

# A Critical Image Analysis of Gender Positioning in Iraqi EFL Textbook

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## Abstract

Textbooks of any country are considered an important tool for the purpose of position in stereotypes of gender at the schools of that country. Therefore, these textbooks must picture the society equally in terms of males and females in order to reflect a real image of that society. The aim of the current paper is to investigate gender positioning in the Iraqi EFL textbooks (English for Iraq) for sixth preparatory stage. For the purpose of analyzing the data, the study adopts Giaschi's (2000) approach. The main goal of this adopted approach is to analyze the data critically. The study concluded that females and males are positioned in a biased way in the selected data. It means that men play the major roles and they are active in the images but women on the other and are passive and have a minor role in the examined images.

**Keywords:** Critical Image Analysis, Sexism, Gender Positioning, Semiotics

## تحليل نقدي لتمثيل النوع الاجتماعي في الكتاب المنهجي للغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية في العراق

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المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة ميسان

## المستخلص

يعد الكتاب المدرسي هو وسيلة مهمة في الحياة الاجتماعية بين الجنسين في المدرسة. لذلك يجب أن يصور الطلاب في الكتاب من منظور متوازن لحصة الذكور والإناث في المجتمع. تهدف الورقة البحثية هذه التحقيق في وضع النوع الاجتماعي في الكتب المدرسية المستخدمة حالياً في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية (الإنجليزية للعراق) للصف السادس الإعدادي في العراق. لغرض تحليل البيانات، تحدد الدراسة إطاراً تحليلياً لتحليل تمثيل الجنسين ودورهم في الخطاب المرئي للكتب المدرسية المختارة. تم اعتماد تحليل صور وفق المنهج التحليلي لـ (Giaschi 2000) في الدراسة الحالية. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أنه تم تمثيل الذكور على أنهم يلعبون دوراً أكثر نشاطاً وأن الإناث يظهرن بأدوار ثانوية وغير فاعلات في الصور التي فحصت.

**الكلمات الدالة:** التحليل النقدي للصور، التمييز على أساس الجنس، تحديد المواقع بين الجنسين، السيميائية

## 1. Introduction

The American philosopher Peirce (1839–1914) used term semiotics at first in the late nineteenth century. Ferdinand (1915) mentions that signs are part of the general linguistic science that he called after that as semiology. So, signs and semiology are interchangeable terms in one way or another. De Saussure (1915) affirms that social practices and gestures are nonverbal signs of human being communication system which is mainly the language because they are established by signs that connect to meaning and communicate by relationships among the signs[1].

Semiotics in other words can be represented as a touch, word, sound, and most importantly semiotics can be used in a visual image. Signifier and signified is a well-known division of sign made by Saussure (1915). The image is considered as a signifier. The meaning of that image is considered as the signified. Arbitrariness is the concept that confirms the relationship between the signifier and the signified.[2].

## 2. Literature Review

The main aim of the textbook in English classroom language teaching is to offer chance for practicing language learning and language skills. In other words, textbooks can oblige as an ideal moral lessons and ethics. Therefore, the textbook is far from being neutral in terms of the vision it conjures up or the world it depicts to its users [3].

Discrimination has been uncovered for guys who were regularly prevailing as characters, addressed in a more extensive assortment of social jobs that portrayed as sincerely amazing. On opposite, females were regularly less important[4],[5]. "the exclusion of girls and women from FL textbooks may seriously impair their abilities to understand the target language and its culture(s)". This means that the majority of researchers validated their views by relying on the major role that the textbooks play as agents of socialization. In other words "students spend as much as 80 to 95 percent of classroom time using textbooks, and teachers make a majority of their instructional decisions based on these texts"[6] This reminds methodology towards the issue to the absence of preparing programs. In educator preparing programs, little consideration is by all accounts coordinated to inquiries of instructive value and reasonableness [7].

Textbooks generalized sex jobs are wild, including the overemotional female; housework and kid care as female-selective areas; inactive, powerless female youngsters; and dynamic intense male kids. Ladies were for the most part depicted as egotistical and shallow, while men were given a role as accommodating and belittling.

"throughout the textbooks, stereotyped sex roles were rampant, including the overemotional female; housework and child care as female-exclusive domains; passive, weak female children; and active bold male children. Women were generally portrayed as selfish and superficial, while men were cast as helpful and patronizing." [8]

Pictorial semiotics is a part of semiotics that examines the manner in which visual pictures impart a message. Investigations of significance advance from semiotics, a

philosophical methodology that looks to decipher messages as far as signs and examples of imagery [9]. Pictorial semiotics generally deals with the pictures' properties and artistic features of images[10]. There are three model for picture analysis. These three models are: narrative model, rhetoric model and Laokoon model. The first one deals with the connection among pictures and time in a sequential way such as in a funny cartoon picture. The second model which is the rhetoric one deals with comparing pictures and various devices for example simile and metaphor. The third model concentrates on the requirements of pictorial articulations by contrasting literary mediums that use time and visual mediums that use space of the image.[11]

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Data Collection

The chosen pictures for analysis of this paper are taken from the 6th preparatory English course books in Iraq which are distributed by the Ministry of Education in Iraq in 2014. These books include "student book" and "activity book". This study is based on a collection of visual images featuring male characters alone, female characters alone, and male and female characters either in pairs or in groups. The motivation to pick these textbooks is that they are somewhat later and are considered as an extreme change of the past series. Consequently, they merit more consideration and assessment.

#### 3.2 Analytical Approach

For the purpose of analyzing the data, the study adopts an analytical approach for the analysis of gender positioning and gender bias in the visual discourse of the selected images. Giaschi's (2000) critical image discourse analytical approach is adopted in the present study.

This adopted analytical approach involves of the following questions:

- What is the activity of the image(s)?
- Who is active (the protagonist) in the image?
- Who is passive (the receiver) in the image(s)?
- What does the clothing communicate?
- Where are the eyes directed?
- What are the frequent spaces in which the two genders are presented?

#### 3.3. Research Question

The current research tries to answer the following question:

Is the Iraqi EFL textbook for sixth preparatory presenting gender positioning equally in its images?

### 4. Data Analysis and Results

The main aim of the current paper is to analyze the selected images critically in the chosen textbooks (English for Iraq) for sixth classes concerning gender positioning or representation.

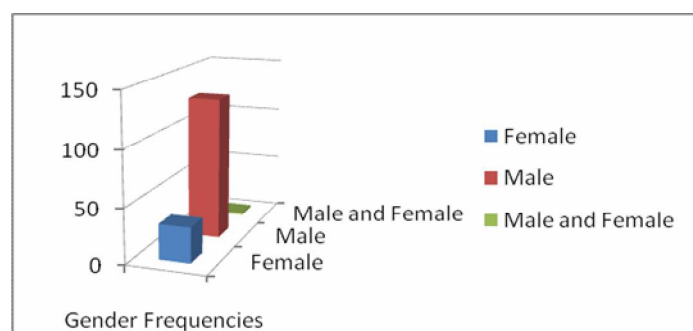
The two selected textbooks (students and activity books) have around 241 pictorial images such as cartoons and photos. Only 182 pictures represent human beings with

percentage of 75.5%, have been analyzed. The exclusion of the 24.5% of total pictures was because most of them are not human. So, the total number of human photos is 182. Table (1) below shows some details about the chosen images.

**Table 1.** Frequencies of Males and Females within the Chosen Images

Gender	Frequencies	Percentages
Female	32	17.5 %
Male	129	70.8 %
Male and female	21	11.5 %
Total	182	100 %

Table (1) shows the frequencies of females and males within the images in the selected data. It states that the total frequencies are 182 images. Females have 32 occurrences with 17.5% percentages of the total images. The males on other hand have 129 occurrences with 70.8 % % percentages of the total images. Finally the males and females (together) have 21 occurrences with 11.5 % percentages of the total images. Figure (1) below shows the big dissimilarities in the occurrences of men and women in the investigated data.



**Figure 1.** Frequencies of Females and Males within the Images

#### a. What is the activity of the image(s)?

The most important activity in the investigated pictures is work. It means that 19 times for men and 5 times for women. In terms of research and studies, the two groups of men and women are communicating about a school-related subject, examining in a college library or utilizing a PC, but with different occurrences. The attention on public activity is additionally clear given that 18 pictures (14 for men and 4 for ladies) depict the two gender orientations in different social circumstances and occasions like gatherings, services and taking public vehicle. Sport is depicted in 11 pictures. The dispersion of these exercises among females and males is displayed in table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Gender Activities within the Images

Activity	Male	Female
Family life	4	14
Research and studies	13	6
Sport	9	2
work	19	5

According to the table above, the critical analysis of the image discourse for this parameter shows that both men and women participate in various exercises in the investigated data. But what is important is that the representation of men in the most important activities in our life like work and studies.

#### 4.2 Who is active (the protagonist) in the image?

One key feature that can uncover gender representation in images is the protagonist in the images. The members in the pictures can check out or away from the watcher. In other words, the eye direction of the viewer in the images for each gender in the investigated images is very important. It means that, females tend to be eyed away from the watcher more than girls, see table 3 below for more details.

**Table 3.** Active/ Passive Role within the Images

Role	Male	Female
Active	23	6
Passive	4	17

As table 3 shows, guys were given priority over females in active jobs execution. Males looked as protagonists in 23 images discourse of the selected data, whereas, females looked as protagonist only in 6 images. It is noteworthy that the dominance of males active role reflects the arrogances of the dominant manly culture that indicates men's power in a Iraqi society.

#### 4.3 What does the clothing communicate?

Men and women are presented differently (in the investigated data) in terms of clothing. This means that in most of the images, men are presented with two basic modes that is to say power-dressed, professional and formal. But women are shown in exaggerated dresses, amusing clothing [13]. Table (4) below shows the main types of clothing in the investigated data. It means that males tend to wear formal clothes than females do.

**Table 4.** Main Types of Wear of Men and Women

Type of wear	Male	Female
Formal	68	7

#### 4.4 Where is the gaze directed?

The distance between the members in the edge and the circumstance of the picture can influence the social distance between the watcher and the members of the picture[14].

This is another parameter that can affect gender positioning in image analysis. This means that the edge of the picture can be isolated into close-up, remote chance, and medium shot. In the examined data, the rates of men imaged in close-up outline are considerably more than those of females who are portrayed for the most part in medium shot casing. This demonstrates that facial conspicuousness for men and put them in a more powerful position in correlation with females [15]

**Table (5).** Gaze Direction of both Genders

Gaze Direction	Male	Female
Close- up	48	7
long shot	36	13
medium shot	29	11

#### 4.5 What are the frequent spaces in which the two genders are presented?

Space is considered as a parameter that analyzes the positioning and representation of gender in image discourse. Space implies the area individuals are introduced in regular daily existence whether indoor or open air circumstances. The data investigated show the range of men and women in different places in the image discourse of the two textbooks (activity book and students' book). This means that the analysis uncovers that ladies are introduced in more indoor spaces or at home.

**Table (6).** Space of both Genders

Space	Male	Female
Indoor	13	81
Outdoor	81	13

## 5. Conclusion

The current paper has featured the significance of exploring gender discrimination in textbooks learning materials by a critical analytical framework. According to the results of this study, it is clear that the choice of work activities, free activities and social activities are very limited concerning the representation of female characters. However women are presented to be more predominant with the those domestic life such as preparing meals, washing the dishes, shopping, subject to programs fighting illiteracy and poverty, and being assistant to men. One result of the current study is that meaner addressed as assuming a more dynamic or active part and females are every now and again displayed as the responsive and objective members in the examined pictures.

**CONFLICT OF INTERESTS****There are no conflicts of interest****References**

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