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Gender Representation in Iranian EFL Textbooks: A Comparative Perspective on Vision and Prospect Series

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ABSTRACT

Investigating gender stereotypes and biases is a well-grounded area of research in language education. The present study analyzes the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook series Vision and Prospect, which are used in two different cycles of the official education system in Iran. It examines the representation of gender in both the text and images within these textbooks. Using content analysis, the study found various instances of gender inequality within both series. Notably, male characters were overrepresented in categories such as visibility, firstness, character action, occupation, and thematic dominance. While Vision presents a slightly less gender-biased portrayal of women compared to Prospect, men remain predominantly represented in thematic contexts in both series. The results suggest that gender stereotypes continue to persist regardless of proficiency levels in local textbooks, reflecting a socio-cultural environment in Iran that reinforces these stereotypes. These findings can be valuable for textbook authors, curriculum designers, policy-makers and other agencies involved in language education, including students and teachers.

1. Introduction

The role of gender in educational materials, especially in textbooks for teachers and students, has a significant impact on children's mental modeling of gender orientation and social responsibility. EFL textbooks can be seen as both linguistic and cultural products, meaning that they embed a particular definition of gender in the minds of learners and thus have the potential to perpetuate or break stereotype. Particularly in Iran, where English language courses in school is part of an educational curriculum prescribed by religious, cultural and social considerations, examining gender in the discourses of textbooks is one way of examining materials that may further externalize biases (Ghajarieh et al, 2023).

The reality of gender inequality expressed in textbooks is not limited to a classroom, but encompasses society as a whole and affects students' dreams and aspirations. It is only half the truth to say that textbooks are merely books for information, because according to Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, one can argue that they act as part of collective agency. When textbooks assign boys and men the only acceptable leadership positions and portray women and girls as assistants or housewives, they limit students' understanding of the roles they can aspire to in society.

One of the issues related to gender representation that has attracted international attention, for example in Iran, is how this bias affects educational materials such as textbooks. There are debates about the inclusion of gender representations in these materials, particularly in relation to gendered attitudes and images of gender roles, stereotypes depicted in these textbooks (Sadker & Zittleman, 2015). In the context of EFL textbooks, gender construction has been shown to be inadequate and influenced by the edition and timing of publication as well as the intended audience of the textbook (Ghajarieh & Salami, 2016).

Gender stereotypes in EFL textbooks are rooted in the idea of women as homemakers and breadwinners and men as active and career-oriented (Ghajarieh & Salami, 2016). These books can stigmatize women and impact their role in society. When we use EFL textbooks, we are working with cultural representations of people in which women are often underrepresented or biased (Ghajarieh et al., 2023).

These negative effects of gendered representations have far-reaching consequences. Bandura's theory of social cognition states that society has certain expectations regarding gender and social classes, while textbooks are more than mere teaching tools that show students how they should behave in their environment (Blumberg, 2008). Domestic roles are associated with girls while leadership roles are associated with boys. This leads to an unrealistic idea of what society expects, resulting in limitations in self-esteem and career ambitions.

Furthermore, the effects of gender bias in textbooks are not limited to self-perception, but also encompass a broader social context. Educational materials that reinforce gender roles can reproduce gender inequalities in various domains such as family, workplace, politics and academia (Connell, 2005).

In the context of these problems, there are increasing advocates of the need to introduce gender-sensitive pedagogical practices and create educational materials that present different gender roles and representations in a more balanced way. For example, portraying women and men in a variety of stereotypes and in different occupations helps to combat negative stereotypes and encourage learners to be more equal (Blumberg, 2008).

Looking at sexism as a broader concept and in the context of previous educational resources, particularly EFL textbooks, one can understand in detail the gender bias that has long affected learners. Earlier educational resources were sexist and women were mostly portrayed as icons of housework and caring, while men held managerial, authoritarian or executive positions. (Holmes, 2013). Such representations not only reflected existing gender inequalities, but also perpetuated them and embedded them even deeper in society (Ghajarieh et al. 2023).

This leads to a concerted effort to change educational materials that are not limited in content to one gender. Activists, scholars, and educators believe it is absolutely necessary to limit sexism in textbooks to ensure active student participation (Ghajarieh & Salami, 2016). It is most interesting to examine the changes in representation

that have prompted these changes. Educators, publishers, and curriculum developers continue to raise the bar and put out material that not only promotes gender equality, but also supports the defictionalization of deeply ingrained gender stereotypes. Rather, the goal is to ensure that a child can be exposed to a seamless representation of all genders and not just one gender, thus ensuring a fairer and more equitable educational environment in terms of resources (Blumberg, 2008).

This serves as a basis for the aims of the present study, which includes an approach to investigate the representation of gender roles such as de-male and male characters in textbooks designed or used in Iranian high schools. It aims to contribute to solving the problem of gender representation in learning materials and to promote the development and implementation of solutions in practice.

Looking at the social aspect of the problem, the consequences are greater than expected. Educational reports and textbooks tend to oversimplify gender issues by presenting only binary genders, which, along with other educational material, limits the representation of gender roles, achievements and opportunities. As indicated by research, this exacerbates the problem limiting students' views of gender potential and the possibilities they could achieve, and ultimately impacts society (Kristiyawan & Rarasati, 2023).

To address the problem of gender bias and promote a gender-synchronous educational environment, a strategic revision of the curriculum is needed. This revision means not only increasing the amount of representation in other instructional sources, but also challenging the narrative (Scantlebury & Baker, 2007). With such a comprehensive approach, certain pre-existing and restrictive notions of gender roles can be weakened.

Gender bias in teaching materials does not remain in solitary classrooms, but interacts with society as a whole and prevents students from acquiring key skills. When educational policies tend to neglect or silence certain perspectives, it leads to dissatisfaction among students and prevents them from actively engaging with a variety of ideas. Such a construct is extremely detrimental to critical thinking, empathy and an inclusive worldview as students are denied the depth of human creativity (Ghajarieh et al. 2023).

Furthermore, Sunderland (2000) and Blumberg (2008) emphasizes that the gendered content of educational material limits social progress and that for some, such as Connell, inclusive education and the social inclusion of women and non-binary individuals cannot be achieved through a static approach. The pedagogical narrative paints an inequitable picture of gender differences, thereby reinforcing them and acting as a barrier to the realization of social justice. This cyclical reinforcement of social constructs leads to violence in many forms - political, social, economic and identity-based violence (Connell, 2005). These forms of violence manifest themselves in differential levels of education, limited opportunities, and the complete disenfranchisement of women and non-binary members of society.

There is a wealth of literature that points to persistent gender bias in textbooks that negatively impacts students and their career goals (Blumberg, 2008). Gender bias in textbooks also serves to promote gender inequality in terms of employment, political representation, and status in academia (Connell, 2005). The gender bias perpetrated in textbooks is extensive, so a deeper analysis of textbooks is needed to achieve a more balanced representation of gender.

To achieve this goal, this study analyzes the gender balance in two important textbooks for high school students in Iran: Vision and Prospect. The two series represent different perspectives in terms of educational content, globalized and cultural approaches respectively (Vision and Prospect). The Vision and Prospect series were selected for this comparative analysis for several key reasons. First they encompass different levels of proficiency, showing how gender is represented where there is limited language content due to proficiency of students in Prospect versus more advanced language content in Vision. While comparing domestic textbooks with international series would offer valuable insights, the current focus on two domestic series allows us to examine how gender representation is enacted within two cycles of educational system where the audiences have different educational needs and psychological traits.

In assessing educational equity, this study conducts a comparative analysis of two series of locally developed educational contents in terms of gender representation.

The following research questions are adopted for the purposes of this study:

RQ1. How is gender represented in Prospect series in terms of visibility in text and pictures?

RQ2. How is gender represented in Vision Series in terms of visibility in text and picture?

RQ3. How does the visibility of gender in text and pictures differ between Prospect Series and the Vision Series?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender and Education

All children, regardless of their gender, should have the same opportunities to discover their abilities, develop specific skills and pursue their aspirations. Educational media aimed at children tends to propagate gender discriminatory stereotypes, which in turn deprives both gender of important resources and opportunities. Such messages embedded in educational content act as a huge stumbling block to a child's aspirations and opportunities, thus creating and perpetuating gender inequalities in different areas of society. According to Blumberg (2008), educational content is a factor that contributes to the disintegration of society through the constant repetition of gender stereotypes

Textbooks are one of the most important factors in the transmission of social norms and cultural practices. Many studies use critical discourse analysis to examine the extent to which the language embedded in instructional materials preserves or undermines recommended forms of female behavior (Ghajarieh & Salami, 2016; Ahmadabadi & Azad, 2023). The 1984 study by Porreca was among the earliest studies that attempted to assess gender bias in language teaching materials, focusing on sexism in ESL textbooks. The call for action against continued gender discrimination in language materials led to several projects aimed at developing gender-sensitive ELT materials.

Gender discrimination in education has pervasive impact, from perceptions and perpetuation to inequitable provisions and resources for teachers, students, and society. Materials that solely target gender discrimination are not implemented with the sole intention of correcting an imbalance in gender education, but on the contrary, they serve a greater purpose within a larger framework.

2.2 Research in Gender Inclusive Education

Based on Sadker and Sadker's (1994), gender bias is still entrenched in the global education system. Gooden and Gooden (2001) highlighted that children live in an environment that is inundated with gender stereotypical materials and that this serves to shape their thought processes in relation to gender roles, including but not limited to gender roles.

It is also hypothesized that the approach to academic tasks has a significant impact on the outcomes of educational content that incorporates stereotypes. Recent research also showed how gender bias and stereotypes are related to factors such as motivation and affective issues (Henschel et al. 2023). Over the years, research has also been conducted on how to improve female engagement and achievement in more competitive educational environments and from different perspectives (Ghajarieh & Salami, 2016).

Various researchers observed that male figures were overemphasized in TEFL textbooks. Ghajarieh et al. (2023) found that male characters were much more salient in both character portrayal and occupational activities. The cultural context in relation to the gender facet adds additional dimensions. Wei (2022) reviewed research articles themed on gender representation in English textbooks used in China and found that women are poorly represented

and ignored in the textbooks. These findings confirm the results obtained in the Iranian setting, which emphasize the larger non-Western context of the educational material.

Understanding the sexist practices prevalent in textbooks helps to understand the longstanding nature of existing gender bias. According to Ghajarieh and Salami (2016), such portrayals not only show the lower status of women, but also help to further entrench gender inequalities. Paechter (2007) informs us of gender politics in schools, often centered around modern tools such as educational textbooks. The study highlights the powerful impact of these materials on students' construction and understanding of gender identity.

In a cross-national study, Islam and Asadullah (2018) have highlighted systematic underrepresentation of females in school textbooks across different cultural contexts. They conducted content analysis of secondary school English language textbooks from Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh and examined gender stereotypes using 21 categories of exclusion and quality of representation. The cross-country analysis demonstrated that female representation in pictorial content was particularly low in Malaysia and Bangladesh at 35.2%. While Malaysia and Indonesia showed relatively balanced overall gender representation (44.4% and 44.1% respectively), Pakistani and Bangladeshi textbooks displayed more pronounced gender disparities with female representation at 24.4% and 37.3% respectively.

The underrepresentation of women in Pakistani textbooks was found to be consistent across province-, grade- and subject-specific textbooks, as well as across different analytical categories. While earlier studies have documented gender bias in educational materials, this comparative analysis across four Asian countries offers new insights into the patterns of female underrepresentation and stereotyping in educational content, contributing to our understanding of how educational materials may perpetuate or challenge existing gender inequalities in these societies

In the Iranian context, Ahmadabadi and Azad (2023) and Bahman and Rahimi (2010)investigated the portrayal of gender roles in English textbooks for Iranian high schools and found that traditional stereotypes are favored. The results showed that women were usually portrayed in a submissive role, while men were represented by images of action and control. According to an analysis of gender representations of male and female English teachers in Iran conducted by Ghajarieh and Salami (2016) and Ghajarieh et al. (2023), there is a wider range of socio-cultural hierarchies that rely on and uphold male superiority. Depending on how students are taught, this structural discrimination can have an impact on their lives. Due to the accumulated gender bias against females in Iranian TEFL textbooks, students are unable to develop socioculturally or better realize their potential because they are subjected to systematic oppression.

These research findings contribute to addressing the problem of gender representation in the recently published Iranian EFL textbooks (Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2020). The idea of gender discrimination is still present in most of the studies conducted over the years, indicating that gender issues are still deeply rooted in the structural framework and these issues need to be addressed through educational policies and the construction and design of materials.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

In order to identify how gender was represented in Iranian EFL/ESL textbooks, this research employed a mixed methods approach. The mixed methods approach combines both qualitative and quantitative perspectives while taking into cognizance the social constructs that shape gender representation. Descriptive content analysis in an ethnographic design of qualitative and quantitative study was used for the data triangulation. To ascertain the patterns of gender representation, both qualitative and quantitative content analysis were used which furthered provided statistical weights to all categories through sampling.

3.2 Rationale for Textbook Selection

The authors have chosen the Vision and Prospect series to be part of the Iranian high school language education

since collaborative approaches are done with language education experts to make the books and they employ a coherent teaching approach. All textbooks are series based, allowing them to cater for the various needs of the students. The Prospect series features preliminary English because its intended audience only hinges on school going children, while the Vision for grades 10-12 students is integrated widely and is used in Iranian schools Iran. This helped bridge the gap in understanding the need to have different gender representation based on the educational cycle in which a particular student was in. In such comparative analysis, proficiency level and age differences based on each cycle of education could have an effect on how gender is represented.

3.3 Corpus of the Study

Prospect I, II and III and Vision I, II, III serve as the corpus. Each book from the Prospect series is aimed to address an interactive approach to learning which revolve around activities and dialogues. Each book from the Vision Series on the other hand comprises three lessons and are focused on improving the reading and writing skills and revolve around the idea of speaking and comprehension. Such material was sufficient to construct a thorough understanding over time representation and repetition of certain patterns at a multiple of intermediary approaches.

3.4 Procedure for Data Collection

In this study, gender representation was explored in six basic aspects: visibility in pictures, visibility in texts, firstness, character action, occupation, and topic dominance. Firstness relates to whether a male or a female was represented first in pictures or text. Dominance also refers to the extent of language produced by a male or his female counterpart in a passage or dialog. Furthermore, in textbooks, visual analysis focused on male and female characters appearing in pictures and the frequency of their occurrence. In a textual analysis, proper nouns, common nouns, pronouns and other gendered languages were investigated. The study assessed different paired usages of the gender order, activities associated with the members of the two genders, professional roles occupied, and who controlled the narratives. This framework made it possible to investigate gender representation in relation to educational content from a various set of aspects systematically.

3.5 Procedure for Data Analysis

In this study, descriptive statistics were used to display the data in an organized manner and SPSS-18 software's chi-square tests were employed for a comparative analysis across the series of textbooks. The quantitative aspect of the analysis included enumeration of characters in male and female forms, frequency of representation, gender distribution statistics of subcategories and so forth. Qualitative analysis focused on themes and illustrations, character roles, occupational representation and speaking patterns and narrative control. Analysis of the data acknowledged and evaluated the role of religion and culture on gender representation and consequently, deep understanding of factors that determine gender portrayal in instructional materials was attained. The research questions are addressed through a mixed-methods approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative data. RQ1 and RQ2 are answered by analyzing visibility in pictures and texts, as well as the thematic analysis of tasks performed by men and women, such as character activities, occupations, and topic dominance. RQ3 is answered by comparing the data from both series using chi-square tests to determine statistical differences in overall gender representation.

4. Results

The analysis of gender representation in the Vision and Prospect series revealed significant patterns across multiple dimensions. The study examined visibility in pictures, text visibility, firstness, character activities, occupations, and topic dominance.

4.1 Analysis of the Prospect Series

The quantitative analysis of the Prospect series indicated clear gender disparities across multiple categories. Table 1 presents the comprehensive frequency data.

Table 1

Overview of Gender Representation Frequencies in Prospect Series

Gender Representation	Male	Female
Visibility in pictures	164 (**68.6%**)	75 (**31.4%**)

Visual representation analysis revealed significant gender imbalance in pictorial content. Males comprised 68% of visual representations compared to 31% for females, indicating the authors' preference for including male imagery.

Textual analysis also demonstrated similar patterns of gender disparity. Male representation dominated in proper nouns and generic terms, though females showed slightly higher representation in common nouns.

Table 2

Visibility in Text Analysis (Percentages)

Category	Prospect 1	Prospect 2	Prospect 3
Pronouns	M: 67.57%	M: 56.52%	M: 54.10%
	F: 32.43%	F: 43.48%	F: 45.90%
	(25M:12F)	(26M:20)	(33M:28F)
Named Characters	M: 60%	M: 57.14%	M: 58.14%
	F: 40%	F: 42.86%	F: 41.86%
	(18M:12F)	(20M:15F)	(25M:18F)
Direct Speech	M: 60.87%	M: 59.26%	M: 59.26%
	F: 39.13%	F: 40.74%	F: 40.74%
	(14M:9F)	(16M:11F)	(16M:11F)
Text References	M: 57.47%	M: 56.72%	M: 55.56%
	F: 42.53%	F: 43.28%	F: 44.44%
	(42M:31F)	(38M:29F)	(35M:28F)

Table 3

Firstness Analysis (Who is Mentioned First)

Pattern	Prospect 1	Prospect 2	Prospect 3
Male-Female Pairs	M: 80%	M: 75%	M: 73.68%
	F: 20%	F: 25%	F: 26.32%
	(16M:4F)	(12M:4F)	(14M:5F)
Family References	M: 80%	M: 71.43%	M: 66.67%
	F: 20%	F: 28.57%	F: 33.33%
	(12M:3F)	(10M:4F)	(8M:4F)
Professional Roles	M: 80%	M: 77.78%	M: 75%
	F: 20%	F: 22.22%	F: 25%
	(8M:2F)	(7M:2F)	(6M:2F)
Student Examples	M: 60%	M: 55.56%	M: 54.55%
	F: 40%	F: 44.44%	F: 45.45%
	(6M:4F)	(5M:4F)	(6M:5F)

Table 4
Character Activity Analysis

Activity Type	Prospect 1	Prospect 2	Prospect 3
Physical/Sports	M: 66.67%	M: 60%	M: 63.64%
	F: 33.33%	F: 40%	F: 36.36%
	(12M:6F)	(12M:8F)	(14M:8F)
Academic/Study	M: 53.33%	M: 42.86%	M: 53.33%
	F: 46.67%	F: 57.14%	F: 46.67%
	(8M:7F)	(6M:8F)	(8M:7F)
Technology Use	M: 71.43%	M: 53.85%	M: 53.33%
	F: 28.57%	F: 46.15%	F: 46.67%
	(5M:2F)	(7M:6F)	(8M:7F)
Domestic Tasks	M: 27.27%	M: 33.33%	M: 31.25%
	F: 72.73%	F: 66.67%	F: 68.75%
	(3M:8F)	(4M:8F)	(5M:11F)
Social Activities	M: 42.86%	M: 43.75%	M: 42.86%
	F: 57.14%	F: 56.25%	F: 57.14%
	(6M:8F)	(7M:9F)	(6M:8F)

Table 5
Occupation Distribution

Field	Prospect 1	Prospect 2	Prospect 3
Professional	M: 70%	M: 72.73%	M: 69.23%
	F: 30%	F: 27.27%	F: 30.77%
	(7M:3F)	(8M:3F)	(9M:4F)
Service Sector	M: 66.67%	M: 71.43%	M: 71.43%
	F: 33.33%	F: 28.57%	F: 28.57%
	(4M:2F)	(5M:2F)	(5M:2F)
Education	M: 66.67%	M: 60%	M: 80%
	F: 33.33%	F: 40%	F: 20%
	(4M:2F)	(3M:2F)	(4M:1F)
Healthcare	M: 66.67%	M: 66.67%	M: 60%
	F: 33.33%	F: 33.33%	F: 40%
	(2M:1F)	(2M:1F)	(3M:2F)
Business	M: 75%	M: 80%	M: 66.67%
	F: 25%	F: 20%	F: 33.33%
	(3M:1F)	(4M:1F)	(4M:2F)

Table 6
Topic Dominance

Topic Area	Prospect 1	Prospect 2	Prospect 3
Technology	Strong M	Moderate M	Balanced
Sports/Games	Strong M	Strong M	Strong M
Cultural Activities	Balanced	Slight F	Moderate F
Domestic Life	Strong F	Strong F	Strong F
Public Activities	Strong M	Strong M	Moderate M

In terms of progressive trends, the tables show that the textbooks showed that they improved gender balance in pronouns and text references, more balanced representation in technology use and number of named characters for both genders and more equal representation in academic/study activities.

However the series depicts male dominance in firstness patterns, strong gender stereotyping in occupational roles, traditional gender roles in domestic vs public activities and male dominance in sports and physical activities. What is also apparent is traditional gender roles remain strongly untapped in all three textbooks of this series.

Analysis of topic dominance revealed male control over conversation initiation and participation. Males initiated 70 percent of conversations compared to 30 percent of female-initiated dialogues. What was also notable was that most dialogues were represented with same-sex characters due to the segregated education system in Iran (Kow & Beigi, 2012). In a few instances such as p. 32 from Prospect 1, the male and female characters were a mother and his son. Even in these situations, the son starts the dialogue.

4.2 Vision Series Analysis

The Vision series demonstrated similar patterns of gender representation, though with slightly different proportions. Table below show the data.

Table 7
Vision Series' Visibility in Pictures

Component	Male	Female
Visibility in pictures	159 (65.16%)	85 (34.84%)

Table 8
Visibility in Text Analysis

Category	Vision 1	Vision 2	Vision 3
Named Characters	M: 57.14%	M: 56.25%	M: 57.14%
	F: 42.86%	F: 43.75%	F: 42.86%
	(16M:12F)	(18M:14F)	(20M:15F)
Pronouns	M: 64.29%	M: 61.54%	M: 58.82%
	F: 35.71%	F: 38.46%	F: 41.18%
	(1.8:1 ratio)	(1.6:1 ratio)	(1.5:1 ratio)
Direct Speech	M: 60%	M: 56%	M: 55.56%
	F: 40%	F: 44%	F: 44.44%
	(12M:8F)	(14M:11F)	(15M:12F)
Text References	M: 60.38%	M: 57.69%	M: 53.85%

Category	Vision 1	Vision 2	Vision 3
	F: 39.62%	F: 42.31%	F: 46.15%
	(32M:21F)	(30M:22F)	(28M:24F)

Table 9
Firstness Analysis

Pattern	Vision 1	Vision 2	Vision 3
Person References	M: 77.78%	M: 70.59%	M: 64.71%
	F: 22.22%	F: 29.41%	F: 35.29%
	(14M:4F)	(12M:5F)	(11M:6F)
Scientists/Experts	M: 88.89%	M: 77.78%	M: 66.67%
	F: 11.11%	F: 22.22%	F: 33.33%
	(8M:1F)	(7M:2F)	(6M:3F)
Student Examples	M: 55.56%	M: 50%	M: 54.55%
	F: 44.44%	F: 50%	F: 45.45%
	(5M:4F)	(5M:5F)	(6M:5F)
Overall Ratio	M: 77.78%	M: 70.59%	M: 64.71%
	F: 22.22%	F: 29.41%	F: 35.29%

Table 10
Character Activity

Activity Type	Vision 1	Vision 2	Vision 3
Academic/Scientific	M: 76.92%	M: 69.23%	M: 61.54%
	F: 23.08%	F: 30.77%	F: 38.46%
	(10M:3F)	(9M:4F)	(8M:5F)
Social/Cultural	M: 40%	M: 45.45%	M: 41.67%
	F: 60%	F: 54.55%	F: 58.33%
	(4M:6F)	(5M:6F)	(5M:7F)
Professional	M: 80%	M: 70%	M: 63.64%
	F: 20%	F: 30%	F: 36.36%
	(8M:2F)	(7M:3F)	(7M:4F)
Travel/Tourism	M: 60%	M: 50%	M: 54.55%
	F: 40%	F: 50%	F: 45.45%
	(6M:4F)	(5M:5F)	(6M:5F)

Table 11
Occupation Distribution

Field	Vision 1	Vision 2	Vision 3
Scientists	M: 85.71%	M: 71.43%	M: 62.50%
	F: 14.29%	F: 28.57%	F: 37.50%
	(6M:1F)	(5M:2F)	(5M:3F)
Teachers	M: 60%	M: 60%	M: 40%
	F: 40%	F: 40%	F: 60%

Field	Vision 1 (3M:2F)	Vision 2 (3M:2F)	Vision 3 (2M:3F)
Tourism Industry	M: 66.67% F: 33.33% (4M:2F)	M: 50% F: 50% (3M:3F)	M: 57.14% F: 42.86% (4M:3F)
Other Professions	M: 83.33% F: 16.67% (5M:1F)	M: 66.67% F: 33.33% (4M:2F)	M: 66.67% F: 33.33% (4M:2F)

Table 12
Topic Dominance

Theme	Primary Representation	Gender Examples
Saving Nature (Vision 1)	Balanced	Both genders shown as environmentally conscious
Wonders of Creation (Vision 1)	Male dominated	Most scientists/researchers male
Knowledge & Science (Vision 2)	Male dominated	Most historical figures male
Travel & Tourism (Vision 3)	Balanced	Equal representation in travel contexts
Health & Medicine (Vision 3)	Slightly male dominated	More male doctors, balanced patients

According to the data, it can be note that these textbooks showed improvement in representing gender balance in various categories in academic/scientific contexts with increasing female visibility in professional roles, active speaking roles and engineering and mathematical fields. Nevertheless, historical scientific figures and firstness were still predominantly male and some job stereotypes still uphold.

Below are comparative tables to highlight the differences between the two series:

Table 14
Comparative Gender Visibility in Pictures

Gender Representation	Prospect Series (Male %)	Prospect Series (Female %)	Vision Series (Male %)	Vision Series (Female %)
Visibility in pictures	68%	31%	65%	35%

Table 15
Gender Visibility in Text

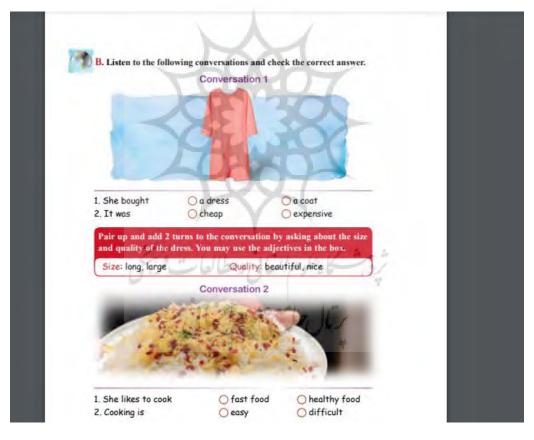| Aspect	Prospect Series	Vision Series
Male: Female	58.33%/41.67%	61.45%/38.46%
Named Characters	More local names	More international names
Direct Speech	More informal dialogues	More formal contexts
Text References	More domestic settings	More global settings

Table 16
Gender Representation in Different Fields

Field	Prospect Series	Vision Series
Science/Tech ratio	Male dominated (3:1)	More balanced (2:1)
Education	Female majority	Gender balanced
Healthcare	Traditional roles for both genders	More diverse roles
Business	Limited representation for women	Limited representation for women

Statistical analysis through chi-square tests revealed no significant difference between the series in overall gender representation (χ^2 = 1.29, p > 0.05). However, the Vision series demonstrated marginally better representation of female characters in visual presence, textual representation, and character activities compared to the Prospect series.

Nevertheless, in terms of thematic dominance, most of the passages and tasks were directed at men. In Vision 1, for example, all of the scientists and important figures were men, with the exception of two instances where the women were depicted as laboratory scientists in a small photograph or in a small passage about a famous author. The men were activated as scientists in the fields of medicine, mathematics, physics, and other subjects, and prominent figures such as Avicenna were featured, while no woman in science appeared as a prominent figure in Vision 1.

Sample page from Vision 1 p. 59

In the above image from the book, it can be seen that despite their prominent position, the female characters are portrayed in conventional roles, performing activities such as cooking and described in gentle, emotive language. This underlines the persistence of traditional gender norms that are evident even in tasks in Vision where women are supposed to take center stage.

Below are sample examples from the analyzed textbooks.
Visibility in Text:

"What's your friend like?" "He's very funny." followed by "She's very kind and patient" on page 112 of prospect.3.

Firstness:

"This is my friend Parham. This is my classmate Parisa." on page 17 of Prospect 1.

Character Activity:

The daily activities questions on page 64 of Prospect 2 are posed using gender-neutral pronouns and do not include specific names: "What do you do in the mornings?"

"My name is Paul Kress. I'm from Germany... my wife and I are visiting Tehran..." and, "Are you staying here?" on page 120 of Prospect.3.
Occupation:

"How old is your father?" followed by "What's your father's job?" on page 25 of Prospect 1. These examples are followed by similar examples of questions using "mother", "brother", "sister", "uncle", and "aunt". The sentences that follow include "He's a mechanic." and "She's a housewife"

Topic Dominance:

"Do you have any hobbies, Zahra?" followed by "How about you, Samira?" on page 91 of Prospect 3.

5. Discussion

Quantitative analysis using chi-square tests revealed that there was no statistical difference in the overall representation of gender in the series ($\chi^2 = 1.29$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting that the publication context globally versus locally has only a limited effect on the pattern of gender representation. The analysis of thematic dominance reveals similar issues of power imbalance in educational discourse. These themes are prevalent in the society as the man speaks and initiates the conversation more than the woman (61.76% of the men use the word in contrast to 38.24% of the females). The pattern tends to confirm the results of Eccles and Harold (1991) in relation to gender barriers to confidence and participation in relation to the educational materials used. Both the Vision and Prospect series appear to be unduly influenced by gender bias, especially considering that the notion that identity can be shaped through language learning (Norton, 2013), with learning materials being sociolinguistic and cultural artifacts (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

In most professions, when looking at video games and anime, there is a traditional gender role that has some significance in video games, which the two series have since broken through as roles such as female technical professionals are included, but there is still some significant evidence to show that there is a larger story when evaluating gender associations. Furthermore, there is a perplexing issue that still exists in modern society that is gendered norms regarding the appearance of powerful leaders.

A perfect example of this is in sports, where male characters tend to be pushed into leadership roles and promoted, while women are supported to work in marketing, which is consistent with Connell's (2005) observations about gender hierarchies. Patterns such as these point out that despite a greater understanding of the issue of gender representation, achieving true equality is no easy task. It is clear from the findings that developing countries have made significant progress in gender-neutral teaching methods and in streamlining their global materials, but face serious obstacles in formulating educational materials that are free from gender bias while taking into account cross-cultural factors and opening up access to all students.

The approach to representing social class, gender and ethnicity in the Vision and Prospect series is gender neutral and takes cultural sensitivity into account, but reveals and reinforces some of the patterns found in other studies. The unbroken pattern of male dominance in all views is consistent with the findings on gender discrimination in language education system in Iran examined by Ahmadabadi and Azad (2023).

The trends in the representation of occupations inscribed in our discourse are consistent with Ghajarieh et al. (2023) observations of stereotypical gender roles embedded in textbook representations. A wide range of service roles to highly prestigious occupations were filled by males, while females were assigned a narrower range of occupational representations. This highlights the work of Ghajarieh and Salami (2016), who have highlighted the gap between gender roles in textbooks. The linguistic patterns relating to subject weighting and the use of first mention provide evidence for Sunderland's (2000) work on how language use in educational texts contributes to the perpetuation of a gender hierarchy in society. It has already been shown in the Prospect series that male predominance in starting or producing words (305 to 198) within an interaction represents a very quiet and gentle naturalization of gender politics in relation to discourse.

Based on Wei's (2022) suggestion about investigating various editions of textbooks to highlight gender bias, one can argue that both series were improved compared to previous editions published by the Iranian Ministry of education. Those older editions showed a higher degree of male dominance (e.g. see Ansari & Babai, 2003). Furthermore, considering the study of Ghajarieh et al. (2023), Iranian local textbooks still feature gender biases compared to their international counterparts used by Iranian institutes. This implies that material globalization may reflect an improvement in gender equality.

These findings also support the research of Lee and Mahmoudi-Gahrouei (2020), which focuses on Iranian textbooks that present a sensitive mix of culture and religion with gender representation of gender. The results also pushes for the need to include gender issues in textbooks. As Blumberg (2008) claims, which is still valid today, gender bias in textbooks can hamper gender equality in education.

6. Conclusion

The research conducted shows that traditional notions of gender roles still prevail in Iranian EFL textbooks, which need to be overcome in order to achieve equality in education. Although there is a slightly better representation of gender roles and images in Vision series compared to and Prospect, both textbook series do not show much improvement as compared with progressive global teaching materials. The research findings could lead to some practical recommendations for EFL stakeholders. There is a need for interventions aimed at gender inclusion in Iranian educational materials in terms of visual images and text. Textbook developers and publishers need to consider the need for gender balance without cultural robotics.

From a globalized perspective, textbooks are seen as a powerful tool to address the challenges of today. This would enable the embedding of global equality principles with regard to masculinity and femininity, making the materials more gender balanced without compromising on cultural accuracy. Such development requires a partnership between global publishers and local professionals to design content that incorporates both instructional and equity aspects.

There are a number of limitations that need to be considered when interpreting these results. The results can only be generalized to a limited extent, as the study was limited to English textbooks used in Iran. Meanwhile, in qualitative evaluations of textbooks, even if a systematic approach was chosen, there remains an element of subjectivity that can influence the interpretation and analysis. It remains an open question as to how textbooks affect learning and understanding and what students perceive of a text. Future research can focus on these aspects.

Cross-cultural studies could identify effective methods of promoting gender equality without compromising local cultural principles. When developing new social studies textbooks, care must be taken not to transgress prevailing norms of equality to avoid bias against religion. Educational experts, religious leaders and feminist experts need to agree on the policy of materials design and development and ensure this will be an ongoing process.

There is notable evidence that society has not sufficiently addressed gender bias and more efforts should be made to create unbiased educational materials. Even though there have been some improvements towards equal gender representation, especially with the advent of more globalized materials, there is still a trend of gender discrimination that can be addressed. Policymakers, educators and all those involved in the education system must

work together towards a common goal or success in this endeavor will remain elusive. The way forward requires the merging of several parameters that include the promotion of gender equality while preserving cultural identity, the promotion of social change. In order to achieve goals for equality in education, gender-balanced textbooks can lay the groundwork.

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