

Analysis of Gender Firstness in Sixteen Omani English Language School Textbooks

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine gender firstness in sixteen Omani school textbooks used in all Omani government schools. The study sample consists of Grades 1, 4, 7 and 11 textbooks. The following categories were analyzed using content analysis: masculine and feminine third person pronouns, titles, and names found in these Omani school textbooks. In general, the study results have revealed that gender bias against females is present. Females' presence is marginal whereas males' presence is powerful. The study findings showed that the total number of third person pronouns was 63 (males appeared before females 38 times, whereas females appeared before males 25 times). Moreover, these textbooks contained 71 proper names (males appeared before females 45 times compared to only 26 females appearing before males). In addition, Omani school textbooks contained 18 titles (12 titles were used with males compared to only 6 titles used with females). Finally, statistical analysis of the textbooks showed that there are no statistically significant differences (chi-square, likelihood ratio, and Cramer's V) between males and females in terms of pronouns and adjectives.

Keywords: gender firstness, gender bias, school textbooks, gender representation

Introduction

The presence of gender bias in school textbooks is deemed unacceptable nowadays. School textbooks should convey a balanced representation of males and females. Using school textbooks that are loaded with gender-biased content is a serious issue that might bring about undesirable effects particularly on children. Learners, particularly children, are susceptible to the influence of partial or impartial representation of gender roles in school or non-school textbooks. This is of major concern to researchers because it can have either positive or negative effects on young learners. Smith (1985) pointed out that textbooks serve as a powerful medium through which values and attitudes find their ways to students' minds. Smith (1985) elaborated on this critical issue indicating that educational materials help to inculcate values and attitudes in young learners because of two reasons. First, because educational and reference materials (e.g. textbooks) are a source of credibility to learners, learners are not usually critical of them. In other words, learners do not usually question the authority and trustworthiness of the textbooks they use in their classrooms. They take it for granted that these textbooks are perfect and fully reliable. The second reason according to Smith (1985) is that learners' need to "to absorb and assimilate the textbook material in minute detail, they will be attentive to the messages conveyed, and susceptible to their influence (Lee & Collins, 2009).

Other researchers have also stressed the fact that school or non-school textbooks can influence learners' perception of the world around them. Kelly and Nihlen (1982), Freebody and Baker (1987), Sheldon (1990) and Hsu (1992) emphasized that textbook content is one of the variables of the learning process that can affect learners' view of the world around them. They have stressed out that, "The content of textbooks has the potential to influence the learners' worldview (Lee & Collins, 2009).

Literature Review

Definition: Gender Firstness

Gender firstness is one of the areas studied and examined by researchers to identify the existence or inexistence of gender equity or inequity in different school or non-school textbooks. Porreca (1984) defined gender firstness as "the order of mention, termed firstness" (Stockdale, 2006). In addition, Bahman & Rahimi (2010) defined gender firstness as "placing male terms before the female terms". On the other hand, Stockdale (2006)

affirms that, “When two gender-specific nouns or pronouns appear as a pair in a text, like mother and father or he/she, the one appearing in the first position can be interpreted as having a higher status”. In other words, when two things are mentioned together, the one appearing before the other is seen more important than the other one. For example, some people would interpret that the male student is more important than the female student in the following sentence because the pronouns ‘he’ was placed before ‘she’: ‘He or she should come early to class’.

Gender firstness is a powerful indicator of gender equality or inequality in school and non-school textbooks. Lee & Collins (2008) indicated that the order of mentioning males and females (who comes first and second) refers to the issue of male or female supremacy in textbooks. They stated that, “Placing the males first when females male are simultaneously mentioned indicates that males are supreme to females (Wu & Liu, 2016). Other researchers have also affirmed that when males appear before females in different school curricula suggests that females’ roles and presence are marginalized and superficial. Hartman & Judd (1978) argued that the mentioning of males before females in various textbooks “can reinforce that women are in the second-place status” (Wu & Liu, 2016). Moreover, Mills (1995) believes that when males come first in textbooks, it is an indication of gender priority and imbalance. He stated that “the order of male terms coming before the terms referring to females is another aspect of the unequal treatment of women and men and this, in fact prioritizes men” (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010).

To sum up, some researchers believe that gender firstness is a marker of status. Placing masculine or feminine markers (e.g. pronouns, names, and titles) first or second may suggest supremacy or inferiority. The investigation of gender firstness in school and non-school textbooks might be an indicator of gender balance or bias.

Gender Firstness in Photographs, Images, Pictures and Illustrations

Many researchers have investigated gender firstness in different textbooks and curricula. Some recent studies have shown that there is a balance in gender firstness in various curricula while other studies have shown that males, in general, are placed before females. Stockdale (2006) conducted a study on gender representation in an EFL textbook called Impact Values. She investigated many areas of gender in her study like visibility, nouns and pronouns, and characters including gender firstness. To determine if the textbook is gender balanced in terms of firstness, she investigated the following categories: Mixed Gender Dialogues, Points of View Opinions, Common Noun & Pronoun Pairs, and Proper Name Pairs. She counted the number of occurrences in each category. The total number of occurrences was in favour of males. Males total was 67, but females total was 45. The findings showed that there is an improvement in terms of firstness, but males are still dominant and prevalent in this textbook. In other words, gender gap in terms of gender firstness is still a major concern. It is in favour of males over females. This is yet another obstacle in the process of eliminating gender bias in school curricula. Healy (2009) conducted a study entitled: “The Representation of Women and Men in a Modern EFL Textbook: Are Popular Textbooks Gender Biased?” She sought to investigate gender firstness by using Sinclair and Coulthard’s analysis of discourse. She performed an analysis of Touchstone Book 2. The book targets adult and young adult learners. The study showed that the textbook authors offered a fair and balanced gender representation in terms of firstness. Healy (2009) stated that the book authors “have placed very few examples in the book where firstness would become a gender issue, and where they have used pairs of nouns or pronouns, they have distributed it evenly placing females first six times and males first seven times”. In other words, the study revealed that gender firstness was not an issue in the textbook. It is also worth mentioning to indicate that Mineshima (2008) examined gender representation in an EFL textbook used in upper secondary classes in Japan. The textbook is entitled “Birdland Oral Communication I”. The study explored the following categories: “gender visibility, character attributes, and picture representations” (Mineshima, 2008). The study findings, in general, revealed that there is a balanced and equal representation of males and females in this school textbook. The study findings also showed that the category of firstness was not only gender-balanced, but it was also to some extent in favour of females. Mineshima (2008) pointed out that, “Females appear before males four occasions more often (F: M=47:43). This demonstrates that both genders are provided with almost the same chances to be the first if slightly in favor of females, which could be interpreted as another indication of equal treatment of the genders by this textbook”. In general, the afore-mentioned studies showed that there is a balanced representation of gender firstness in the target textbooks.

In addition, Nagatomo (2010) conducted a study on gender representation in an EFL textbook. The study sought to investigate gender representation of characters in an EFL textbook entitled “Conversation Topics for Japanese University Students”. She analyzed the book using Porreca’s (1978) and Leiskin’s (2001) theoretical frameworks. She used them to investigate among others visibility, firstness, gender bias, male prominence etc. The study finding related to firstness showed that this textbook was in favour of female firstness. Nagatomo (2010)

stated that, “female characters were found to initiate conversations almost twice as often as male characters”. This book is one of the few textbooks that show that female representation is more visible than male’s. Nagatomo (2010) put it this way, “It was somewhat surprising, however, to find that the female characters showed far more visibility than the male characters”. In other words, more efforts should be made to offer a more equitable gender representation in terms of firstness in school and non-school textbooks like the textbook examined by Nagatomo. Nagatomo (2010) used the word “surprising” to show that this situation is not normal. It is therefore, important to make balanced gender firstness the rule and not the exception. It should be a mainstream tendency in all school and non-school textbooks. Finally, Datzman (2013) performed a case study to investigate gender representation and EFL textbooks. He performed a qualitative analysis of a textbook entitled *Breakthrough English 1*. Datzman (2013) study used “Lakof’s (1975) 10 features of female linguistic representation as well as amount of talk, conversational topics, and interruptions. Vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and vocal patterns were all evaluated, as well as firstness, occupation, omission, and visual representation and treatment of males and females”. The study findings, in general, revealed that this textbook offered an equal and balanced representation of males and females. With respect to sex firstness, the study showed that the textbook offered approximately equal and balanced sex firstness. Datzman (2013) stated that, “Women were presented first in the text 46% of the time while men were presented first 54% of the time”.

Some other studies have indicated that positioning preference is usually given to males over females in school and non-school textbooks. Bahman & Rahimi (2010) conducted a study entitled “Gender Representation in EFL Materials: an Analysis of English Textbooks of Iranian High Schools”. The study examined the existence or inexistence of gender bias in textbooks used in Iranian high schools. One of the areas the study examined is gender firstness. The results showed that males still have the priority over females. Females come second in most cases. They stated that, “the percentage of all the names, nouns, pronouns and adjectives of men is 79%, but those of women is 21% in volume 1. This means that without the slightest doubt males have been given priority over females regarding the points under investigation”. Amini & Birjandi (2012) conducted a study to investigate gender bias in some Iranian high school EFL textbooks conducted another study. The study investigated the presence of gender bias in these textbooks using various categories: gender firstness, visibility, occupations, and generic masculine constructions. The Amini & Birjandi (2012) study concluded that, “Regarding firstness, again in majority of cases men were mentioned before women as is the case in the present Iranian culture especially in traditional families”. They stated that their study results showed that, “In Book II, for 12 (85.71%) first mentions of males, there were only 2 (14.28) first mentions of females”. In other words, these Iranian school textbooks contain a blatant gender bias against females. The above-mentioned male and female figures sums up the case: males are again the centre of textbooks. Amini & Birjandi (2012) attributed females being subordinate in textbooks to Iranian culture. They added that this idea of females being subordinate to males is “deeply rooted” in Iran. In sum, despite the fact that some school and non-school curricula offer balanced and equal gender representation in terms of gender firstness in general, book designers and writers should take the issue of firstness more seriously because some textbooks are still in favour of placing males before females.

To sum up, the afore-mentioned studies showed that some school textbooks exhibited balanced representation of gender firstness while other school textbooks contained blatant gender bias against females.

Methodology

1. Materials

The sample of the present study consists of sixteen Omani English school textbooks used in Grades 1, 4, 7 and 11. It is noteworthy that all Omani government schools use these designated English school textbooks to teach English. It is obligatory that all Omani government schools use school textbooks published by the Omani ministry of education.

2. Data Collection Analysis

The study performed a content analysis of the following three categories: masculine and feminine third person pronouns, proper names, and titles associated with males and females in the sixteen Omani school textbooks. The analysis of these categories included the following sub-categories:

- 1- total number of male and female third person pronouns, names, and titles in all textbooks
- 2- number of male and Female third person pronouns, names, and titles per each textbook
- 3- number of male and female third person pronouns, names, and titles in: Grades 1, 4, 7 and 11 textbooks

3. Procedures

The analysis of gender firstness study focused on three levels of procedures: the first involved counting the number of masculine and feminine first person pronouns. Then masculine or feminine pronouns are counted according to gender firstness (e.g., masculine or feminine pronouns appearing first in dialogues etc.). The results are tabulated and analysed. The other procedure involved counting the number of masculine and feminine proper names in the sample textbooks. The results are tabulated then analysed. The last procedure focused on counting the number of masculine and feminine titles and then tabulated and analysed accordingly. In addition, statistical analysis (e.g. Chi-square, likelihood ratio, and Cramer's V) was performed for third person pronouns, names, and titles for Grades 1, 4, 7 and 11.

Analysis of Findings

The present study involved a quantitative analysis of data obtained from the sixteen Omani school textbooks. The findings of the present study involved the following categories and sub-categories:

Gender Firstness

Recent studies have paid much attention to the analysis of gender firstness in school and non-school textbooks. Gender firstness is one of the ways used to examine gender representation and verify the existence or non-existence of gender bias in school and non-school textbooks. The present study examined three different categories related to gender firstness: third person pronouns (he, him, his, she, her, and hers), masculine and feminine titles and names.

Gender Firstness of Third Person Pronouns, Names and Titles in All Textbooks

In general, the analysis of gender firstness in terms of third person singular pronouns, proper names and titles has revealed that the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks exhibit some sort of gender bias against females. Statistics has showed that almost all gender firstness categories (third person singular pronouns, names, and titles) are in favour of males over females. Males are still dominant and their presence is more powerful than females in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

Third Person Singular Pronouns

First, statistics has shown that the total number of third person singular pronouns in terms of gender firstness in all sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks is 63. Males appeared first (before females) in dialogues and activities 38 times while females appeared first (before males) 25 times in all sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks. The total number of third person singular pronouns associated with males indicates that males have the priority and that their presence is more visible than females. In other words, females are still marginalized in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks. This powerful male presence is to be taken seriously by schoolbooks designers and publishers because it enhances the idea of male supremacy and female invisibility. Gender equality or gender balance is not achieved in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks when it comes to using third person singular pronouns. Luckily, this situation can be easily modified by offering a fair distribution of masculine and feminine third person singular pronouns in school textbooks. It does not need much effort on the part of school textbook designers and publishers to do so.

Proper Names

Second, the total number of proper names in terms of gender firstness in the sixteen Omani EFL textbooks was 88. Males' proper names appeared first (before females) in dialogues and activities, 54 times whereas females' proper names appeared first (before males) 34 times only. In other words, gender gap between males and females in these Omani EFL school textbooks was huge. Male proper names appeared first (before females) almost two times more than their female counterparts. The presence of such gender-biased situation against females is by no means

acceptable. It is an indication that males' presence is dominant and prevailing in these sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

Proper names are of particular importance in gender representation because they can be easily identified by learners particularly children. Therefore, they can have a direct influence on young learners. This influence can be either positive or negative depending on their distribution according to gender in school textbooks. It is no longer deemed acceptable to have school textbooks that have predominantly masculine proper names (e.g. the present study). In other words, female's identity remains invisible and insignificant in the present study because masculine proper names frequency is much higher than that of females'.

Masculine and Feminine Titles

Finally, the study findings showed that the total number of titles used with males and females in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks is 18. The total number of titles associated with males was 12 while the total number of titles associated with females was only six. The gender gap in this category is huge and it has serious implications on the presence of females in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks. In other words, gender bias in the category of titles is flagrant and blatant. This negative situation should not be tolerated in modern EFL school textbook contexts. Balanced gender representation should be a priority to Omani EFL school textbook designers and publishers.

Gender Firstness of Third Person Pronouns, Names and Titles per Each Textbook

The analysis of the total number of third personal pronouns in each textbook has revealed some interesting information. The analysis has showed that gender firstness in terms of third personal pronouns was in favour of males except for two school textbooks: *Class Book B* (Grade 4), *Skills Book B* (Grade 4) and *Class Book* (Grade 1). *Class Book A* (Grade 4), for example, has four masculine third person pronouns and three feminine personal pronouns. In addition, *Skills Book A* (Grade 4) has no feminine third person pronoun compared to only one masculine third person pronoun. Table 4.12 provides statistics in terms of the number of occurrences of third person singular pronouns per each textbook. In other words, gender gap, in general, is still in favour of males over females. Once again, it is evident that the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks are centred on male presence. Females, on the other hand, remain invisible compared to males.

In addition, the analysis has showed that the biggest gap (in favour of males) between males' and females' third personal pronouns lies in the following two Omani EFL school textbooks: *Work Book A* (Grade 11) and *Course Book B* (Grade 11). *Work Book A* (Grade 11), for example, has 10 third personal pronouns for males and only four third personal pronouns for females. In other words, gender gap in *Work Book A* (Grade 11) is huge. In addition, *Course Book B* (Grade 11) has five third personal pronouns for males and only one feminine third personal pronoun. Once again, it is clear that the gender gap in terms of third personal singular pronouns is of a major concern and is in favour of males. Finally, this major gap between males and females is mainly visible in Grade 11 Omani EFL school textbooks in general.

The statistical difference between males and females is NOT SIGNIFICANT when chi-square and likelihood ratios are calculated for masculine and feminine third person pronouns in each Omani EFL school textbook. Table 1 reveals the Chi Squared test outputs testing the independence of association between gender and masculine and feminine third person pronouns. As indicated in the output, NO statistically significant differences were observed between males and females in textbooks used in Omani schools $\chi^2 (13, N = 416) = 10.89, p = 0.620$. Figure 1 also shows no statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of masculine and feminine third person pronouns. In sum, Table 1 and Figure 1 SPSS output statistics also show that the gender gap between males and females is not visible in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

Table 1: Number of Occurrences of Third Person Singular Pronouns per Each Textbook

Textbook	Male	Female	Ch ²	Sig	Likelihood ratio	Cramer's V
Class Book A (Grade 4)	4	3	10.896	0.620	12.812	0.416
Skills Book A (Grade 4)	1	0				
Class Book B (Grade 4)	2	3				
Skills Book B (Grade 4)	1	4				
Course Book A (Grade 11)	2	1				
Work Book A (Grade 11)	10	4				
Course Book B (Grade 11)	5	1				
Work Book B (Grade 11)	6	4				
Class Book A (Grade 1)	1	0				
Skills Book A (Grade 1)	0	0				
Class Book B (Grade 1)	0	1				
Skills Book A (Grade 1)	0	0				
Class Book A (Grade 7)	1	0				
Skills Book A (Grade 7)	1	0				
Class Book B (Grade 7)	2	2				
Skills Book B (Grade 7)	2	2				
Total	38	25				

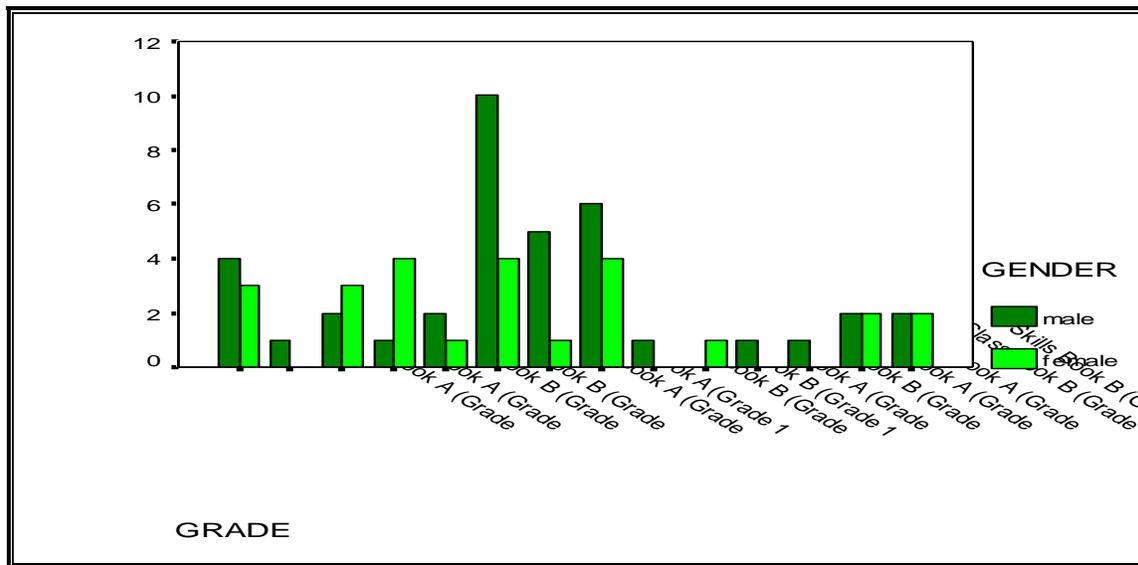


Fig 1 Number of Occurrences of Third Person Singular Pronouns per Each Textbook

It is also worth mentioning to indicate that statistics in Table 2 show that gender gap is getting wider in certain textbooks. For example, males' proper names presence is very powerful in the following two Omani EFL school textbooks: *Class Book A* (Grade 4), *Class Book A* (Grade 1) and *Course Book A* (Grade 11). Moreover, females' presence in terms of proper names is higher than males' in the following two school textbooks: *Class Book B* (Grade 4), *Skills Book B* (Grade 4) and *Class Book B* (Grade 1). *Class Book B* (Grade 4), for example, has four female proper names and three male proper names. In addition, *Skills Book B* (Grade 4) has two female proper names and no male proper names. Moreover, *Class Book B* (Grade 1) has one female proper names and no male proper names. In other words, statistics show that males' proper names are prevailing in most Omani EFL school textbooks. Gender bias is present and visible in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

The statistical difference between males and females is NOT SIGNIFICANT when chi-square and likelihood ratios are calculated for masculine and feminine proper names in each Omani EFL school textbook. Table 2 reveals the Chi Squared test outputs testing the independence of association between masculine and feminine proper names. As indicated in the output, NO statistically significant results were observed between males and females in textbooks used in Omani schools $\chi^2 (15, N = 385) = 13.02, p = 0.600$. Figure 2 also shows no statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of masculine and feminine proper names. In sum, Table 2 and Figure 2 SPSS output statistics also show that there is no gender gap between males and females in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

Table 2: Number of Occurrences of Proper Names per Each Textbook

Textbook	Male	Female	Ch ²	Sig	Df	Likelihood ratio	Cramer's V					
Class Book A (Grade 4)	7	1	13.025	0.600	15	15.391	0.385					
Skills Book A (Grade 4)	2	1										
Class Book B (Grade 4)	3	4										
Skills Book B (Grade 4)	0	2										
Course Book A (Grade 11)	7	3										
Work Book A (Grade 11)	4	2										
Course Book B (Grade 11)	1	0										
Work Book B (Grade 11)	3	1										
Class Book A (Grade 1)	2	3										
Skills Book A (Grade 1)	1	0										
Class Book B (Grade 1)	0	1										
Skills Book A (Grade 1)	1	0										
Class Book A (Grade 7)	8	3										
Skills Book A (Grade 7)	6	5										
Total	45	26										

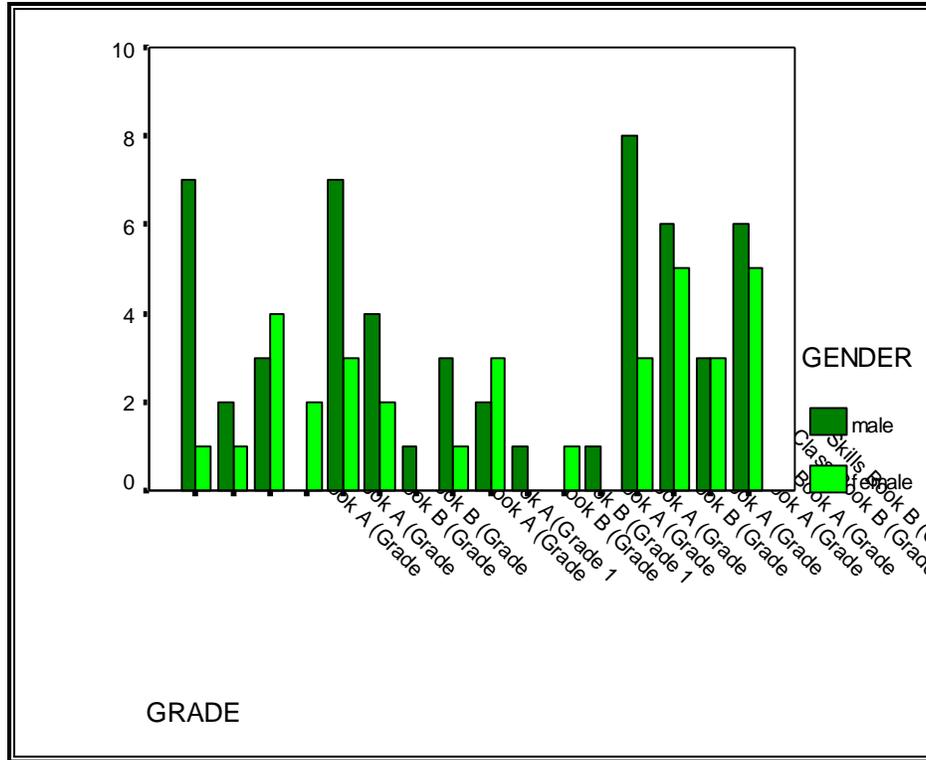


Fig. 2 Number of Occurrences of Proper Names per Each Textbook

It is also interesting to examine statistics related to gendered titles found in Table 3. Table 3 presents statistics in terms of the number of occurrences of gendered titles per each textbook. Statistics clearly show that almost all Omani EFL school textbooks are male dominated in terms of gendered titles. All Omani EFL school textbooks, except for *Work Book B* (Grade 11), have more titles associated with males than females. In other words, these EFL school textbooks offer biased and unequal representation of males and females.

The other point that statistics reveal is that the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks do not contain any significant number of titles. In fact, many of these Omani school textbooks do not have any titles at all. The other remaining Omani school textbooks either have one, two or three titles at the highest. It is also worth mentioning that these Omani EFL school textbooks offer little space for gendered titles. In other words, more masculine and feminine titles should be introduced in future editions of the Omani EFL school textbooks. In addition, special care should be given to offer a more balanced use of masculine and feminine titles in these Omani EFL school textbooks.

The statistical difference between males and females is NOT SIGNIFICANT when chi-square and likelihood ratios are calculated for gendered titles in each Omani EFL school textbook. Table 3 reveals the Chi Squared test outputs testing the independence of association between masculine and feminine gendered titles. As indicated in the output, NO statistically significant results were observed between males and females in textbooks used in Omani schools $\chi^2(7, N = 524) = 4.95, p = 0.666$. Figure 3 also shows that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of gendered titles. In sum, Table 3 and Figure 3 SPSS output statistics also show that the gender gap between males and females is not visible in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

Table 3: Number of Occurrences of Gendered Titles per Each Textbook

Textbook	Male	Female	Ch ²	Sig	Likelihood ratio	Cramer's V
Class Book (Grade 4)	0	0	4.950	0.666	6.682	0.524
Skills Book A (Grade 4)	1	0				
Class Book B (Grade 4)	0	0				
Skills Book B (Grade 4)	1	0				
Course Book A (Grade 11)	1	0				
Work Book A (Grade 11)	3	2				
Course Book B (Grade 11)	2	0				
Work Book B (Grade 11)	0	1				
Class Book A (Grade 1)	0	0				
Skills Book A (Grade 1)	0	0				
Class Book B (Grade 1)	0	0				
Skills Book B (Grade 1)	0	0				
Class Book A (Grade 7)	3	2				
Skills Book A (Grade 7)	1	1				
Class Book B (Grade 7)	0	0				
Skills Book B (Grade 7)	0	0				
Total	12	6				

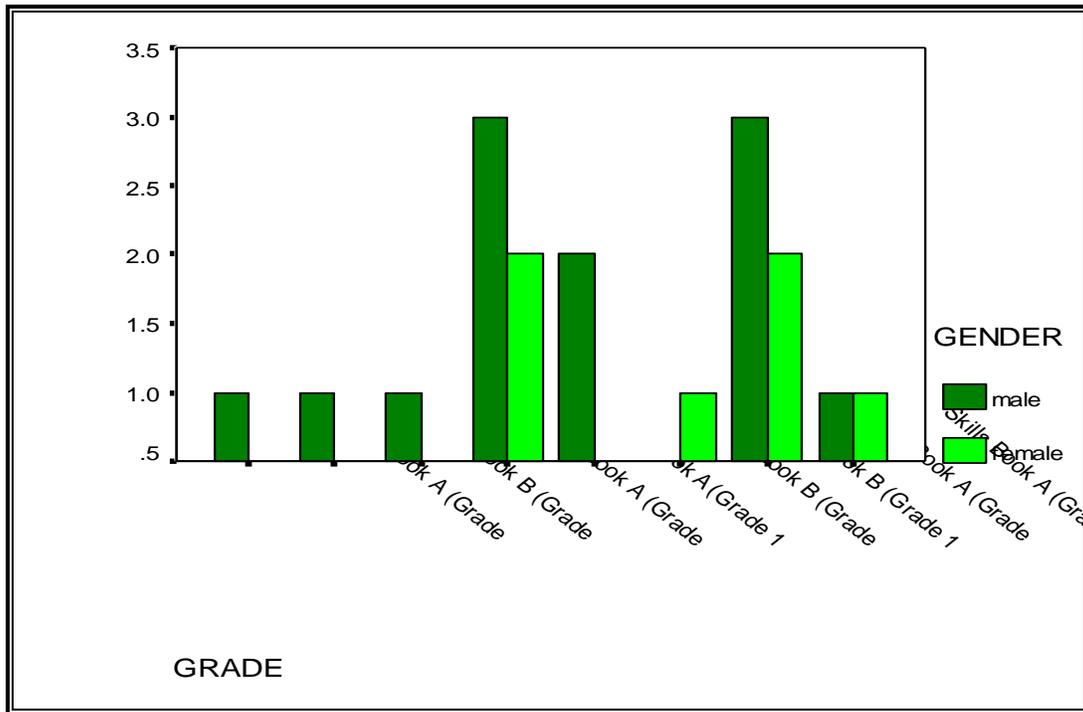


Fig 3: Number of Occurrences of Gendered Titles per Each Textbook

Gender Firstness of Third Person Pronouns, Names and Titles in Grade 4 Textbooks

The analysis of data obtained from Grade 4 Omani EFL school textbooks in terms of third person pronouns, proper names and titles has indicated that males are dominant in the categories of proper nouns and titles. Statistics has also shown that females' visibility is still marginalized and insignificant except in the category of third person pronouns. The total number of proper male names in Grade 4 Omani EFL school textbooks is 12 compared to eight female proper names. In addition, the total number of titles associated with males is two compared to no titles associated with females. In other words, males have a powerful presence whereas females stay marginalized and their presence is insignificant. Sexism and gender bias against females are still prevalent in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

On the other hand, the analysis of data found in Grade 4 Omani EFL school textbooks has revealed that females are more visible than males in terms of third person pronouns. The total number of third person singular pronouns associated with females' stands at ten while third person singular pronouns associated with males is eight. It is considered as an indication of gender presentation balance in Grade 4 Omani EFL school textbooks.

Gender Firstness of Third Person Pronouns, Names and Titles in Grade 11 Textbooks

The analysis of statistics related to third person singular pronouns, proper names and gendered titles found in Grade 11 Omani EFL school textbooks has indicated that these four EFL school textbooks contain blatant and overt gender bias against females. The total number of third person singular pronouns associated with males found in Grade 11 textbooks was 23 compared to only 10 third person singular pronouns associated with females. Females' presence is diminishing in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks. In addition, the total number of male proper names is 15 compared to six female proper names found in these Grade 11 EFL school textbooks. It is an indication that gender inequality is entrenched in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks. The analysis of gendered titles category has also indicated that males' dominance is still growing. The analysis of data obtained from Grade 11 EFL school textbooks has revealed that the number of titles associated with males is six compared to only three titles associated with females. In other words, sexism is still on the rise in the sixteen Omani EFL school textbooks.

A comparative analysis of the data available from Grade 4 and Grade 11 Omani EFL school curricula has revealed that Grade 11 school curricula have a more powerful male presence compared to Grade 4 EFL school textbooks. The total frequency of occurrence of all categories (third person pronouns, proper names and titles) is in favour of males in all Grade 11 Omani EFL school textbooks. Grade 4 EFL school textbooks, on the other hand, have one category where females' presence was more visible than males' (third person singular pronouns).

In addition, it has been noted that the statistical difference in terms of the number of occurrence between males and females in these categories is not that much in grade 4 Omani EFL school textbooks. On the other hand, the statistical difference in terms of the number of occurrence between males and females in these categories is greater in Grade 11 Omani EFL school textbooks. For example, the total number of males' proper names is 12 while the total number of females' proper names is eight in Grade 4. On the other hand, the total number of males' proper names in Grade 11 is 15 compared to six females' proper names for the same grade.

Gender Firstness of Third Person Pronouns, Names and Titles in Grade 1 Textbooks

The analysis of statistics related to third person singular pronouns, proper names and gendered titles found in Grade 1 Omani EFL school textbooks has indicated that these four EFL school textbooks exhibit a balanced representation of males and females. Numeric data show that males and females have the same number of occurrences in the three categories. The total number of third person singular pronouns associated with males in Grade 1 textbooks was the same for males and females. The textbooks have only two male and female thirds person singular pronouns. In addition, the textbooks have four masculine and feminine proper names. Last but not least, the textbooks have no masculine or feminine titles. In other words, Grade 1 school textbooks offer an equitable representation of males and females.

Gender Firstness of Third Person Pronouns, Names and Titles in Grade 7 Textbooks

The analysis of statistics related to third person singular pronouns, proper names and gendered titles found in Grade 7 Omani EFL school textbooks has revealed that these four EFL school textbooks exhibit an inequitable representation of males and females. Numeric data show that males and females have unequal number of occurrences in the three categories. The total number of masculine third person singular pronouns in Grade 7 textbooks is six while feminine third person pronouns are four. The textbooks have only 16 female proper names in comparison with 25 masculine proper names. In addition, the textbooks have four masculine titles compared to only

three feminine titles. In other words, Grade 4 school textbooks offer a biased representation of males and females. Gender bias is against females. Females remain invisible.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study are consistent with the findings of previous studies on gender firstness in school and non-school textbooks. The analysis of gender firstness (3rd person singular pronouns, proper names and titles) in these Omani EFL school textbooks indicated that gender bias is still present and is in favour of males over females. Analysis statistics have also showed that gender bias against females was substantial in terms of gender firstness. In other words, males' presence is dominant while females' presence is still marginal and subordinate to males'.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings of the present study on the existence or inexistence of gender bias against females in the target school textbooks, teachers and instructors should be aware that gender is a fundamental variable in any learning process. It can directly or indirectly influence learners' attitudes, their self-esteem and understanding of the world around them. Teachers and instructors should also be educated on how to identify and deal with gender bias in school curricula.

It is also worth mentioning that more teachers, educators and experts on gender issues in textbooks should be involved in designing and creating gender balanced school textbooks. Their expertise on the subject matter should be sought. I strongly believe that feedback obtained from teachers, instructors, and educators on gender bias and sexism in school curricula would yield more equitable and gender balanced school textbooks. I believe that their broad experience should be utilized for the benefit of producing bias-free school curricula. In other words, teachers', instructors', and educators' feedback is indispensable. Their feedback should pave the way for more gender-balanced curricula.

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