1)

- Lee moved permanently to the United States and in 1995, he <u>directed</u> his first full-length film in English. (Book 2, Unit 3, Chapter 2)

- He <u>beat</u> every other rowing team in the world and <u>coped with</u> two very serious illnesses. (Book 2, Unit 5, Chapter 2)

- The mother quickly <u>hits</u> the brakes, and her car comes to a stop. (Book 2, Unit 10, Chapter 2)

- In 2004, Carroll <u>was stopped</u> for driving a brand-new BMW without license plates or insurance, for which he <u>was banned</u> from driving for six years. (Book 3, Unit 4, Chapter 2)

- Also, I've <u>kept off</u> the weight for three years now. (Book 3, Unit 7, Chapter 1)

4. ***Limited Activity*** verb elements which convey movement similar to action verbs but with a restricted degree compared to the action verbs as in:

- I was on the bus this morning and a man <u>spoke</u> to me, but I hardly understood him. (Book 1, Unit 3, Chapter 2)

- My mother <u>advised</u> me to stick to my budget carefully so I don't have to borrow. (Book 1, Unit 4, Chapter 1)

- *The rich man <u>requested</u> the most expensive room at the inn, and he went up to his room to dress for dinner.* (Book 1, Unit 12, Chapter 1)
- *The boy seems to have no particular destination in mind as he <u>points</u> to the side of the road and <u>asks</u> to be let out there.* (Book 4, Unit 4, Chapter 2)
- *As he arrives at the address, he <u>turns</u> to speak to her but she is gone.* (Book 4, Unit 4, Chapter 2)

5. ***State*** verb elements which are state-of-being verbs and verbs that don't entail explicit physical movement compared to limited activity verbs as in:
- *I <u>think</u> it is very impolite to make calls in small spaces or crowded rooms.* (Book 1, Unit 5, Chapter 1)
- *I'<u>ve heard</u> that a person should eat a large breakfast.* (Book 2, Unit 11, Chapter 1)
- *Now she <u>finds</u> herself owing the government $ 270,000.* (Book 3, Unit 4, Chapter 2)
- *Then a friend told me about the health benefits of a vegetarian diet, and I <u>decided</u> to try it.* (Book 3, Unit 7, Chapter 1)
- *He plays a self-effacing, irresponsible scholar who <u>prefers</u> poetry to violent action.* (Book 3, Unit 12, Chapter 1)
- *There, a kind man gave a marshmallow to each of them and said they could eat the marshmallow right away, or <u>wait</u> for him to come back from an errand, at which point they would get two marshmallows.* (Book 4, Unit 6, Chapter 1)

6. ***Feeling and Nurturing*** verb elements which are related to emotions and caring as in:
- *He <u>loves</u> to teach us his secrets of cooking and eating.* (Book 1, Unit 1, Chapter 1)
- *I <u>miss</u> my friends and family.* (Book 1, Unit 3, Chapter 2)
- *These people believed that the mountain gods <u>protected</u> them by controlling the weather and the supply of water.* (Book 3, Unit 6, Chapter 1)
- *Diego <u>feels</u> sorry for the poor but cannot resist the rulers openly, so he uses a disguise.* (Book 3, Unit 12, Chapter 1)
- *They go to her house to report what they <u>fear</u> might have been a horrible accident.* (Book 4, Unit 4, Chapter 2)
- *These things would add up to the kind of book I <u>enjoy</u> reading myself.* (Book 4, Unit 5, Chapter 2)

7. ***Negative*** verbs which refer to verbs with grammatically negative structure or verbs with grammatically positive structure but negative meaning as in:

- I like them, but sometimes I <u>can't understand</u> them very well. (Book 1, Unit 3, Chapter 2)

- The innkeeper <u>could hardly contain</u> her delight as she served him dish after dish of ginger buds. (Book 1, Unit 12, Chapter 1)

- Although the bus is packed with other teenagers, she <u>speaks</u> to no one. (Book 4, Unit 2, Chapter 2)

- I will never <u>do</u> antivirus. (Book 4, Unit 2, Chapter 2)

In this study, all main verbs were considered except those in the "To Be" copula forms (such as "am", "is", "are', etc.). A comparative analysis was applied to distinguish *Action*, *Limited,* and *State* verb types. In other words, the type of these verbs was determined by comparing the degree of physical movement involved in them. Graphic elements were excluded from the analysis but were employed to identify ambiguities concerning the subject gender of the verbs. Modals were preferred to opt out of the analysis. Inanimate characters were included in the analysis provided that they were assigned genders. Doer/receiver roles as reflected in verbs across genders and verb types were also taken into consideration as a variable to describe gender portrayal. The determination of doer/receiver roles was based on the doer/receiver relationship in accordance with the active/passive voice of sentences as in:

- In Jamie's Kitchen, <u>he</u> (the doer) taught young people how to cook. (Book 1, Unit 1, Chapter 1)

- <u>He</u> met (doer) young players from around the world there, and was invited (receiver) to a youth basketball program in the U.S. (Book 2, Unit 4, Chapter 2)

- <u>He</u> (receiver) was hired by the firm Cathy Hardwick in 1986, where <u>he</u> (doer) began to work as a fashion designer. (Book 3, Unit 2, Chapter 2)

- <u>He</u> (doer) has purchased several luxury vehicles, and in 2004, <u>Carrol</u> (receiver) was stopped for driving a brand-new BMW without license plates or insurance, for which <u>he</u> (receiver) was banned from driving for six years. (Book 3, Unit 4, Chapter 2)

- <u>She</u> (the doer) pulled their noses, yanked their hair, and poked needles into them. (Book 4, Unit 4, Chapter 1)

To answer the first research question, a list of verbs used in the texts was prepared. The verb category and the gender of the grammatical subject of each verb were specified in an Excel file. And to answer the second research question, a category of doer/receiver

	Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**38** **Sedigheh** **Ebrahimi Tazangi**

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

was added to the same excel file and the identified verbs were further analyzed in accordance with whether the particular gender was the receiver or doer of the action.

The data were computed and frequencies and percentages were then consolidated in one file and rechecked. After one month of producing the final list of verb classification, to check intra-reliability, the verb elements were analyzed once more and the intra-rater reliability was assured.

Results

Statistical Analysis of Verb Types Associated with Males and Females

To answer the first research question, the data obtained related to this research question were first subjected to descriptive statistics and then chi-square tests were applied. Table 1 presents the frequency count and percentage of verb element types related to the female and male characters.

Table 1

Total frequency count and percentage of verbs per gender across verb categories

Verb category	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Action	237	61.08	151	38.91
Agency/Control	33	56.89	25	43.10
Competition/Destruction	8	33.33	16	66.66
Feeling/Nurturing	25	45.45	30	54.54
Limited	155	68.58	71	31.41
State	148	53.04	131	46.95
Negative	29	42.02	40	57.97
Total	635	57.77	464	42.22

According to Table 1, of the total number of 1099 verbs applied in 99 main reading passages, 57.77 percent are associated with the male characters. The male characters dominate female characters in four verb types, that is, *Action*, *Agency/Control*, *Limited*, and *State*, from as high as 68.58 percent of verbs in the *Limited* category to 53.04 percent in *State* verb elements. However, in the other three categories of *Competition/Destruction*, *Feeling/Nurturing,* and *Negative* the female characters outnumber male characters. In other words, 66.66, 57.97, and 54.54 percent of *Competition/Destruction*, *Negative,* and *Feeling/Nurturing* verbs used are assigned to females compared to males, respectively. The most and the least frequent verbs allocated

to both female and male characters are related to the *Action* category and *Competition/Destruction* respectively. Figures 1 and 2 show a visual representation of the results.
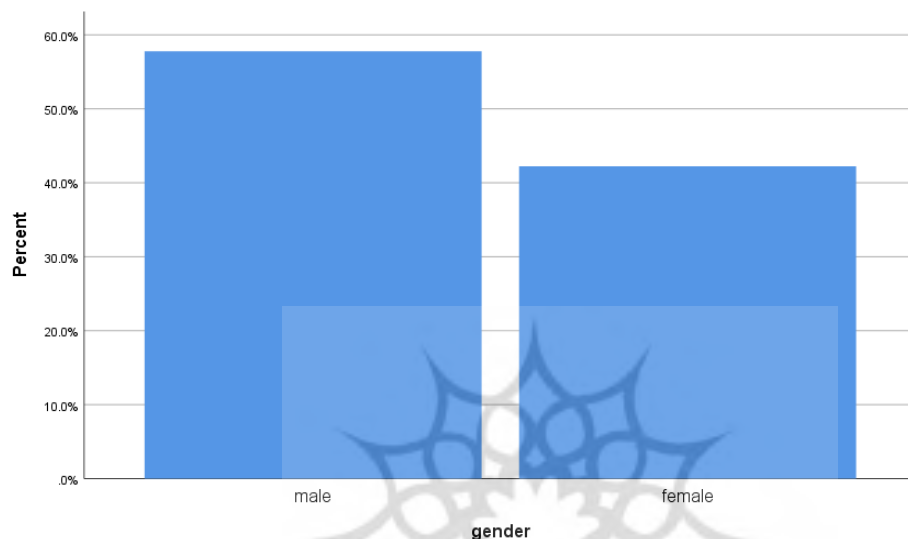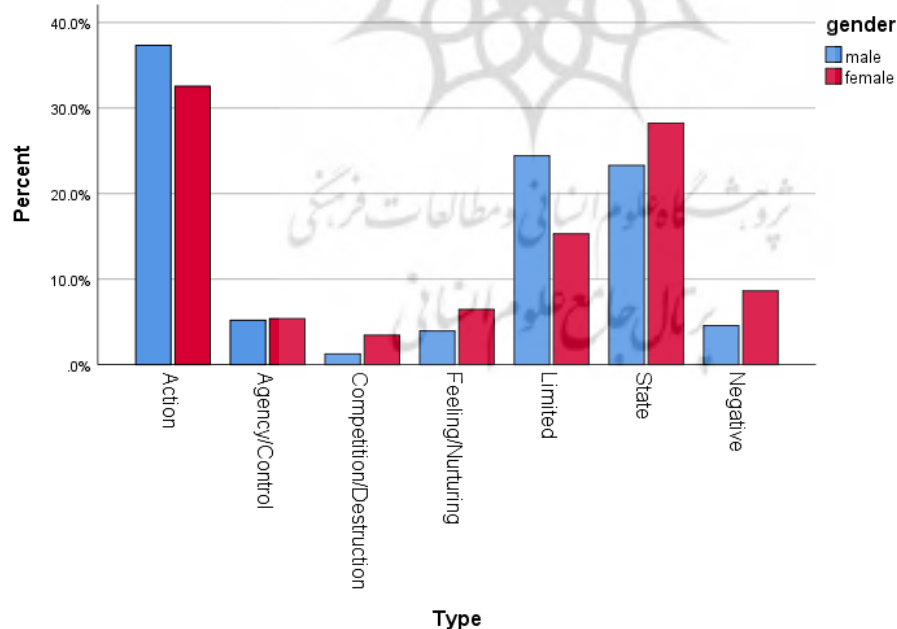

Figure 1. *Total percentage of verbs per gender*

Figure 2. *Total percentage of verbs per gender across verb categories*

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**40** Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Next, to confirm the results of the frequencies, the distinct chi-square tests were used on the total number of every verb type per gender and total verb frequencies per gender.

Table 2 shows the result of a chi-square test for the distribution of frequency of *Action* verb elements per gender.

Table 2

Frequency of Action verb elements per gender

gender

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
male	237	194.0	43.0
female	151	194.0	-43.0
Total	388		

As can be seen in Table 2, the number of *Action* verbs assigned to female characters is 151, while this number is 237 for male characters, which may indicate a case of imbalance in the representation of gender.

Now, to investigate whether the difference is statistically significant or not, the result can be observed in Table 3.

Table 3

Test statistics for Action verb elements per gender

Test Statistics

	gender
Chi-Square	19.062[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

According to Table 3, the chi-square value is 19.062 (degree of freedom=1, alpha=.000) which is significant. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference between the frequency of *Action* verb elements assigned to males and females in favor of males.

Tables 4 and 5 display the results of the chi-square test in terms of the distribution of frequency and test statistics for *Agency/Control* verb elements per gender, respectively.

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

41

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Table 4

Frequency of Agency/Control verb elements per gender

gender			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
male	33	29.0	4.0
female	25	29.0	-4.0
Total	58		

According to Table 4, the frequency of *Agency/Control* verbs assigned to males is more than that attributed to females.

Table 5

Test statistics for Agency/Control verb elements per gender

Test Statistics	
	gender
Chi-Square	1.103[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.294

As reported in Table 5, the chi-square value of *Agency/Control* verb elements per gender is 1.103 with the degree of freedom=1 and alpha=.294. Therefore, it can be stated that there is not a statistically significant difference between the frequency of *Agency/Control* verbs referring to male and female characters.

Table 6 indicates the observed and expected frequency counts of the number of *Competition/Destruction* verbs per gender.

Table 6

Frequency of Competition/Destruction verb elements per gender

gender			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
male	8	12.0	-4.0
female	16	12.0	4.0
Total	24		

As Table 6 indicates, 16 *Competition/Destruction* verb elements were allocated to females, but for males, only 8 *Competition/Destruction* verbs were considered.

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

42

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Table 7 displays the result of the chi-square test for *Competition/Destruction* verb elements per gender.

Table 7

Test statistics for Competition/Destruction verb elements per gender

Test Statistics	
	gender
Chi-Square	2.667[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.102

According to Table 7, the chi-square value of *Competition/Destruction* verb elements per gender is 1.103 with a degree of freedom=1 and alpha=.102. Thus, it can be stated that there is not a statistically significant difference between the frequency of *Competition/Destruction* verbs referring to male and female characters.

Table 8 indicates the results of the chi-square test for *Feeling/Nurturing* verb elements allocated per gender.

Table 8

Frequency of Feeling/Nurturing verb elements per gender

gender			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
male	25	27.5	-2.5
female	30	27.5	2.5
Total	55		

As is visible in Table 8, there is a difference in the frequency distribution of *Feeling/Nurturing* verbs between male and female characters in preference to females.

Now, to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the two genders, we observe the results of the chi-square test in Table 9.

Table 9

Test statistics for Feeling/Nurturing verb elements per gender

Test Statistics	
	gender
Chi-Square	.455[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.500

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

43

**Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi**

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Regarding the p-value shown in Table 9 - .500 -, it can be inferred that there is no significant difference in *Feeling/Nurturing* verbs assigned to male vs female characters.

Tables 10 and 11 offer the results of the chi-square test for *Limited* verb elements per gender through the distribution of frequency and the test statistics.

Table 10

Frequency of Limited verb elements per gender

gender	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
male	155	113.0	42.0
female	71	113.0	-42.0
Total	226		

Based on Table 10, the number of Limited verbs used by male characters i.e. 155 is more than those by female characters i.e. 71. That is to say which intended sample is male-oriented in relation to *Limited* verb elements used by each gender.

Now, the results of Table 11 are used to find out the significance of the observed difference.

Table 11

Test statistics for Limited verb elements per gender

Test Statistics	gender
Chi-Square	31.221[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Following this table, frequencies of *Limited* verb elements show a significant difference between the two genders in favor of male characters (p<o/o5).

Comparing the frequency of *State* verb elements assigned to male and female characters by chi-square test, the results are reported in Tables 12. and 13.

Table 12

Frequency of State verb elements per gender

gender	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
male	148	139.5	8.5
female	131	139.5	-8.5
Total	279		

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

44
Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

As Table 12 shows, male characters are allocated 148 *State* verbs while female characters are only assigned 131 verbs in this category.

Table 13

Test statistics for State verb elements per gender

Test Statistics	
	gender
Chi-Square	1.036[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.309

As shown in Table 13 the p-value for the intended item is .309 (P> 0/05). Therefore, there is no significant difference between genders in terms of *State* verbs applied to them.

The seventh and last category subjected to the chi-square test is the *Negative* verb element category. The results obtained regarding this category are represented in Tables 14 and 15.

Table 14

Frequency of Negative verb elements per gender

gender	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Male	29	34.5	-5.5
Female	40	34.5	5.5
Total	69		

On the basis of Table 14, it can be observed that the frequency of *Negative* verbs assigned to female characters is more than that attributed to male characters.

Table 15

Test statistics for Negative verb elements per gender

Test Statistics	
	gender
Chi-Square	1.754[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.185

With respect to Table 15, the chi-square value of *Negative* verb elements per gender is 1.754 with the degree of freedom=1 and alpha=.185. Consequently, no significant

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

45

Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

difference is observed between the two genders in terms of *Negative* verbs allocated to them.

The last chi-square related to the first research question was run on total verb frequencies per gender. Tables 16 and 17 indicate the results of the chi-square test related to this item.

Table 16
Frequency of total verbs per gender

gender	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
male	635	549.5	85.5
female	464	549.5	-85.5
Total	1099		

As it can be observed in Table 16, there is no balance in the representation of female and male characters regarding the frequency of total verbs assigned to each gender and the number of verbs assigned to males outnumbers that allocated to females.

Table 17
Test statistics for total verbs per gender

Test Statistics	gender
Chi-Square	26.607[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

The chi-square value for this item is 26.607 and the p-value is .000 which is less than 0/05. So, it can be stated that there is a statistically significant difference in total verb frequencies assigned to male and female characters in preference for male characters.

To summarize the results obtained related to the first research question, out of seven chi-square tests run to investigate if there was a statistically significant difference between male and female characters in the frequency of every verb category attributed to them, the p-value for all categories except *Action* and *Limited* verb elements was greater than 0/05. Therefore, it can be said that only in the two categories *Action* and *Limited*, the gender difference was statistically significant (p<0/05). In addition, the result of the chi-square test on total verb frequencies per gender also showed a statistically significant

	Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**46** Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

difference between genders (p<0/05). In all of these three cases, there was a clear bias towards male characters.

Statistical Analysis of Doer/Receiver Roles Associated with Males and Females

To answer the second research question, firstly, descriptive statistics and then inferential statistics -chi-square tests- were employed. The frequency count and percentage of verbs associated with the female and male characters across doer/receiver roles are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

Total frequency count and percentage of verbs per gender across doer/receiver roles The numbers in parentheses represent total percentages in each verb category

Character	Role	*Action*	*Agency/ Control*	*Competition/ Destruction*	*Feeling/ Nurturing*	*Limited*	*State*	*Negative*	Total
Male	Doer	230 (59.27)	30 (51.72)	7 (29.16)	23 (41.81)	152 (67.25)	144 (51.61)	27 (39.13)	613 (55.77)
	Receiver	7 (1.80)	3 (5.17)	1 (4.16)	2 (3.63)	3 (1.32)	4 (1.43)	2 (2.89)	22 (2.00)
Female	Doer	150 (38.65)	25 (43.10)	15 (62.5)	26 (47.27)	71 (31.41)	129 (46.23)	39 (56.52)	455 (41.40)
	Receiver	1 (0.25)	0 (0)	1 (4.16)	4 (7.27)	0 (0)	2 (0.71)	1 (1.44)	9 (0.81)

As reported in Table 18 out of the total number of 1099 verb elements analyzed, 1068 verbs i.e. 97.17 percent represent both genders- female and male characters- as doers, and only 31verbs i.e. 2.82 percent are used in passive voice. However, there is an imbalance between male and female characters when comparing the total frequency of doer/receiver roles assigned to them. Put another way, comparing the overall frequency of doer roles allocated to female and male characters, 57.39 percent of the time these are assigned to males, and by means of 42.60 percent of the time are allocated to female characters. Also, receiver roles assigned to female and male characters are 29.03 and 70.96 percent respectively. Moreover, as it is obvious this imbalance pattern is observed when comparing the total frequency of doer/receiver roles assigned to male and female characters in each verb category. In all verb element types the frequency of active roles given to male characters is more than that of females except in three categories *Competition/Destruction*, *Feeling/Nurturing,* and *Negative* verb elements. Related to

	Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**47** Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

receiver roles, the only category in which female characters dominate males is the *Feeling/Nurturing* verb element type.

In comparing the total frequency of roles in each verb category, the frequency of doer roles allocated to each gender was found to be more than that of the receiver roles related to that gender. This is true even for *Feeling/Nurturing* verb elements. Still, in this category which is traditionally dominated by female characters, male characters also are given more active roles than receiver roles. Only 2.05 percent of doer roles have been assigned to *Competition/Destruction* verb elements signifying that EFL materials do not demonstrate the characters as doing damage or behaving in a harmful manner to themselves or other people.

Figures 3 and 4 give a visual representation of the total percentage of verbs per role and the total percentage of roles per gender.
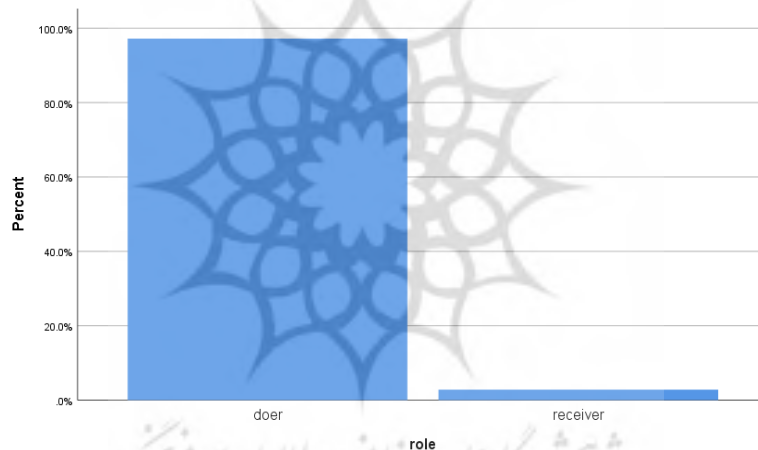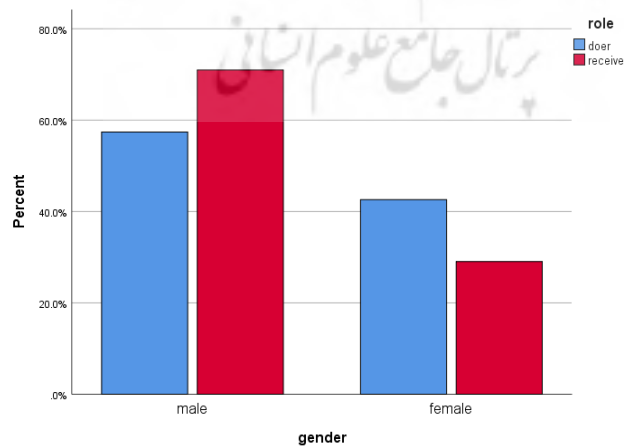

Figure 3 *Total percentage of verbs per role*

Figure 4 *Total percentage of roles per gender*

	Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**48** Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Then, to confirm the above-mentioned results separate chi-square tests were run on doer/receiver roles and gender exclusively per verb type, the total frequency of verbs representing doer/receiver roles, and total male and total female doer-receiver roles. It should be noted that regarding the fact that one of the required assumptions to be met in the chi-square test is related to the expected frequency that should be at least a minimum of five cases for each cell in the contingency table, whenever this assumption is violated, we used Fisher's exact test.

Tables 19-25 show the results of chi-square tests related to the total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated with each gender in each verb type. These tables appear in the appendix.

According to Tables 19-25, Fisher's exact test p-value for all items is greater than 0.05. thus, there is no statistically significant difference between male and female characters in terms of doer/receiver roles applied to them in each verb type.

Table 26. displays the results of the chi-square test related to total male and total female doer-receiver roles.

Table 26

The results of the chi-square test on the total male and total female doer-receiver roles

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.274[a]	1	.132		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.752	1	.186		
Likelihood Ratio	2.369	1	.124		
Fisher's Exact Test				.144	.091
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.272	1	.132		
N of Valid Cases	1099				

As Table 26 shows, the continuity correction value of the total male and total female doer-receiver roles is 1.752 with a degree of freedom=1 and alpha=.186. Thus, no statistically significant difference is observed between male and female characters in terms of doer/receiver roles allocated to them.

Comparing the frequency of total verbs representing doer/receiver roles by the chi-square test, the results are reported in Tables 27 and 28.

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

49
Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Table 27

Frequency of total verb elements per role

role	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
doer	1068	549.5	518.5
receiver	31	549.5	-518.5
Total	1099		

Table 28

Test statistics for total verbs per role

Test Statistics	
	role
Chi-Square	978.498[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

As Table 28 shows, the Asymp. Sig. is .000-. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between the frequency of total verbs representing doer/receiver roles.

To put the results obtained concerning the second research question briefly, the frequency of total verb elements representing doer roles was significantly higher than that representing receiver roles ($p<0/05$); however, there was no significant difference between male and female characters in terms of doer/receiver roles assigned to them across verb types and also across total verb elements ($p>0/05$). This finding might be the result of selecting non-fiction text.

Discussion

The results of the study revealed that the *Active Skills for Reading* series demonstrated considerable improvement in establishing equality between females and males. Of course, it does not mean that there is no gender inequality in these textbooks and in fact, a trace of bias can still be seen in some texts. Indeed, some instances of gender bias were observed and the statistical differences suggested that the manifestation of female and male characters in the reading passages was unfair and the presence of male characters in terms of total verb frequencies assigned to them was more highlighted than that of females.

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)
42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

50
Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Regarding the frequency of verbs associated per gender across every verb type, although the descriptive analysis showed some asymmetrical and stereotypical representation, inferential statistics proved no significant difference between genders except in the case of *Action* and *Limited* verb categories in which male characters dominated females. The more total *Action* verb frequency attributed to male characters suggests that male characters are more likely to be considered as more powerful agents and so are more involved in the actions which demand a higher amount of energy, whereas female characters have a greater tendency to take part in the processes of doing acts which are usually considered to require less energy. *Action* verb elements also were the most commonly used category for females as for males, contrary to the findings of Johnson and Young (2002) and Mante-Estacio, Dumalay, and Rentillo (2018) in which it is indicated that women would use more limited verbs highlighting their physical weakness.

In this study, *Action*, *Limited,* and *State* verbs were determined based on a comparative analysis of the movement involved in them. Verbs involving oral speech such as say, ask, and express (in an oral manner) were defined as *Limited* activity verbs in comparison to verb elements referring to the writing process e.g., write a letter and explain in a written manner which was categorized as action verbs. It is also noteworthy to state that in the present study *Limited* verbs often represented different forms of characters' oral speech; consequently, male dominance of *Limited* verb elements in the current study indicated that contrary to the traditional belief, men were more talkative than women.

In other categories, even in *Feeling/Nurturing,* verb elements which traditionally were believed to show female dominance; the difference between genders in terms of verb frequencies assigned to them was not statistically significant to conclude that male and female characters are stereotyped and represented unequally.

Concerning the frequency of total verbs representing the doer/receiver relationship in accordance with transitivity and active/passive voice of applied verbs, it was confirmed that total verb elements represented characters more in active roles. A possible rationale for this is due to the usual style of authors in writing reading passages of EFL educational textbooks where the active voice is more commonly applied rather than the passive voice.

Comparing the frequency of total actor/receiver roles allocated to female and male characters, male characters dominated female ones in both actor and receiver roles. In different verb categories, there were differences in actor/receiver roles assigned to female vs. male characters. However, the results of chi-square tests did not demonstrate a

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

51

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

significant difference between male and female characters and accordingly gender equality in EFL educational material in another aspect can be claimed.

This development in establishing equality in the verbal parts of EFL textbooks partially contradicts the findings of the study by Johnson and Young (2002) on gendered voices in television advertising addressed to children, which demonstrated asymmetric and stereotyped representation of genders in all criteria of verbal parts. Based on the results obtained from their study, male characters were portrayed to involve more in traits that need more power, and women were more likely shown as nurturing, emotional, and less powerful individuals. In fact, in Johnson and Young' (2002) study, male characters in three verb categories *Action*, *Agency/Control,* and *Competition/Destruction* which somehow required more power and represented a kind of superiority outnumbered female characters. Although, in two categories *Feeling/Nurturing* and *Limited* activity, female characters dominated male ones. Investigation of the speaking roles of girls and boys by these two researchers also reinforced the stereotyped belief in women in engaging in talk while men more preferring action.

The outcomes of the present study also partially confirmed the findings of Emilia, Moecharam, and Syifa (2017) on gender representation in the Indonesian EFL context. Employing the framework of the Transitivity system in functional grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Haliday & Mathiessen 2014), they reported that based on their findings the presence of men in the intended context was more than women and also males in both doer and receiver roles were depicted as more powerful characters taking part in activities demanding more energy. The findings of their study and the current study concerning actor/receiver roles allocated to female and male characters were not the same. Put in other words, their study proved male characters more in the role of actors meanwhile, females were more demonstrated as Goals affected by the action of actors.

In line with the current study which demonstrated total verb frequencies more associated with male characters than female ones in EFL material, the investigation conducted by Mante-Estacio, Dumalay, & Rentillo (2018) on gender representation in children's storybooks written by Filipino authors indicated that the narrative materials were also no exception to this phenomenon. In addition to this, applying verb taxonomy defined by Johnson and Young (2002), their inquiry revealed male dominance not only in *Action* verb elements but also in all defined verb types. It should be noted that the two studies demonstrated both male and female characters more in active roles; however, unlike the present study which indicated a gender-free attitude toward active/passive roles

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**52** **Sedigheh** **Ebrahimi Tazangi**

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

assigned to female vs male characters, Mante-Estacio, Dumalay, & Rentillo's examination showed a male-dominated representation in both doer and receiver roles.

The findings of the present study related to actor/receiver roles allocated to female vs male characters in non-fiction texts completely supported the results obtained from the study performed by Amalsaleh, Javid, and Rahimi (2010). Using the CDA approach, more specifically Hodge and Kress's (1993) framework, they analyzed EFL textbooks used in certain Iranian EFL institutes and concluded that both male and female characters were mostly represented in active voice and there was no significant difference between genders concerning active/passive voice applied.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis of 96 main reading passages of the *Active* series revealed a considerable change in the equal representation of gender. Of course, it does not negate the fact that gender disparity still exists in some aspects and there is still more room for improvement to depict an unbiased portrayal of gender. Actually, the total verb frequency attributed to male characters consistently dominates that assigned to female ones and the stereotype of men being more likely to participate in activities that require a lot of energy and physical strength is still reinforced.

However, gender stereotypes like men being more commanding and authoritative and women being obedient to them or women being more emotional are not used anymore. As comparing frequencies of *Agency/Control*, *Competition/Destruction*, *Feeling/Nurturing*, *State* and *Negative* verb types assigned per gender demonstrated, no significant difference between female and male characters and even talkative traits that traditionally used to be attributed to the female gender proved to be more applied to men.

The evidence of men's talkativeness rather than women's can be considered as a both positive and negative points in gender analysis. on one hand, it can be regarded as negative because of the notion of inequality. On the other hand, it can be a positive point because of the denial of gender stereotypes about females.

The analysis also demonstrated that both male and female characters are more doers of verbs instead of being affected by the action of actors, which reinforces the belief that active voice pattern is generally utilized by authors. However, comparing frequencies of doer/receiver roles attributed to male vs female characters in each verb type and also across total verbs assigned per gender showed no significant difference.

All in all, we look at our general findings as a reflection of improvement; the writers of EFL textbooks may have started to pay more attention to the sexist language which

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

53

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

they may consciously or unconsciously provide in the textbooks. We say "may have started" because, although in most cases, the differences in the numbers of investigated items per gender were not statistically significant, the raw frequencies did not necessarily demonstrate gender-free language.

Students and individuals who use textbooks commonly consider them to be true and absorb the ideology underlying their content. Thus, gender-biased material might have negative effects on learners' perspective and their self-esteem. This, indeed, might impede their learning instead of facilitating. When language learners perceive sexism and injustice in textbooks, they will feel deficient and might get negative attitudes and feelings toward the language they are learning.

In fact, this study can have implications for material developers and curriculum designers to raise their awareness and consciousness concerning gender-biased material to help them to modify these discriminations and take into consideration the idea of gender equality when selecting passages of textbooks. Moreover, the current study goes through a limitation that restricts the generalizability of the related results. Only the reading passages of one EFL series were inevitably selected to investigate the variables. Thus, due to the limitations related to the sample size, more studies are required to be conducted to increase the generalizability of the findings.

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ) (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills) 42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59	**54** Sedigheh Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

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Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

55

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

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Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

56

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

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Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

57

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Appendix

Table 19

The results of the chi-square test on the total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated with each gender in Action verb elements

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.398[a]	1	.121		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.398	1	.237		
Likelihood Ratio	2.810	1	.094		
Fisher's Exact Test				.157	.116
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.392	1	.122		
N of Valid Cases	388				

Table 20

The results of the chi-square test on the total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated with each gender in Agency/Control verb elements

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.397[a]	1	.122		
Continuity Correction[b]	.902	1	.342		
Likelihood Ratio	3.507	1	.061		
Fisher's Exact Test				.251	.177
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.355	1	.125		
N of Valid Cases	58				

Table 21

The results of the chi-square test on the total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated to each gender in Competition/Destruction verb elements

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.273[a]	1	.602		
Continuity Correction[b]	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.258	1	.611		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.565
Linear-by-Linear Association	.261	1	.609		
N of Valid Cases	24				

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

58

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Table 22

The results of chi-square test related to total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated to each gender in Feeling/Nurturing verb elements

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.399[a]	1	.528		
Continuity Correction[b]	.039	1	.844		
Likelihood Ratio	.408	1	.523		
Fisher's Exact Test				.678	.427
Linear-by-Linear Association	.392	1	.531		
N of Valid Cases	55				

Table 23

The results of the chi-square test on the total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated with each gender in Limited verb elements

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.393[a]	1	.238		
Continuity Correction[b]	.307	1	.580		
Likelihood Ratio	2.281	1	.131		
Fisher's Exact Test				.554	.321
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.387	1	.239		
N of Valid Cases	226				

Table 24

The results of the chi-square test on the total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated with each gender in State verb elements

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.457[a]	1	.499		
Continuity Correction[b]	.069	1	.793		
Likelihood Ratio	.468	1	.494		
Fisher's Exact Test				.688	.401
Linear-by-Linear Association	.455	1	.500		
N of Valid Cases	279				

Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (TESLQ)
(Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)

42(1), Winter 2023, pp. 29-59

59

Sedigheh
Ebrahimi Tazangi

GENDER IDENTITY IN VERB TYPE OCCURRENCES

Table 25

The results of the chi-square test on the total frequency of doer/receiver roles associated with each gender in Negative verb elements

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.781[a]	1	.377		
Continuity Correction[b]	.082	1	.775		
Likelihood Ratio	.773	1	.379		
Fisher's Exact Test				.568	.380
Linear-by-Linear Association	.770	1	.380		
N of Valid Cases	69				