

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Family and Friends Textbooks: Representation of Genderism

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Abstract

The present study employed a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to investigate the linguistic representation of male and female social actors in *Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6*. To this end, van Leeuwen's (1996) representational framework and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) Transitivity Theory Model were adopted to reveal the ideology behind the constructions. The findings indicated a "sexist attitude" in favor of male social actors in which males were portrayed more than females and also had high activity. In addition, it was revealed that there was attempt to avoid traditional stereotypes of females in most parts of textbooks and women were not portrayed at home as housewives engaged in child care, however, it can be claimed that they suffered most obviously from low visibility. The findings may help EFL teachers, material developers and policy makers to be aware of equality/inequality issues in textbooks in order to make an equality perspective to learners.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender, Textbook, Representation, Social Actors

1. Introduction

Despite the move towards technology, textbooks still serve as the most common educational tools in classroom content. Textbooks in developing countries, in turn, play their own part in contributing to gender and social class stereotypes. Books are part of an appropriate system of education on which the social, cultural, scientific and mental growth of learners depend (Kemp, 1977). In this regard, Gershuny (1977, p. 150) claims that "textbooks purporting to teach the specifics of academic discipline have concomitantly taught secondary information gender roles and social values". In this respect, the unconscious effect of textbooks on students especially in early ages lead to an oppressive and gender-biased attitude in students. "Gender-biased language in textbooks can affect students adversely and it creates an oppressive world for them because this gender-biased language most often is unjustified and unfair" (Cameron, 1990, p. 13). Doubtless, students frequently have interaction with textbooks thus a cautious approach is needed for materials and it must avoid any form of discrimination. Accordingly, textbooks are not only a resource for learning but also a factor that influence people in other matters implicitly. The content of the textbooks helps reinforce gender as a social division and perpetuate inequalities between men and women.

Genderism is one of the most important aspects in the content of textbooks that is the concern educators. Since, a biased attitude of writers may sometimes have destructive effects on students that will remain in the student's mind. It should be noted that gender identity cognition begins from childhood and it will remain constant when children reach puberty. Therefore, attention to create a balanced atmosphere in textbooks should be considered severely. The traditional stereotypes and exclusion of social actors in textbooks may impair learners' attitude and also lead to have negative attitudes towards opposite sex. Educators usually are concerned about sexism in textbooks because it can have terrible effects on students' personality.

As mentioned, genderism or gender perspective is a phenomenon that can be transferred alongside other matters as a drawback. Gender-biased language and unequal treatment will change students' attitude about society and social actors. For example, in many textbooks mostly females are usually considered as an inferior to males in societies. In this regard, critical discourse analysis will be useful to reveal these inequalities in textbooks and also unravel policies and ideologies underlying them. Critical discourse analysis not only attempts to find drawbacks in texts but also to inform language users to backstage events.

2. Review of the literature

Critical discourse analysis focuses on power abuse that usually occurs in discursive conditions by institutions or elite groups. In recent years, CDA has attracted many researchers to work on various sectors such as textbooks, newspapers, media etc. Researchers have analyzed the various text features such as male's or female's names, pronouns, images, stereotypical roles, social actors activities and other aspects. Such studies mostly are quantitative or qualitative in which

male and female social actors are counted. In this section, the related literature of the previous studies on ELT textbooks for gender analysis will be elaborated.

Coles (1977) analyzed five of prevalent sets of adult basic educational materials. The results indicated that male social actors were portrayed three times more than females. He also found that males are indicated as breadwinners but on the contrary females are viewed as housewives or workers.

Dominguez (2003) made an attempt to analyze New Interchange Intro to explore how males and females are represented. To this end, he analyzed the book in terms of word level, male and female characters, occupational roles, amount of talk and male and female illustrations. Regarding data collected, he concluded that the book is not biased toward any of the sexes.

Keynan and Fakhruddin (2004) did a study on policy context, curriculum outlines and 194 textbooks to identify gender disparities in curricula and textbooks used in Pakistan education centers. They used content analysis to determine the different gender portrayal. The findings revealed that females were down-graded in and they had not received the desired value the same as males.

Babaii and Ansary (2005) carried out an investigation on Book Reviews (BRs) in order to find the disciplinary variation based on transitivity theory. The researchers analyzed BRs from three different disciplinary-related academic journals of physics, sociology and literature. The data gathered revealed that in terms of process types, there were significant differences between physics' BRs and the other two but there were no significant differences between BRs of sociology and literature. They also found that in terms of participants' gender there were marked differences between analyzed BRs.

Halberg (2006) made an attempt to investigate Blueprint A with a new approach toward gender analysis to indicate how gender is portrayed in one of the most prevalent textbooks which published in Swedish Upper Secondary obligatory course English A. The various perspective of power were represented in the textbook, but it couldn't be provided any text or discussion that challenge gender norms. Therefore this investigation revealed a rather conservative depiction of men and women.

Mustedanagic (2010) selected two textbooks which are being used in Swedish secondary schools in order to investigate them critically. Regarding some issues of gender such as gender in illustration, gender roles, main characters and sub characters and gender distribution of narrators be taken into consideration by Mustedanagic. She found that a non-stereotypic view of gender roles represented in Wings 8, which is in accordance with the fundamental values of LPO 94. According to this study, the illustrations tend to represent men and women in what can be considered as quite stereotypical. She claimed that Team 8 was filled by gendered language and male dominance; women were placed in the background or left out completely. So, she found that Team 8 would not be deemed to be compliant with the requirements set by the Swedish National Agency of Education today.

Hamdan (2010) investigated on gender bias in English-Language school textbooks used in public schools in Jordan. The authors' treatment of jobs attributed to male and female characters was the purpose of this study. In this regard, grades 1 to 9 of textbook have been studied by Hamdan in a content analysis of the discourse. The findings indicated a tendency toward gender asymmetry in Jordanian EFL texts greater than the gender asymmetry in Jordanian society as a whole. She concluded that male social actors dealt with a variety of jobs and they were manifested as effective and dominant characters in the labor market, so she concluded that the textbooks reflect the culturally-prevalent gender bias, but on the contrary female social actors practice traditional jobs such as teachers and nurses.

Baghdadi (2012) investigated on Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and AFL (Arabic as a Foreign Language) textbooks in order to find how gender roles portrayed in these textbooks. To this end, she employed mixed method of Social Prominence by Lesikin, which is based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Syntax and also a criterion for analysis of the equality of gender representation by Rifkinwich applied in CDA framework. With regard to findings, it came out that male social actors were portrayed significantly more than female social actors. She claimed that males were the central point of most sentences in both subject and actions and also in main figure in sentences and pictures. She refers that there was a significant differences between AFL and EFL textbooks. She found that both textbooks were extremely traditional in presenting stereotypical gender roles and activities. She does not believe these textbooks are a true reflection of the Iranian society as a whole. The findings simply show the viewpoints of the authors or a small sector of the Iranian society and particularly the ideology of the government in power.

Ghalajian Moghaddam (2013) provided a theoretical background and methodology for the analysis of the relationships between language, ideology, and power. She did study the ideological issues of gender, class, and culture reflected in Iranian High school English texts. "As a methodology for this study, Thompson's socio-historical, textual (micro-analysis, macro-analysis, and linguistic analysis) and interpretive analysis is adopted" (Ghalajian Moghaddam, 2013, p. 110). The results indicated that there are several manifestations of ideology, either positive or negative, among members of different social classes.

Yang (2014) conducted a study on Step Up and Primary Longman Express which are two prevalent primary English Language textbooks series and this study specifically went to reading passages, dialogues and visuals. She analyzed textual (lexis and grammar), discourse and visual representations of gender. A mix method is employed in this study. She concluded that males and females are represented similarly and fairly, and show an improvement over previous textbook studies in gender representation.

Mustapha (2014) used content analysis to reveal how men and women roles are portrayed in selected English Language textbooks for Junior Secondary School students in Nigeria. According to findings it is revealed that women are manifested in traditional roles and they dealt with some works which are related to home such as, child caring, and home chores, men are manifested in roles in public sphere in highly professional skills. He found that the textbooks analyzed are gender-biased in terms of gender roles, especially against female in the public life and against male in the private life.

Hall (2014) did a study on EFL textbooks (Right Path to English I and II) that are designed for Iranian secondary schools. The findings indicated that there was no balance in gender manifestation in these textbooks.

These studies indicate that CDA and SFL can be applied to different texts with different genres to reveal their underlying ideology.

3. Research Questions

- 1) Based on van Leeuwen's (1996) representational framework, to what extent are male and female social actors presented in Family and Friends textbooks?
- 2) Based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity theory, to what extent are male and female social actors presented regarding attributed process types?

4. Corpus

In the present study, three Oxford University Press textbooks named *Family and Friends* were selected. The series are written for primary learners by three different authors i.e. *Family and Friend 4* authored by Naomi Simmons (2010), grade 5 by Tamzin Thompson (2010), and grade 6 by Jenny Quintana (2010). For analyzing the representation of genderism, the present study specifically goes to reading section of each book. There were 4 extensive reading passages in grade 5 and 6, also 5 extensive reading passages in grade 4, and 14 reading passages in grade 4, 12 reading passages in grade 5 and 6. It should be noted that these textbooks are American English versions and also very similar in style and components; all of them consist of reading and extensive reading sections which are the target of the current study. Family and Friends series is one of the most popular and also prevalent international textbooks in the world. The popularity and prevalence of these textbooks motivated researcher to investigate them critically.

5. Framework of Study

In this research, with respect to van Leeuwen (1996) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) models, all sentences of the reading passages have been critically analyzed. Van Lueewen's framework is known as a comprehensive framework to the representation of the male and female actors from a social standpoint in CDA studies. On the other hand, Halliday and Matthiessen's transitivity model has been used for analyzing the type of activity that refers to process types of male and female social actors.

Regarding van Lueewen's framework (1996) the following elements are considered to function as criterion for the analysis: Deletion, role allocation and substitution. Deletion as main section of framework focuses on inclusion and exclusion of social actors, therefore, role allocation deals with activation and passivation of social actors in which suppressed, backgrounded, participation, possessivation, circumstantialization, subjection and beneficialization are placed in this category. Finally, substitution collaborates on personalization and impersonalization in which functionalization, classification, relational identification, formal nomination, semi-formal nomination, informal nomination, indetermination, objectivation, abstraction, genericization, individualization and collectivization are placed in this category.

With regard to Halliday (1994) there are two approaches to analyze any text to reveal the hidden relations of power and language. These two approaches are SFL in general and transitivity in particular that transitivity model can be used for a manageable set of process types. It can codify actors in some processes i.e. material process, behavioral process, mental process, verbal process, relational process, and existential process. In fact, using these five categories can identify individuals' roles of social actors in their process types.

6. Procedure

In the first stage the gendered clauses of the reading sections of textbooks were isolated for analysis. Afterward participants and processes were examined in clauses. Participants in each gendered clause were underlined and analyzed in two distinguishing types i.e. males and females. Thus it clarified that what the gender of social actor was and also it revealed which gender was responsible for the conducted process types in gendered clauses. After all, in the present study because of the narrow borderline and the semantic load of material and behavioral processes researcher did not make any distinction between them, so the researcher decided to transfer behavioral processes into material category.

7. Results

Using van Leeuwen's (1996) social actor representation framework and also Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity theory, data analysis went as follows:

7.1 Deletion

Deletion can be used to represent process of inclusion and exclusion. Table 1.1 summarizes the inclusion and exclusion of males and females in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6:

Table 1. Distribution of Inclusion and Exclusion in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6

	Inclusion	Exclusion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Family and Friends 4	168 (78%)	4 (67%)	47 (22%)	2 (33%)
Family and Friends 5	236 (82%)	-	48 (18%)	-
Family and Friends 6	145 (71%)	1 (50%)	58 (29%)	1 (50%)
Total	549 (78%)	5 (62%)	153 (22%)	3 (38%)

As the Table 1 indicates in *Family and Friends 4* inclusion of male/female ratio is near to 4:1. It is evident that in *Family and Friends 4* male social actors are included with more frequency than females. On the other hand, descriptive analysis supports this claim. Out of 19 passages analyzed by the researcher only one of them dedicated to a specific female. There were 5 passages that specifically dealt with males and the other passages collaborates on both of male and female but the proportion of males is more than females. Of course there were few neutral passages that researcher ignored them.

Regarding Table 1 the difference between inclusion of men and female in *Family and Friends 5* is very obvious. It can be said the inclusion of male/female ratio is near to 4:1. This textbook consists of 16 passages in which specified that 6 passages specifically deal with males and there was only one passage about female that was very brief. There was not any sign of male and female in exclusion category.

According to Table 1 inclusion of male/female ratio in *Family and Friends 6* is near to 3:1. This textbook consists of 16 reading passages and there were 2 passages specifically deal with female. Table 1 indicates in *Family and Friends 6* the number of male and female is equal in exclusion.

7.2 Role Allocation

Role allocation plays a significant part in critical discourse analysis as a discursive structure. Table 2 summarizes the inclusion and exclusion of males and females in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6:

Table 2. Distribution of Passivation and Activation in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6

	Male		Female	
	Activation	Passivation	Activation	Passivation
Family and Friends 4	145 (77%)	23 (88%)	44 (23%)	3 (12%)
Family and Friends 5	187 (82%)	49 (86%)	40 (18%)	8 (14%)
Family and Friends 6	110 (68%)	35 (83%)	51 (32%)	7 (17%)
Total	442 (79%)	107 (86%)	135 (21%)	18 (14%)

As Table 2 indicates, male social actors are more active than females in Family and Friends 4. It happened for male social actors in passivation category similarly. It has shown female social actors are lower activated and passivated than males in Family and Friends 5. As Table above indicates, male social actors also are more activated than females in Family and Friends 6. Regarding Table 2, as expected the result indicated male social actors have shown more frequently than females.

Table 3. Distribution of Exclusion in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6

Exclusion	Male	Female
<i>Suppressed</i>	-	-
<i>Backgrounded</i>	5 (37.5%)	3 (62.5%)

As it is shown in Table 3, there is no suppressed element in these textbooks. Most likely it is occurred because of the level of textbooks.

Table 4. Distribution of activation and passivation in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6

Activation/Passivation	Male	Female
<i>Participation</i>	427 (76%)	134 (24%)
<i>Possessivation</i>	93 (79%)	24 (21%)
<i>Circumstantialization</i>	22 (92%)	2 (8%)
<i>Subjection</i>	33 (85%)	6 (15%)
<i>Beneficialization</i>	43 (84%)	8 (16%)

According to Table 4 most of activation are belonged to participation for both genders and as expected male share is much more than the female again, so males participated more in passages of *Family and Friends* textbooks.

7.3 Transitivity

In present study the transitivity model of Halliday applied on text and it tries to indicate verb groups in a sentence with their processes.

Table 5. Distribution of process types in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6

Participant/Processes	Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal	Existential	Total
Male	313(78%)	114(71%)	100(74%)	47(85%)	1(50%)	575(76%)
Female	89(22%)	46(29%)	35(26%)	8(15%)	1(50%)	179(24%)
Total	402 (100%) (54%)	160 (100%) (21%)	135 (100%) (18%)	55 (100%) (7%)	2 (100%) (0%)	754 (100%) (100%)

As it is shown in Table 5, the analysis of different types of processes in *Family and Friends* textbooks revealed that out of 754 investigated processes, material processes were the most frequent ones (54%) that followed by mental processes (21%), relational processes reserved (18%), verbal processes (7%), and the least ones were existential processes which was less than (1%). With regard to transitivity model it was uncovered that there was no equality between male and female social actors in process types and these textbooks represented them differently.

7.4 Substitution

Table 6. Distribution of Personalization/Impersonalization in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6

Personalization/Impersonalization	Male	Female
<i>Functionalization</i>	18 (86%)	3 (14%)
<i>Classification</i>	40 (73%)	15 (27%)
<i>Relational ID</i>	19 (68%)	9 (32%)
<i>Formal Nomination</i>	62 (100%)	-
<i>Semi-Formal Nomination</i>	33 (82%)	7 (18%)
<i>Informal Nomination</i>	85 (65%)	46 (35%)
<i>Indetermination</i>	2 (100%)	-
<i>Objectivation</i>	-	-
<i>Abstraction</i>	-	-

According to Table 6 it can be said that males and females were not equally functionalized. It means that most of jobs held by men, and females were not associated with business activities. It can be concluded that males are portrayed with a delicacy but females usually indicated as simple phenomena. One of the important factors employed to represent social actors is nomination. Regarding Table 6 it was clear that male social actors were represented as formal and respectful and unique but in the contrary females were represented with their informal names. There were no significant number of indetermination, objectivation and abstraction in *Family and Friends* textbooks. This could be due to primary level of textbooks.

Table 7. Distribution of Genericization and Specification in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6

Genericization/Spesification	Male	Female
<i>Genericization</i>	13 (100%)	-
<i>Specification Individualization</i>	179 (77%)	52 (23%)
<i>Collectivization</i>	37 (100%)	-

As Table 7 shows there were differences between male and female social actors in genericization and specification. It again shows the domination of male social actors in *Family and Friends* textbooks.

8. Discussion

The present study aimed to explore gender representation in *Family and Friend* 4, 5 and 6. An attempt was made to shed light on genderism of these textbooks by CDA method which were van Leeuwen's (1996) social actors representation framework and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity theory. Referring to the data gathered, it was explored that in *Family and Friends* 4, 5 and 6 male social actors were represented more frequently than females. They were more activated and participated and in material process had upper hand, so the male social actors had a position of

power and control over females. At a glance, these three textbooks are similar in including social actors, discursive features and process types, thus it can be concluded that the difference between these three textbooks was not significant. In all of them was a trace of sexism whereas in Family and Friends 5 was more considerable.

In this regard, for a better descriptive analysis, researcher has discussed with the author of *Family and Friends 4*. Researcher asked her some questions about considering gender equality and issues of gender stereotypes of social actors. In respect of the questions she answered that “The girls are strong personalities and we also wanted to show older people as active and fun regardless of gender. That is why stories show grandmas having fun in the park, and fathers and grandfathers active with the children”. It can be said that Naomi Simmons was right in considering of gender stereotypes in some passages e.g. *Family and Friends 4 Unit 13, Child Heroes*, in this unit *Emilee* as a girl represented as a strong and brave girl by sentences like these: *Emilee broke a window to carry her brother to safety* or in another place she described as a brave person such as: *The family home was destroyed, but because Emilee was so brave, no one was hurt*. As the above examples indicated the author tried to show *Emilee* strongly but in some units can see the traditional stereotypes of social actors like reading section of unit 7 in *Family and Friends 4*. In this passage *Joe* as a boy predicts life in 100 years later, he says: *I think robots do everything for us* and *Tom* as another boy says: *there will be more people on earth in the future... I think we will have new roads in the sky*. So far, it’s obvious that the boys have optimistic beliefs for future and they aren’t scared of upcoming days but *Jess* as a girl starts her words with this sentence: *I sometimes worry about the future. I think it will be hotter and there will be more storms*. Thus, it can be concluded that this girl showed as a worried person or a person who scared of something.

With respect to accuracy of authors to present textbooks with appropriate level of gender equality, the present study revealed that there were traces of genderism in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6.

9. Conclusion

In the present study, only textbooks selected and other supplementary materials such as audio CDs were excluded. It should be noted that textbooks consisted of grade 4, 5 and 6 and the reading sections of each specific textbook were analyzed to explore any trace of sexism bias or equal manifestation of men and women. A detailed image of distribution of biased and non-biased stance for genders was illustrated by applying van Leeuwen’s (1996) representation of social actor framework and Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004) transitivity theory. According to van Leeuwen framework it came out that the inclusion of male and female social actors is near to 4:1 and based on this claim, males participated much more than females. With regard to transitivity model of Halliday, it was revealed that there was no equality between male and female social actors in process type and most of material, mental, relational and verbal processes belonged to men. This study revealed that these three textbooks suffer from gender bias against female social actors. Based on the analysis it can be said that females were ignored and males represented as active social actors and they had upper hand. In this sense, Family and Friends has taken a cultural oriented position in sexism. Family and Friends devoted more reading sections to males, further females ignored. It is whothnoting that one of the main problems in Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6 was greater amount of units that belonged to male social actors and females were deprived of it. Therefore it can be concluded that the Family and Friends textbooks suffered from lower appearance of female social actors than males in both van Leeuwen’s (1996) social actor framework and Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004) transitivity theory.

10. Implications

Actions and goals which are due to conscious or unconscious ideas refer to ideology. Most political and economic tendencies in society are propounded by ideology. In this regard, one of the most popular concepts in ideologies is power. Ideology having power can reach specific purposes and always in society some groups having more power dominate others, so, dominating groups can make a stance to establish text and talk to shape and form people’s unconscious thought which is a main goal for ideology. Gender consists of social thoughts and roles in which dominant culture of society carries them on men and women. One of the main purposes of critical discourse analysis is identify and discover gender issues such as difference between male and female in society which is stated through language, in this way, power structure and hidden ideology of power group could come out. With regard to study of CDA and its analyses and results, curriculum developers should consider these studies and provide unbiased content to improve equality between male and female in society. The results of this study can be useful for policy makers, material developers, teachers and students to interpret its findings to find a way to revise or reform the content of the books such as Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6 specifically in sexism area.

11. Suggestion for Further Studies

This paper is only limited to the study on three textbooks of Family and Friends series published 2010. Family and Friends is a six-level primary course and researcher analyzed grade 4, 5 and 6. Thus more textbooks could be scrutinized that can lead to make the study more reliable. Furthermore, in this study, researcher only analyzed reading sections of Family and Friends 4, 5 and 6 but it is evident that there are so many aspects of genderism found in textbooks such as dialogue, listening and writing sections. The second edition of Family and Friends textbooks was published earlier this year and the reading passages are now changed from the first edition. It could be good possibility to compare the first edition against second.

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