

Research paper

## A Sexism and Cultural Content Analysis of *Vision* and *Touchstone* Series

Rasoul Mohammad Hosseinpur<sup>\*1</sup>, Reza Bagheri Nevisi<sup>2</sup>, Homa Niroomand<sup>3</sup>

Department of English Language and Literature, University of Qom, I.R. of Iran

<sup>\*1</sup> Associate professor of TEFL, Department of English Language Teaching, University of Qom, Qom,  
Iran

Mohammad Hosseinpur, R., Bagheri Nevisi, R., & Niroomand, H. (2026). A sexism and cultural content analysis of *Vision* and *touchstone* series. *Journal of new advances in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 8(1), 200-222.

Doi: 10.22034/Jeltal.2026.8.1.9

\* Corresponding Author:rmhosseinpur@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

The interconnection of culture and gender in educational textbooks has been highlighted in the field of textbook evaluation. The current study aimed at investigating the representation of culture and gender in the *Touchstone* and *Vision* series. Specifically, the cultural content of the books was investigated based on Byram et al.'s (1994) framework of intercultural communicative competence, which categorizes culture into social identity, social interaction, belief and behavior, socio-political institutions, socialization, national history, geography, heritage, and stereotypes. Furthermore, gender representation was analyzed through the lens of Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model, focusing on text, discursive practice, and social practice to uncover underlying gender ideologies. Results indicated that in the *Vision* series, gender was primarily represented through pictorial representations, activities, social and domestic roles, the ratio of females to males, and masculine generic construction. However, in the *Touchstone* series, gender was illustrated in semantic roles, activities, pictorial representations, ratio of females to males, social and domestic roles, and titles. It was also found that there was a significant difference between the *Vision* and *Touchstone* series in terms of culture and gender representation. Ultimately, these findings suggest that it can assist writers and material developers in becoming more conscious of the presence of sexism in written EFL/ESL textbooks and minimizing the sexism context in their textbooks. It can also inform language teachers and learners about the appropriate selection of texts by the course book developer's checklist.

**Keywords:** Content Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Culture, EFL Textbooks, Gender, Sexism.

**Received:** 2026-01-22 **Revised** 2026-03-02 **Accepted** 2026-03-15

## **Introduction**

Making choices and judgments about materials, including textbooks, is necessary in many language programs. Additionally, textbooks have typically mirrored the primary sources of input for the student in circumstances involving second and foreign languages. According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994), the textbook is a fundamental component of English language instruction, and a teaching-learning environment is ineffective without one. To satisfy the demands of language learners, textbooks should be designed appropriately. That is to say, it is critical to assess textbooks based on their proper coverage of the intended teaching and learning content. In addition, as students typically learn about the culture and values of the target language through textbooks, they are essential to EFL education (Bagheri Nevisi & Reisi, 2024). A deeper understanding of the characteristics of a particular teaching-learning setting can be attained by textbook evaluation, as stated by Tomlinson (2001). In actuality, the creation and management of language learning programs benefit from textbook evaluation (McGrath, 2016; Sadeghi, 2024). By assessing the textbook as a linguistic action, Tomlinson (2001) claims that instructors, administrators, supervisors, and material developers can assess the impact of the materials on pupils. McGrath (2016) also made note of the importance of textbook evaluation in the creation and management of language learning programs.

English language features, such as its global reach, geographical spread, and status as a prominent scientific medium among researchers, have contributed to its widespread acceptance across the world. However, factors like religion, culture, geography, and historical backgrounds

have shaped diverse approaches to how the language is introduced and taught in different national contexts. Some argue that language invariably transmits its own cultural values to learners on a subconscious level. According to Melaku and Kirubakaran (2021), the expansion of European languages, particularly English, alongside shifts in clothing styles, the global spread of Western fashion, dietary changes, and most notably, the transformation of customs, values, ideals, and beliefs such as individualism and hedonism, as well as the secularization of various life domains, are all outcomes of reliance on Western cultural models. In parallel, educational materials, serving as essential instruments of socialization, significantly contribute to shaping and reinforcing social and cultural values and identity among learners (Kabilito, 2024; Mohammad Hosseinpour & Sarbandi, 2019). The portrayal of male and female identities in educational content across various textbooks, both in written and visual forms, holds considerable importance, as such representations can influence gender identity formation across generations. A key concern in this area involves how gender is depicted in EFL instructional materials, which is often informed by the prevailing social, cultural, and ideological frameworks of each society. Clearly, the conceptualization of gender roles is heavily influenced by the dominant cultural and ideological norms in Iran, where Islamic historical perspectives and distinct Eastern cultural orientations carry significant weight.

Teaching materials presented in textbooks is one of the most significant “gender agents”. The materials we use to study also have a significant impact on how we see gender roles and our own responsibilities in society. Textbooks are instruments that develop a specific idea of what women's position in society should be. They have the ability to influence children's thoughts and their perceptions of what the boundaries and expectations are for young girls and women, as well as their behavior. Besides, the portrayal of gender in instructional materials reflects the attitude of a particular society toward gender, which is subconsciously absorbed by students and may have

long-term negative effects on their academic performance and social behavior. For more than 50 years, language educators have debated the delicate topic of the role of culture in teaching foreign or second languages. The target language's cultural element should be included in English textbooks for foreign languages. Without a doubt, if the target language's culture is also taught at the same time as the target language, foreign language learners will be far more motivated to study English. According to Cakir (2010), cultural information should be included in language textbooks so that foreign language learners can effectively access authentic language incorporating some cultures that are regularly used in target language conversation.

The way culture and gender are represented in textbooks has a great effect on the learners' progress. Learners should know that the behaviors and speech patterns that are appropriate in their own speech community may be considered inappropriate by the native speakers of the target language. Hence, this study aimed to investigate and compare the aspects of culture which are more frequently used in *Vision* and *Touchstone* series and whether men and women are presented in a balanced way, with each sex assigned positive role models and given equal space in society. One of the most important problems attached to EFL educational materials is representation of the culture and gender and the way they are developed based on the dominant social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds in each society (Bagheri Nevisi & Moghadasi, 2020). Obviously, culture and gender representation are directly dependent on the dominant cultural and ideological beliefs of the authors. Thus, the extent to which culture and gender in localized textbooks, compared to the global EFL books, are presented is considered to be one of the difficult areas for language learners (Tahriri & Moradpour, 2014). A number of studies have been conducted on investigating the role of gender and culture in the textbook (e.g., Aljuaythin, 2018; Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Mohammad Hosseinpour & Sarbandi, 2017; Putra et al., 2020; Rashidi & Meihami, 2016; Wahyuni

et al. 2019). However, reviewing the related literature revealed that no study was conducted to investigate and compare the aspects of culture and sexism in *Vision* and *Touchstone* series.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Sexism and Language Learning**

A socio-cognitive viewpoint appears to be essential in analyzing such a discursive phenomenon because language serves as a social activity that is symbolic of complex and multidimensional social issues. One of the problems with language textbooks, which embody the norms and values of ideologies, civilizations, and even cultures, is gender. The connection between sex and language and the ways in which it is expressed have been central concerns in sociolinguistic studies. In reality, the publication of three publications in 1975 marked the beginning of the study of language and gender, and they have had a considerable impact on sociolinguistic studies ever since. Since then, according to Holmes (1996), Sociolinguists have generally demonstrated a great lot of interest in the relationship between sex and language, particularly with regard to the existence or lack of linguistic forms in a few languages that are only employed by speakers of one sex or the other.

However, over the past two decades, a lot of research on the correlations between language and sex has focused mostly on how language locates and maintains women's disadvantage in society (Eckert, 1989). Although sexist language is frequently unconscious, it still negatively affects society in a huge way. It supports the notion that men and women are naturally different and should remain so and frequently encourages harmful stereotypes. We must be careful how we use language because it is an extremely potent tool. Sexist behaviors are those that help to stereotype either sex or to treat women (or men) with contempt or indifference; sexism frequently has less to

do with purpose and more to do with results. Language is more than just a way of exchanging information. As a matter of fact, it is a vital tool for developing and sustaining social ties with other members of the speech community. One excellent illustration of the kind of social purpose that language serves is gender-based linguistic variance. It is not surprising that gender disparities are represented in language because they constitute a fundamental aspect of sociolinguistic life (Mohammad Hosseinpour & Mousavi, 2021). That is to say, there are some linguistic styles that are only suited for use by men, whereas there are other styles that are only fit for use by women. These distinctions can sometimes be influenced by both the addressee's and the addresser's sex. In a nutshell, "the differential use of certain status-marking forms by sex" (Fasold, 1990, p. 115) is what is meant by sex-linked language diversity.

### **Empirical Studies on Cultural and Gender Representation in ELT Textbooks**

Numerous studies have demonstrated that ELT textbooks serve as vital vehicles for transmitting cultural norms and gender ideologies (Arslan, 2016; Li et al., 2019). Regarding cultural representation, research indicates that textbooks often promote specific cultural values, with international books typically emphasizing target culture aesthetics and local books focusing on sociological values or source culture elements (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014; Rashidi & Meihami, 2016; Tajeddin & Bahrebar, 2017). For instance, localized textbooks tend to present culturally neutral or source-culture content, whereas global series showcase vibrant target-culture social and artistic aspects.

In terms of gender representation, a substantial body of literature reveals persistent biases and stereotyping. Studies across various contexts, including Iran, Australia, Uganda, and Saudi Arabia, consistently report a male-favoring bias characterized by the underrepresentation of women, the

confinement of females to domestic or low-status roles, and the overrepresentation of males in professional and active roles (Aljuaythin, 2018; Bahman & Rahimi, 2010; Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Lee & Collins, 2009). Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies utilizing Fairclough's model have uncovered both overt and hidden sexism in textbooks, highlighting how linguistic choices and visual representations perpetuate male supremacy and female marginalization (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Esmaili, 2010; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015; Tahriri & Moradpour, 2014). Despite this extensive research, a comparative analysis of culture and sexism specifically between the localized *Vision* series and the international *Touchstone* series remains unexplored, constituting the primary gap this study addresses.

It should be noted that after examining the aforementioned research, gender representation as well as culture have been an important issue in sociolinguistic studies and have been criticized by several scholars. As a result, the current study intended to analyze how culture is conveyed in two English textbook series, *Vision* and *Touchstone*. Furthermore, this study aimed to assess the gender power imbalance in these two series using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. The present study is an attempt to provide answer to the following research questions:

Q1. How is culture represented in the *Touchstone* and *Vision* series?

Q 2. How is gender represented in the *Touchstone* and *Vision* series?

## **Methodology**

### **Corpus**

*Vision* series course books (Alavi Moghaddam et al., 2018), are designed by The Office of Public and Secondary Teaching course books in 2018 to teach English to the Iranian high school

students who are between 16 to 19 years old. They are in 3 volumes. Each book has 4 lessons. All four skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing are covered in these books. Each lesson starts with an introduction to the lesson which is called ‘Get Ready’. ‘Conversation’ and ‘New Words’ sections provide the students with new vocabularies and new information. ‘Reading’, ‘Grammar’, ‘Listening’, ‘Speaking’, ‘Pronunciation’ and ‘Writing’ are also the next sections. ‘What you learned’ section at the end of each lesson helps the students internalize the new information. The *Vision* series is the continuous non-periodic collection that consisted of three books following the CLT framework. It was designed for teaching English in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades of Iranian high school. The authors designed these books as a way to focus on four skills simultaneously. These textbooks included various educational activities, which emphasize learning the language practically while utilizing substantial, significant, and comprehensible information in preparing instructional content, fostering the motivation of language learning through cooperation in the classroom, giving feedback toward the errors of learners, and regarding facets and their parts in the learning procedure. In the current study, *Vision* series including *Vision 1*, *Vision 2*, and *Vision 3* were utilized and analyzed.

*Touchstone* was written by McCarthy et al., (2014). It is a four-level series for adults and young adults that takes students from beginning to intermediate levels (CEFR: A1–B1). Its key features are natural language, conversation strategies, inductive learning, personalization and blended learning. Each book, fronted by a comprehensive scope and sequence matrix, comprises 12 units, each interspersed with Checkpoints at three-unit intervals which review and revise what has already been learned. Each unit is further broken into four sections, A to D. Each section typically occupies two pages, excepting section D, which runs to a third: The Vocabulary Notebook. Grammar is presented in the first section of each cycle and reinforced in the second, where it is

integrated with vocabulary while sections C and D tilt the balance in favor of listening and speaking activities. The series comprises four course books of 12 units each (plus four revision units), which take learners from beginner to intermediate levels. Each text is buttressed by attendant workbooks and listening material (which comes in a choice of CD or cassette format). For the purpose of this study, three Touchstone textbooks were selected and used. The detailed characteristics of the corpora are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:**  
*Summary of the Corpus Characteristics*

| Series     | Target Audience                                | Levels/Volumes Analyzed    | Key Features/ Framework                                       |
|------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vision     | Iranian high school students (16-19 years old) | 3 volumes (Vision 1, 2, 3) | CLT framework, focuses on 4 skills, localized content         |
| Touchstone | Adults and young adults (A1-B1)                | 3 levels (Levels 1, 2, 3)  | Natural language, conversation strategies, inductive learning |

## **Instruments**

### **Culture Scale**

To analyze the cultural content, the study utilized the documentation checklist proposed by Byram et al. (1994). This framework categorizes cultural learning into nine analytical components: social identity, social interaction, belief and behavior, socio-political institutions, socialization and the life-cycle, national history, national geography, national cultural heritage, and stereotypes. . (The detailed checklist is provided in Appendix A).

### **Sexism Scale**

Gender representation was investigated by applying Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional CDA model, which examines text, discursive practice, and social practice. To operationalize this

model and demystify the underlying gender ideologies, eight specific factors were analyzed: 1) ratio of females to males, 2) social and domestic roles, 3) semantic roles, 4) titles, 5) order of appearance, 6) pictorial representations, 7) masculine generic construction, and 8) activities.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

The data were collected through a systematic document analysis of the selected textbooks. Cultural aspects were coded according to Byram et al.'s (1994) framework of intercultural communicative competence to determine the frequency and distribution of each cultural category. The cultural content of the material in *Touchstone* and *Vision* series are categorized into social identity, social interaction, belief and behavior, national history, national identity, national heritage, and the stereotypes.

Subsequently, the textbooks were examined for gender representation based on the eight factors derived from Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model. Effectively, different parts of these two series were investigated systematically based on eight factors, i.e., female and male's characters, female and male's social roles, female and male's domestic roles, female and male's semantic roles, female and male's titles, order of appearance, masculine generic construction, activities females and males engaged in, and finally the pictorial representation of both genders.

The collected quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate frequencies and percentages. Finally, Chi-square tests were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the two series, followed by a critical interpretation of the findings through the lens of CDA.

## Results

### Cultural Representation in the *Vision* and *Touchstone* Series

The first research question examined the representation of culture based on Byram et al.'s (1994) framework of intercultural communicative competence. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of cultural aspects in the *Vision* series. The culture in the *Vision* series was mostly represented through socialization and the life-cycle (n=7; 18.9%), stereotypes and national identity (n=7; 18.9%), national geography (n=5; 13.51%), belief and behavior (n=4; 10.8%), and social identity and social groups (n=4; 10.8%).

**Table 2:**

*Frequency and Percentage of Culture Representation in Vision Series*

| <b>Cultural Aspect</b>            | <b>N</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| social identity and social groups | 4        | 10.8              |
| social interaction                | 3        | 8.10              |
| belief and behavior               | 4        | 10.8              |
| socio-political institutions      | 2        | 5.40              |
| socialization and the life-cycle  | 7        | 18.9              |
| national history                  | 2        | 5.40              |
| national geography                | 5        | 13.51             |
| national cultural heritage        | 3        | 8.10              |
| stereotypes and national identity | 7        | 18.9              |
| Total                             | 37       | 100               |

Conversely, Table 3 illustrates the cultural aspects in the *Touchstone* series. The most frequent cultural aspects in this series included social interaction (n=19; 13.6%), national geography (n=19; 13.6%), national cultural heritage (n=18; 12.9%), socialization and the life-cycle (n=18; 12.9%), and stereotypes and national identity (n=15; 10.9%).

**Table 3:**

*Frequency and Percentage of Culture Representation in Touchstone Series*

| <b>Cultural Aspect</b>            | <b>N</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| social identity and social groups | 13       | 9.35              |
| social interaction                | 19       | 13.6              |
| belief and behavior               | 11       | 7.9               |
| socio-political institutions      | 14       | 10.07             |
| socialization and the life-cycle  | 18       | 12.9              |
| national history                  | 12       | 8.6               |
| national geography                | 19       | 13.6              |
| national cultural heritage        | 18       | 12.9              |
| stereotypes and national identity | 15       | 10.79             |
| Total                             | 139      | 100               |

To determine the difference between the two series regarding cultural representation, a Chi-square test was conducted. As shown in Table 4, there was a statistically significant difference between the culture representations of the *Touchstone* and *Vision* series ( $\chi^2 = 16.40$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 4:**

*Chi-Square Test on Culture Representations in Two Corpora*

|                              | <b>Chi-Square<br/>Value</b> | <b>Df</b> | <b>P</b> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 16.405 <sup>a</sup>         | 2         | .001     |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 16.585                      | 2         | .001     |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 13.506                      | 1         | .000     |
| N of Valid Cases             | 176                         |           |          |

### **Gender Representation in the *Vision* and *Touchstone* Series**

The second research question investigated gender representation using Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model. Table 5 displays the results for the *Vision* series. The most frequent gender aspects identified were pictorial representations ( $n=16$ ; 21.3%), activities ( $n=12$ ; 16.0%), social and domestic roles ( $n=11$ ; 14.6%), ratio of females to males ( $n=9$ ; 12.0%), and masculine generic construction ( $n=9$ ; 12.0%).

**Table 5:**

*Frequency and Percentage of Gender Representation in Vision Series*

| <b>Gender Aspect</b>           | <b>N</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| ratio of females to males      | 9        | 12.0              |
| social and domestic roles      | 11       | 14.6              |
| semantic roles                 | 6        | 8.0               |
| Titles                         | 8        | 10.6              |
| order of appearance            | 4        | 5.3               |
| pictorial representations      | 16       | 21.3              |
| masculine generic construction | 9        | 12.0              |
| activities                     | 12       | 16.0              |
| Total                          | 75       | 100               |

Table 6 reports the gender representation in the *Touchstone* series. The most frequent aspects included semantic roles (n=21; 15.3%), activities (n=21; 15.3%), pictorial representations (n=19; 13.8%), ratio of females to males (n=18; 13.1%), and social and domestic roles (n=17; 12.4%).

**Table 6:**

*Frequency and Percentage of Gender Representation in Touchstone Series*

| <b>Gender Aspect</b>           | <b>N</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| ratio of females to males      | 18       | 13.1              |
| social and domestic roles      | 17       | 12.4              |
| semantic roles                 | 21       | 15.3              |
| Titles                         | 17       | 12.4              |
| order of appearance            | 11       | 8.2               |
| pictorial representations      | 19       | 13.8              |
| masculine generic construction | 13       | 9.4               |
| Activities                     | 21       | 15.3              |
| Total                          | 137      | 100               |

Finally, a Chi-square test was run to ascertain the differences in gender representations between the two corpora. Table 7 indicates a significant difference between the gender representations of the *Touchstone* and *Vision* series ( $\chi^2 = 15.223$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Specifically, the *Vision* series showed a dominance of male pictorial representations, whereas the *Touchstone* series indicated more equal representations of both genders.

**Table 7:**

*Chi-Square Test on Gender Representations in Two Corpora*

|                              | Chi-Square Value    | Df | p    |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 15.223 <sup>a</sup> | 2  | .001 |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 15.004              | 2  | .001 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 12.928              | 1  | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases             | 212                 |    |      |

## Discussion

The current study aimed at investigating the representation of the culture and gender in *Touchstone* and *Vision* series based on Byram et al.'s (1994) framework of intercultural communicative competence and Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model. To this end, two corpora including *Vision* and *Touchstone* series were selected and analyzed. The findings revealed that in *Vision* series culture was represented in *socialization and the life-cycle, stereotypes and national identity, national geography, belief and behavior, and social identity and social groups*. In contrast, in *Touchstone* series culture was presented by *social interaction, national geography, national cultural heritage, socialization and the life-cycle, and stereotypes and national identity*.

The findings of the current study showed that gender and culture were represented somewhat differently in *Touchstone* and *Vision* series with respect to different tasks assigned to the specific gender and groups. Accordingly, this study supports the findings of previous investigations such as Stockdale (2006), Paivandi (2008), and Esmaili (2010). A profound look at the pictorial representation of males in *Vision* series reveals to some extent the dominance of men's pictures over women's. Even though the difference between men's and women's pictorial representation is not big, it definitely expresses some unequal ideological, societal, social, cultural and religious

implications. Such pictorial representation of men and women could be interpreted as gender inequality which confirms societal stereotype of the dominance of men. In contrast, in *Touchstone* series, the equal occurrence of both genders was considered as a remarkable tendency to create gender equality against gender discrimination and bias which acts as a stereotype residing in societies.

As far as the culture representation is concerned, the findings implied that the textbook writers' linguistic ideologies and choices may influence the way the readers respond to views about culture and diversity. The descriptions and portrayals of individuals in the society (e.g., classmates, historical figures), institutions (e.g., family, school), and social activities and practices (e.g., making friends, visiting relatives, listening to music) may lead to the standardization, naturalization, and eternalization of specific assumptions about ways of being, thinking, and behaving. Although the working of ideology is not always the product of a conscious choice on the part of the author (Levorato, 2003), language school textbooks can be deliberately exploited to perpetuate ideas about the self and the other in relation to culture, identity, ethnicity, nationalism, and diversity.

When analyzing the role of language in the perpetuation of ideologies, Thompson (2013) emphasizes that the mobilization of meaning in the service of power not only maintains but also establishes relations of dominance. Such results are consent with the finding of previous research (e.g., Khouni & Boudjelal, 2019; Kirkgoz, 2019; Mirhosseini, 2018; Ulum & Köksal, 2019). For instance, Caro and Caro (2019) concluded that the textbook implicitly promoted the British culture as universal using positive expressions and adjectives. The results are also in line with the findings of Khouni and Boudjelal's (2019). They also found out that possessing a great deal of social and cultural information assisted learners achieve the right interpretation of any utterance, produce

more socially and culturally appropriate comments, and avoid misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Similarly, Prieto-Arranz and Jacob (2019) advocated for a transcultural approach, arguing that it is more acceptable to introduce language learners to issues that are universally relevant across all cultures. Their results contradict the widely accepted belief that transcultural competence leads to an individual's view of themselves as culturally closer to members of their imagined communities.

Another aspect of gender representation was the domestic and social roles of males and females. The results indicated that balanced and equal representation of both genders in terms of occupations and social role such as of manager, chief, engineer, singer, doctor, writer, and student was frequently observed in Touchstone series. From CDA stance, the ratio of the representation of both genders in domestic and social roles reflected the societal, social, and cultural beliefs and practices in the society. In *Vision* series, women were associated with some low-status roles. However, men got involved in outside activities, work as craftsmen, and do sports more than women. These results are supported by Jannati (2015), Ahmad and Shah (2019). It was also found that in *Vision* textbooks masculine voices outnumbered feminine voices, and male characters occupied more space as they had more opportunities to speak than their female counterparts.

Another factor contributing to the male dominance of space was that female speeches were often reported indirectly while males directly, which makes feminine voices less audible and thus the space they were allotted was reduced. In addition, most texts that featured masculine characters were autobiographical, whereas the feminine-centered texts are usually biographical. This study revealed the existence of sexism in *Vision* series. Accordingly, this study can be verified by the findings of previous investigations that have been mentioned above. Actually, investigating this series upheld that the issue of inequality and prejudices is prolonged. The findings revealed that

*Vision* series did not have a neutral perspective toward gender representation pictorially. It means that both genders have not been behaved equally even in terms of picture representation. This study emphasized the arguments raised by other researchers such as Jones et al. (1997), Bayyurt and Litosseliti (2006) as well as Esmaili (2010). In contrast to the local *Visions* textbook series, according to Fairclough (2001, 2015), capitalism economy is an ideology aims to expand the economic system in which private ownerships, private productions and private benefits are celebrated. Capitalism inculcates the values and norms related to market as supply, demand, price, distribution, investment. Consequently, the series as internationally distributed ELT textbooks pursue the ideology of the late twentieth century known as capitalist economy.

Moreover, research into the majority of ELT textbooks revealed that gender is always presented in a biased manner (Johansson & Malmsjö Bachelder, 2009). According to Weatherall (2002), language can both reflect and challenge the social status of both men and women. The social categorization, which is one of the variables used to assess the language individuals use, is influenced by a number of criteria, including gender, social class, age, ethnicity, education, and others (Lee, 2019). In a similar vein, Ansary and Babaii (2003) assert that language, despite being viewed as a neutral communicative tool, is a means of transmitting various attitudes, values, and norms; as a result, it is not surprising that language plays a significant role in reinforcing or even forming attitudes and values of a society. The interaction of language and gender is a prominent topic in the field of sociolinguistics. Bell et al., (2006) viewed gender as a contextually dependent term that links linguistic techniques to males and females. It illustrates the socially prescribed roles for men and women.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the representation of culture and gender in the *Vision* and *Touchstone* textbook series. The major findings indicated that while the international *Touchstone* series promoted a more balanced gender representation and a broader, interaction-oriented cultural scope, the localized *Vision* series exhibited a distinct male bias and focused heavily on localized socialization and national stereotypes. These findings confirm that EFL textbooks are not neutral; they act as powerful agents of socialization that reflect and perpetuate the dominant cultural and ideological beliefs of their respective societies.

Despite these insights, the study has certain limitations. First, the research relied solely on document analysis of the textbooks' written and visual content, without triangulating the data through the actual perceptions of teachers and students who use these materials. Second, the study was restricted to two specific textbook series within the Iranian educational context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other localized or international textbooks.

Based on these limitations, it is suggested that future research employ triangulation methods, such as interviewing textbook writers to understand their underlying decision-making processes, and surveying students and teachers to assess how they perceive and internalize the gender and cultural messages in these books. Furthermore, future studies could expand the scope to include a wider variety of local and global textbook series across different educational levels. Pedagogically, it is imperative that teacher education programs raise pre-service teachers' awareness of gender and cultural biases in instructional materials, equipping them with critical strategies to subvert stereotypical discourses and foster a more inclusive classroom environment.

## References

- Ahmad, M., & Shah, S. K. (2019). A critical discourse analysis of gender representations in the content of 5th grade English language textbook. *International and Multidisciplinary journal of social Sciences*, 8(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.17583/rimcis.2019.3989>
- Alavi Moghaddam, B., Kheirabadi, R., Rahimi, M., & Davari, H. (2018). *Vision 1*. SAMT.
- Alavi Moghaddam, B., Kheirabadi, R., Rahimi, M., & Davari, H. (2018). *Vision 2*. SAMT.
- Alavi Moghaddam, B., Kheirabadi, R., Rahimi, M., & Davari, H. (2018). *Vision 3*. SAMT.
- Aljuaythin, W. (2018). Gender representation in EFL textbooks in Saudi Arabia: A critical discourse analysis approach. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 7(5), 151-157. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.7n.5p.151>
- Amerian, M., & Esmaili, F. (2015). A brief overview of critical discourse analysis in relation to gender studies in English language textbooks. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(5), 10-33. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0605.16>
- Ansary, H. & Babaii, E. (2003). Subliminal sexism in current ESL/EFL textbooks. *Asian EFL journal*, 5(1), 1-15.
- Arslan, S. (2016). An analysis of two Turkish EFL books in terms of cultural aspects. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 232, 217-225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.10.049>
- Bagheri Nevisi, R. & Moghadasi, A. (2020). Content analysis of Iranian high school English textbooks in terms of politeness markers, speech acts, and language functions. *Issues in Language Teaching*, 9(2), 155-184. <https://doi.org/10.22054/ilt.2021.54493.529>
- Bagheri Nevisi, R & Reisi, E. (2024). Representation of culture and intercultural interactions in Iranian and Afghan secondary English textbooks. *Foreign Language Teaching and Translation Studies*, 8(2), 109-138. <https://doi.org/10.22034/efl.2024.425553.1274>
- Bahman, M., & Rahimi, A. (2010). Gender representation in EFL materials: An analysis of English textbooks of Iranian high schools. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 273-277. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.149>
- Barton, A. & Sakwa, L. N. (2012). The representation of gender in English textbooks in Uganda. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 20(2), 173-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2012.669394>
- Bayyurt, Y. & Litosseliti, L. (2006). Gender and language in education. *Gender and language: Theory and practice*, 2(8), 73-89.
- Bell, C. M., McCarthy, P. M., & McNamara, D. S. (2006). Variations in language use across gender: Biological versus sociological theories. In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 28(28).34-55.
- Byram, M., Morgan, C., & Colleagues. (1994). *Teaching and Learning Language and Culture*. WBC. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800418158>
- Cakir, I. (2010). The frequency of culture-specific elements in the ELT coursebooks at elementary schools in Turkey. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 4(2), 66-79.
- Caro, H. J., & Caro, D. A. (2019). Cultural hegemony portrayed in Cutting Edge pre-Intermediate textbook. *Enletawa Journal*, 12(2), 42-57. <https://doi.org/10.19053/2011835X.10951>
- Eckert, P. (1989). The whole woman: Sex and gender differences in variation. *Language variation and change*, 1(3), 245-267. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S095439450000017X>
- Esmaili, F. (2010). A comparative study on gender representation in Iranian high school English textbooks and American Headway series: A critical discourse analysis perspective. M. A. Thesis. Arak University, Arak: Iran

- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Pearson Education.
- Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and power* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Longman.
- Fasold, R. (1990). *The sociolinguistics of language*. Blackwell.
- Holmes, J. (1996). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Longman.
- Hutchinson, T. & Torres, E. (1994). The textbook as agent of change. *ELT Journal*, 48(4), 315-328. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/48.4.315>
- Jannati, S. (2015). Gender representation in EFL textbooks: A case of ILI pre-intermediate series. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 2(3), 211-222.
- Johansson, S., & Malmsjö Bachelder, K. (2009). *Gender bias in EFL textbook dialogues*. Blackwell.
- Jones, M. A., Kitemu, C., & Sunderland, J. (1997). Discourse roles, gender and language textbook dialogues: who learns what from John and Sally? *Gender and education*, 9(4), 469-490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540259721204>
- Kabilito, I. J. (2024). The influence of instructional materials on students' academic achievement. *Research Invention Journal of Law, Communication and Languages*, 3(2), 30-33.
- Khouni, O. & Boudjelal, A. (2019). Introducing the target language culture to EFL learners to enhance sociocultural competence. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, 10(3), 45-66. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no3.31>
- Kirkgoz, Y. (2019). Investigating the growth of English-medium higher education in Turkey and the Middle East region. In D. Staub (eds), *Quality assurance and accreditation in foreign language education* (9-19). Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_2)
- Lee, J. F. (2019). In the pursuit of a gender-equal society: do Japanese EFL textbooks play a role? *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28(2), 204-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2018.1423956>
- Lee, J. F., & Collins, P. (2009). Australian English-language textbooks: the gender issues. *Gender and education*, 21(4), 353-370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250802392257>
- Levorato, A. (2003). *Language and gender in the Fairy Tale tradition: A linguistic analysis of old and new story telling*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230503878>
- Li, J., Dong, J., & Duan, W. (2019). Identity options and cultural representations in English textbooks used in Cambodia. *Asian Social Science*, 15(11), 60-74. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v15n11p60>
- McCarthy, M., McCarten, J., & Sandiford, H. (2014). *Touchstone series*. Cambridge University Press.
- McGrath, I. (2016). *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748694822>
- Melaku, M., & Kirubakaran, A. (2021). The impact of western culture on the identity and lifestyle of youths in Mettu University in the case of Mettu main campus. *Anthropo Indialogs*, 1(1), 24-39.
- Mirhosseini, S. A. (2018). Issues of ideology in English language education worldwide: An overview. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 26(1), 19-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2017.1318415>
- Mohammad Hosseinpur, R., & Mousavy, Z. (2021). Politeness in Instagram: The employment of gratitude speech act by male and female English and Persian users. *Research in English Language Pedagogy*, 9(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.30486/relp.2020.1897275.1197>

- Mohammad Hosseinpur, R. & Sarbandi Farahani, M. (2017). Cultural intelligence, cultural identity and Iranian EFL learners' use of politeness strategies. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies*, 4(4), 27-45. <https://doi.org/10.30479/elt.2017.1453>
- Mohammad Hosseinpur, R. & Sarbandi Farahani, M. (2019). Cultural intelligence, Cultural identity and Iranian EFL learners' use of English address terms. *Journal of Foreign Language Research*, 9(2), 585-608. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jflr.2019.256870.502>
- Paivandi, S. (2008). *Discrimination and intolerance in Iran's textbooks*. Freedom House.
- Prieto-Arranz, J. I. & Jacob, K. (2019). A Transcultural Approach to EIL teaching and its impact on learners' national identities. *Atlantis*, 41(2), 11-34. <https://doi.org/10.28914/Atlantis-2019-41.2.01>
- Putra, T. K., Rochsantiningsih, D., & Supriyadi, S. (2020). Cultural representation and intercultural interaction in textbooks of English as an international language. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 10(1), 163-184. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v10i1.1766>
- Rashidi, N. & Meihami, H. (2016). Hidden curriculum: An analysis of cultural content of the ELT textbooks in inner, outer, and expanding circle countries. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1212455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1212455>
- Sadeghi, M. (2024). Evaluating textbooks in Iranian EFL context; Vision 1 in focus. *Journal of new advances in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.22034/Jeltal.2024.6.1.1>
- Samadikhah, M., & Shahrokhi, M. (2015). A critical discourse analysis of ELT materials in gender representation: A comparison of "Summit" and "Top Notch". *English Language Teaching*, 8(1), 121-133. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n1p121>
- Stockdale, D. A. (2006). Gender representation in an EFL textbook. *Paper submitted to the School of Humanities of the University of Birmingham*.
- Tahriri, A., & Moradpour, P. (2014). Gender representation in 'Top-Notch' series: A critical discourse analysis perspective. *International Journal of Research Studies in Psychology*, 3(2), 39-51. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrsp.2014.633>
- Tajeddin, Z., & Bahrebar, S. (2017). Sociological and aesthetic senses of culture represented in global and localized ELT textbooks. *Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)*, 36(3), 119-143.
- Tajeddin, Z., & Teimournezhad, S. (2015). Exploring the hidden agenda in the representation of culture in international and localized ELT textbooks. *The Language Learning Journal*, 43(2), 180-193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2013.869942>
- Thompson, J. B. (2013). *Ideology and modern culture: Critical social theory in the era of mass communication*. John Wiley.
- Tomlinson, B. (2001). *Materials development: Teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667206.010>
- Ulum, Ö. G. & Köksal, D. (2019). Ideological and hegemonic practices in global and local EFL textbooks written for Turks and Persians. *Acta Educationist Generalis*, 9(3), 66-88. <https://doi.org/10.2478/atd-2019-0014>
- Wahyuni, Y. D., Rizkanisa, N., Samad, I. A., & Daud, B. (2019). Experiencing English: A textbook evaluation on the cultural loads. *Al-Ta lim Journal*, 26(3), 254-266. <https://doi.org/10.15548/jt.v26i3.555>
- Weatherall, A. (2002). *Gender, language and discourse*. Routledge.

### Appendix A: Byram's Checklist

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>social identity and social groups</i> | groups within the nation-state which are the basis for other than national identity, including social class, regional identity, ethnic minority, professional identity, and which illustrate the complexity of individuals' social identities and of a national society (NB the issue of national identity is dealt with under 'stereotypes') |
| <i>social interaction</i>                | conventions of verbal and non-verbal behavior in social interaction at differing levels of familiarity, as outsider and insider within social groups.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>belief and behavior</i>               | routine and taken-for-granted actions within a social group national or sub-national and the moral and religious beliefs which are embodied within them; secondly, routines of behavior taken from daily life which are not seen as significant markers of the identity of the group.                                                         |
| <i>socio-political institutions</i>      | institutions of the state and the values and meanings they embody which characterize the state and its citizens and which constitute a framework for ordinary, routine life within the national and sub-national groups; provision for health-care, for law and order, for social security, for local government, etc.                        |
| <i>socialization and the life-cycle</i>  | Institutions of socialization families, schools, employment, religion, military service and the ceremonies which mark passage through stages of social life; representation of divergent practices in social groups as well as national auto-stereotypes of expectations and shared interpretations.                                          |
| <i>national history</i>                  | periods and events, historical and contemporary, which are significant in the constitution of the nation and its identity both actually significant and, not necessarily identical, perceived as such by its members.                                                                                                                         |
| <i>national geography</i>                | geographical factors within the national boundaries which are significant in members' perceptions of their country; other factors which are information (known but not significant to members)                                                                                                                                                |

---

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                   | essential to outsiders in intercultural communication (NB national boundaries, and changes in them, are part of 'national history')                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>national cultural heritage</i> | cultural artefacts perceived to be emblems and embodiments of national culture from past and present; in particular, those which are 'known' to members of the nation e.g. Shakespeare in Britain, the Impressionists in France, Wagner in Germany through their inclusion in curricula of formal education; and also contemporary classics, not all of which have reached the school curriculum and some of which may be transient but significant, created by television and other media e.g. Truffaut's films in France, Agatha Christie in Britain, Biermann's songs in Germany. |
| stereotypes and national identity | for example, German and English notions of what is 'typically' German and English national identity; the origins of these notions historical and contemporary and comparisons among them; symbols of national identities and stereotypes and their meanings, e.g., famous monuments and people.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

---