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Research Paper

## **A CDA of Representation of Males and Females in EFL Textbooks of Iranian High Schools: *Vision Series***

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### **Abstract**

The present study, adopting a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, aimed to identify the particular ways by which social actors (i.e., males and females) have been represented linguistically in EFL *Vision* series taught in Iranian high schools, using van Leeuwen's (1996) framework as the analytical model. To this end, content analysis of the textbooks was carried out to explore the frequency and proportion of different discursive features for each social actor. Quantitative data analysis showed that there were no significant differences between the males and females for all the discursive features of deletion, role allocation, and substitution. Also, qualitative findings revealed that the females were depicted as successful, famous, independent, and talented as the males. In the same way, the kinds of activities describing each of the male and female actors did not seem to be very different. This elevation of women from the margin to the foreground is in contrast to previous EFL textbooks which promoted a traditional image of women—often confined to home context. Finally, pedagogical implications for EFL teachers and students are discussed within a CDA perspective.

**Keywords:** *CDA, Social actors, Discursive features, Deletion, Role allocation, Substitution*

## Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) rests upon the assumption that texts, both written and spoken, are not ideologically neutral but invested (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; van Dijk, 2001, 2006; van Leeuwen, 1996). It focuses on the analysis of all discourse types in an attempt to identify the ideology and values underlying them. Taking a critical stance towards language, manifested, in the main, in the belief that naturalization and opacity of ideologies constitute an important part of discourse (Fairclough, 2010), CDA proponents seek to reveal the interests and power relations in any institutional and socio-historical context through analyzing the ways in which language is encoded. To put it differently, denaturalization of discourse is the main objective of CDA. It basically involves depicting how social structures determine properties of discourse, and how discourse, in turn, determines social structures. In this sense, discourse acts as socially constitutive as well as socially shaped (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

One area CDA could comfortably navigate through with important consequences for society is school curriculum (Frein, 1998; Hodge & Kress, 1993). As Kress (1996) mentioned, the main aim of a curriculum is not to transfer mere knowledge to learners, but to instill certain attitudes, social values, and norms. It is important to recognize that this process of identity construction is not conscious on the part of the learner. On the contrary, the preservation or challenge of the political and social structures is achieved indirectly through the hidden agenda built into the curriculum. Therefore, the learners' identity formation is largely an unconscious function of the learning curriculum in which they are situated (Gee, 2011).

Textbooks constitute an important part of any curriculum (Litz, 2005; Richards, 2001). The content of textbooks has been always a matter of both interest and concern to people in positions of authority because textbooks, like any piece of discourse, are believed not only to convey the intended information but also to have a key role in shaping the learners' world view in a particular direction, leading to the hegemony of certain individuals, groups, or classes over the others (Moughrabi, 2001).

On a more practical basis, the concept of ideological revelation is often realized in the close scrutiny of linguistic choices a textbook producer makes as a tool by which the ideological significance of a particular discourse situation can be reproduced. One fruitful research area fitting comfortably within this CDA trend includes gender inequality, as one manifestation of social inequality issues (Gee, 2011). This is particularly important in relation to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks as they are considered the main sources through which EFL learners come to know the culture of the target language (TL). The ideological components embedded in these textbooks can form and inform the learners' attitudes towards their own or the opposite gender on an unconscious level.

Accordingly, considering the relationship between ideology and language, the purpose of the present study is to identify the particular ways by which social actors, males and females, have been represented in *Vision* series taught in Iranian high schools and reveal the possible hidden discursive structures in this respect. This is done through adopting a CDA approach which, like gender-based studies, has the aim of revealing ideological agendas consciously built into many discourse types.

## Literature Review

Investigations of gender bias in EFL textbooks has been recently brought into focus (Eckert & McConnell, 2003; Evans & Davis, 2000; Yaghubi-Notash, 2007). Ansary and Babaii (2003) evaluated two EFL textbooks taught at Iranian high schools, *Right Path to English I* and *Right Path to English II*, in terms of sexism by analyzing the dialogs, reading passages, exercises,

and illustrations. They concluded that these textbooks used sexist use of language in that they assumed an unequal role for females, thus depicting a biased picture of women to Iranian EFL students.

Amal Saleh, Sajjadi, and Yarmohammadi (2006) investigated how language as a social practice had been employed in three sets of different EFL textbooks used in various levels of high schools in Iran to represent a particular society. After doing content analysis in terms of possible differences in social gender, race, and class, the researchers came up with different images of social actors. Females were found to be largely ignored in these EFL textbooks. Additionally, the frequency and type of activities males and females had been linked with were in sharp contrast. Females were mostly depicted as traditionally domestic actors enjoying few professional opportunities in the society.

Also, Bahman and Rahimi (2010) examined different areas of bias in the representation of males and females in three volumes of EFL textbooks taught in the high schools of Iran. The results showed that the representation of women and men was not partial. That is to say, men were more highlighted in terms of names, nouns, pronouns, and adjectives associated with them. As for firstness, again, male-attributed terms came first more frequently than those of females. In reading passages, the appearance of male characters reported more frequently than female characters.

Applying van Leeuwen's (1996) framework, Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh (2010) analyzed the linguistic representation of male and female social actors and the formation of gender identities in *New Interchange* series. Their findings indicated that females, compared with males, were represented as more active, successful, prominent, assertive, and independent. Also, women were significantly in the foreground and had high-status jobs. In conclusion, women were portrayed as crucial as men in their social functions.

In the same vein, Karimaghahi and Kasmani (2013), scrutinizing *Top Notch 2A/2B* in terms of the linguistic representation of male and female social actors, reported that females were depicted as less successful and intellectual in the *Top Notch* textbooks and more ordinary jobs were assigned to them. Shirvani (2013) also replicated the same findings for *Summit* series. To put it simply, males were portrayed as more independent and active, and they were included more than females.

These and other gender-centered studies count as tremendous strides. However, as Roohani (2014) said, they also suffer from important limitations and gaps. For example, some studies (e.g., Yaghoubi-Notash & Nariman-Jahan, 2012) just employed quantitative methods of analysis for gender representation; some studies (e.g., Amini & Birjandi, 2012) did not made use of CDA perspective to examine gender bias, some (e.g., Shirvani, 2013) were built on a restricted corpus (i.e., limited to only readings and conversations). Adopting a CDA perspective, the present study investigates, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the linguistic representation of male and female social actors and the construction of gender identities in recently published EFL *Vision* series taught at Iranian high schools. To do so, attempts were made to identify the principal ways through which social actors are represented in the texts under study and reveal the possible hidden discursive structures. The study draws on the work of van Leeuwen' (1996) framework, which utilizes a socio-semantic inventory. Therefore, the present study aimed at answering the following research question: How are male and female social actors represented in *Vision* series?

## Methodology

### Corpus

The present study examined *Vision* series (Alavi Moghaddam, Kheirabadi, Rahimi, & Davari, 2018), comprising 3 volumes. The first volume, *Vision 1*, consists of 4 lessons. Each lesson contains such sections as Get Ready, Conversation, New Words & Expressions, Reading, Grammar, Listening & Speaking, Pronunciation, Writing, and What You Learned. The second and third volumes, *Vision 2* & *Vision 3*, consists of 3 lessons with the same sections as *Vision 1*. A substantial portion of the textbooks is devoted to listening and speaking parts and every lesson enjoys a reading passage. For this reason, all listening, speaking, and reading sections were selected for the content analysis. The conversations, readings, and listening parts were, therefore, scrutinized for the possible significance for gender representation in social contexts. The reason for the selection of these textbooks is that *Vision* series are the sole EFL textbooks taught in Iranian high schools, recently replaced the old EFL series. The books have been designed, developed, and printed by officially appointed educational authorities in Iran. From a CDA perspective, they could act as potential means of indirectly disseminating certain ideologies and attitudes espoused by these people in authority. The dominant content of the books under study is highly culture-specific as it mainly attempts to represent Iranian life and culture in English.

### Theoretical Basis for Analysis

The content of the books were analyzed using van Leeuwen's (1996) framework, a comprehensive CDA framework that is premised on a socio-semantic inventory. The model assumes that each and every discourse type is an act of recontextualization of social practices (van Leeuwen, 2008). In this framework, deletion, rearrangement, and substitution constitute the three main types of transformation. The following is a rough outline of the different components featuring in van Leeuwen's (1996) model, employed in the present study as the criterion for the content analysis.

### Deletion

The process of deletion stands as the main concern of CDA and includes both inclusion and exclusion of "social actors to suit their interest and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are included" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 28).

### Exclusion

As one of the components of deletion, exclusion sends social actors to the background or completely suppresses them through specific linguistic mechanisms. According to van Leeuwen (2008), a substantial portion of CDA relates to exclusion, mostly evident in newspapers and political discourse. Excluded actors, by their hidden nature, are more difficult to interpret.

### Inclusion

Another dimension of the revealing process of deletion is inclusion. Here, social actors are directly stated for the interests of text production and readership.

### Role allocation

Rearrangement or role allocation is another component. It is matter of identification of which role is allocated to which social actor. Social actors can be activated (i.e., represented as

the active dynamic forces in an activity), or passivated (i.e., represented as undergoing an activity or as being the recipient).

### **Activation**

In the process of activation, the subject of the clause is identified as the doer or the agent of the action. Social actors can be activated through being represented as active dynamic forces.

### **Passivation**

Passivation occurs when social actors are being represented as experiencing an activity or as being the recipient of the action. Passivated social actors can be subjected (treated as objects in the representation) or beneficialised (positively or negatively, benefitting from the action) through participation.

### **Substitution**

There are certain discursive features under the umbrella term substitution, such as functionalization, classification, relational identification, categorization, nomination, and many others.

### **Functionalization**

Functionalization occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of an activity, an occupation, or a role.

### **Classification**

Classification occurs when the social actors are referred in terms of the major categories by mean of which a given society or institution differentiates between classes of people.

### **Identification**

Identification occurs when social actors are defined in terms of what they are (including age, gender, provenance, class, wealth, ethnicity, religion and so on).

### **Relational identification**

Relational identification represents social actors in terms of their personal, kinship, or work relations to each other, realized by nouns denoting relations such as friend, aunt, and colleague.

### **Nomination**

Nomination is represented by the use of proper nouns. It can be realized as formalization (surname only, with or without honorifics), semiformalization (given name and surname), or informalization (given name only).

### **Genericization**

Genericization occurs when social actors are represented as classes or as specific, identifiable individuals.

### **Specification**

It is realized as two forms: (a) individualization which occurs when social actors are referred to as individuals and (b) collectivization occurs when social actors are referred to as groups which are realized by plurality, by a mass noun, or a noun denoting a group of people.

### Personalization

When social actors are represented as a human being or not, that is realized by proper names or nouns and personal or possessive pronouns.

### Impersonalization

Impersonalization can be realized through abstraction or objectivation. The former occurs when an attribute is assigned to social actors. The latter occurs when social actors are represented by means of reference to concrete nouns, a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the activity they are represented as being engaged in.

### Indetermination

It occurs when social actors are represented as unspecified, anonymous individuals or groups. Indetermination is typically realized by indefinite pronouns such as *somebody*, *someone*, *some people*, and many others.

## Results

### Deletion

In the first part of the analysis, the frequency of the tokens which introduced the social actors in terms of deletion were calculated. Table 1 summarizes the frequency and percentages of the instances of inclusion and exclusion of male and female social actors, together with chi-square results, in *Vision* series.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for Deletion*

Deletion	Male	Female	Chi-square	Sig.
Inclusion (Total = 249)	138 (55.4%)	111 (44.6%)	2.928	.087
Exclusion (Total = 22)	9 (40.9%)	13 (59.1%)	.727	.394

As shown in Table 1, the analyzed data yielded more cases of inclusion ( $n = 249$ ) than exclusion ( $n = 22$ ) for both males and females. Also, male social actors are included with more frequency (55.4%) than female social actors (44.6%). However, the results of chi-square test proves the difference not to be statistically significant ( $p = .087$ ). In other words, the male social actors were not included with considerably more frequency. As for the exclusion component, the same story holds true. Whereas more females (59.1%) were excluded, this difference between males and females did not turn out to be statistically significant ( $p = .394$ ).

Further support for the above findings came from the qualitative content analyses. The miscellaneous parts of the textbooks, including the conversations, readings, and listening sections, were observed to take a largely neutral position in the sense that both males and females were somehow evenly included or excluded in the EFL discourse on a regular basis. For example, in the reading passages on the topic of renewable energy and blood, instances of exclusion of both genders are present. At the same time, cases of inclusion abound in other parts of the textbooks, particularly in conversations, grammar sections, and parts introducing new words and expressions.

The followings are some examples of male and female inclusion:

**Example 1:** *Alireza is visiting an observatory. He is talking to Ms. Tabesh who works there (Vision 1, p. 47).*

**Example 2:** *Maryam is seventeen and she hopes to be a translator (Vision 2, workbook, p. 55).*

**Example 3:** *A little later, the mother went to her room and came back with an old diary. She said, "My dear son, I bought this diary when you were born" (Vision 3, p. 24).*

**Example 4:** *Mr. Sanders is a doctor who lives in a city. He works in a village which is near the city (Vision 3, p. 59).*

### **Role Allocation**

Depending on the nature of their actions, male and female social actors could be allocated different roles (van Leeuwen, 1996). In this connection, the content of the books were analyzed to identify the various role types assigned to different social actors. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for Role Allocation*

Role allocation	Male	Female	Chi-square	Sig.
Circumstantialization (Total = 3)	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)		
Activation (Total = 466)	181 (52.5%)	164 (47.5%)	1.039	.308
Possessivation (Total = 118)	61 (51.7%)	57 (48.3%)		
Passivation (Total = 45)	7 (38.9%)	11 (61.1%)	.783	.376
Beneficialization (Total = 28)	13 (46.4%)	15 (53.6%)		

As can be seen in Table 2, both male and female social actors were far more activated ( $n = 466$ ) than being passivated ( $n = 45$ ). Additionally, the subcomponent of participation ( $N = 345$ ) received higher frequency than possessivation ( $n = 118$ ) and circumstantialization ( $n = 3$ ) for both males and females. A superficial comparison of males and females in terms of participation shows that the male (52.4%) and female (47.6%) social actors were almost equally represented as the active and dynamic forces in the society. Also, males (51.7%) and females (48.3%) enjoyed almost the same level of possessivation. Males (66.7%), however, outnumbered females (33.3%) in terms of circumstantialization. The results of the chi-square test did not reveal a statistically significant difference between social actors in terms of activation ( $\chi^2 = 1.039$ ).

As for passivation, females received the highest role allocations in subjection (61.1%) and beneficialization (53.6%), but all the same, there was not a statistically significant difference between both social actors in terms of passivation ( $\chi^2 = .783$ ).

In order to further explore any possible significant difference between males and females in regard to the subcomponents of activation category (i.e., participation, possessivation, and circumstantialization), another chi-square was also run. The results appear in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Chi-Square for Activation Subcomponents*

Activation	Male	Female	Chi-square	Sig.
Participation	181	164	.838	.360
Possessivation	61	57	.136	.713
Circumstantialization	2	1	.333	.564

According to Table 3, the tests of significance did not show any statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of the activation subcomponents. To put it differently, male or female social actors are not foregrounded against the other in a meaningful way.

In-depth qualitative analyses also reaffirmed this textual impartiality. The following lines are but some examples of the participation and possessivation of the male and female social actors:

**Example 5:** *Alfredo is an Italian tourist. He lives in Rome. He likes to travel and see different places of the world. He takes photos, especially of animals. Next month, he and his wife will travel to Iran (Vision 1, p. 26).*

**Example 6:** *A: Where are you going to do in summer, Alice?*

*B: I am going to go to Brazil.*

*A: Really? What will you do there?*

*B: I will visit people and places (Vision 1, p. 31).*

**Example 7:** *Amin is a pilot. He is 40 years old. He lives with his wife and his son and daughter in Mashhad. He loves his job (Vision 1, p. 38).*

**Example 8:** *She is doing research on blood cells (Vision 1, p. 78).*

**Example 9:** *Sajjad put his camera aside and asked people to leave. The firefighters put out the fire when he was talking with people (Vision 1, p. 95).*

**Example 10:** *Bahar is a careful driver. She drives carefully (Vision 1, p. 115).*

**Example 11:** *Samira has started a business (Vision 2, p. 65).*

**Example 12:** *Maryam's favorite hobby is writing poems (Vision 2, p. 76).*

**Example 13:** *Iranian craftsmen and craftswomen are hard-working people (Vision 2, p. 87).*

**Example 14:** *We are going to the gym on Friday. Will you come with us, Mina (Vision 3, p. 33)?*

As the above examples show, the kinds of activities describing each of the male and female actors are not very different. In example 7, a male is positively represented as being a young pilot and, at the same time, as possessivated with a wife and son. Similarly, in example 10 and 11, two females, named *Bahar* and *Samira*, are activated as being a careful driver and a businesswoman, respectively. Also, in example 12, *Maryam* is associated with the creative activity of writing poems. Therefore, both social actors are equally activated, with no signs of social marginalization.

### **Substitution**

Regarded mainly as a kind of transformation, substitution comes to replace the elements of the real social practice with semiotic elements (van Leeuwen, 2008). Table 4 presents a

summary of the discursive features in terms of substitution, used under two major categories of personalization and impersonalization:

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for Substitution*

Substitution	Male	Female	Chi-square	Sig.
Functionalization (Total = 52)	29 (55.8%)	23 (44.2%)	.021	.884
Classification (Total = 92)	52 (54%)	40 (46%)		
Relational Identification (Total = 44)	18 (40.9%)	26 (59.1%)		
<b>Personalization</b> Formalization (Total = 50)	28 (56%)	22 (44%)		
Semiformalization (Total = 19)	12 (63.2%)	7 (36.8%)		
Informalization (Total = 132)	60 (45.5%)	72 (54.5%)		
Indetermination (Total = 32)	13 (40.6%)	19 (59.4%)		
<b>Impersonalization</b> Objectivation	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	.022	.581
Abstraction	10 (50%)	10 (50%)		

As Table 4 depicts, personalization is present, to a greater or lesser extent, for both males and females. As for impersonalization, the male and female social actors are equally impersonalized, both in terms of abstraction ( $n = 13$ ) and objectivation ( $n = 13$ ). As is evident, personalization is mostly realized by informalization ( $n = 132$ ) followed by classification ( $n = 92$ ). On the one hand, females received higher frequency in relational identification (59.1%),

informalization (54.5%), and indetermination (59.4%). Males, on the other hand, outnumbered in functionalization (55.8%), formalization (56%) and semiformalization (63.2%). However, Chi-square results did not show a statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 0.21$ ,  $p = .884$ ). The examples below are illustrative of some findings of the qualitative analyses, given in support of the above quantitative results.

Concerning classification, both males and females are mostly represented in terms of their nationality and job. Examples 15, 16, 17, and 18 below demonstrate this tendency well:

**Example 15:** *Hafez is known to be as one of the most famous Persian poets of all time (Vision 3, p. 29).*

**Example 16:** *Tahereh Saffarzadeh was an Iranian writer, translator and thinker (Vision 1, p. 82).*

**Example 17:** *Mr. Sanders is a doctor who lives in a city. (Vision 3, p. 59).*

**Example 18:** *My father was a teacher and my mother was a nurse. (Vision 2, p. 66).*

Furthermore, the qualitative analyses revealed that male and female social actors alike did similar jobs and activities in terms of prestige and social stakes (e.g., physician, scientist, doctor, teacher, businessperson, writer, poet, physicist, mathematician, nurse, philosopher, museum curator, zookeeper, farmer, pilot, and inventor). Below are two examples:

**Example 19:** *She got interested in translating the Holy Quran when she was studying and teaching translation (Vision 1, p. 82).*

**Example 20:** *He was trying to find a new medicine to save people's lives. He found a new medicine when he was working on antibiotics. This was the amazing penicillin. (Vision 1, p. 80).*

Example 19 talks about an Iranian woman, Tahereh Saffarzadeh, who turned out to be a famous writer, translator, and thinker. She is said to have published her first book while she was still studying in the university. At the same time, Example 19 identifies a male social actor (Alexander Fleming) as the founder of penicillin.

As for nomination, addressing people's names, semiformalization was accomplished mainly through social actors' first names and surnames, formalization through surnames and certain honorifics, and informalization by the use of first names. Below are some examples:

**Example 21:** *Maryam is visiting the Museum of Nature and Wildlife (Vision 1, p. 19).*

**Example 22:** *Babak is an energetic boy (Vision 1, p. 77).*

**Example 23:** *Babak Saberian is a translator who works for IRIB (Vision 2, p. 19).*

**Example 24:** *Marie Curie found uranium herself (Vision 1, p. 86).*

**Example 25:** *Excuse me Mr. Iranmehr, I wonder if you could help me (Vision 3, p. 47).*

Additionally, the male and female characters in the corpus were analyzed for instances of genericization and specification. Table 5 shows the observed frequencies of genericization and specifications in *Vision* series, together with chi-square results for the differences between male and female social actors in terms of specification:

**Table 5**

*Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for Genericization and Specifications*

Genericization/ Specification	Male	Female	Chi-square	Sig.
Genericization	7 (50%)	7 (50%)		
Individualization (Total = 73)	33 (45.2%)	40 (54.8%)	.301	.583
Specification				
Collectivization (Total = 9)	6 (60%)	4 (40%)		

According to Table 5, male and female social actors were genericized equally. In terms of specification, individualization received greater frequency ( $n = 73$ ), with females (54.8%) outnumbering males (45.2%). Also, males were more collectivized (60%). However, the difference between males and females was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = .301$ ,  $p = .583$ ) for the subgroup of specification. Therefore, males and females are represented in the same way.

### Discussion

Having employed van Leeuwen's (1996) model, the present study attempted to delve into the particular ways by which male and female social actors had been represented in the EFL textbooks of *Vision* (Alavi Moghaddam, Kheirabadi, Rahimi, & Davari, 2018) series taught in Iranian high schools.

The findings did not show any signs of biased attitudes in the social depiction of males or females. Concerning deletion, the books under study used inclusion far more extensively for both genders. Although male social actors were more frequently included and females more excluded, these differences were not significant at all. Furthermore, the content analysis depicted both males and females as equally creative and successful, doing such great jobs in the world as dentistry, surgery, writing poems, and piloting. Seemingly, the authors have made tremendous strides in reducing the bias which Amal Saleh (2004) claimed to have surrounded the content of the previous EFL textbooks taught at Iranian high schools. He portrayed a differential representation of social actors working against females who had been confined to home context or low-status jobs. Also, the above finding is in contrast with that of an evaluation of Interchange series by Sahragard and Davatgarzade (2010) who came to the conclusion that females were more activated and that a female-oriented ideology was prevalent throughout the textbooks.

The next issue to investigate was the different roles social actors were allocated to play. The findings revealed that both males and females were frequently activated and in a few instances passivated. According to Amal Saleh et al. (2006), this prevalence of activation might be due to the fact that the text books have been primarily designed for EFL students whose command of English is not supposed to be very high. Therefore, the strategy of passivation which

demands complex linguistic skills and high proficiency is not possibly in proportion with the limited linguistic and discorsal skills of these EFL learners and, therefore, activation is considered to be the prime candidate. Also, both male and female social actors were somehow equally realized by participation, possessivation, and circumstantialization, with no gender being more meaningfully foregrounded against the other. This stands in contrast with the results of the study by Sahragard and Davatgarzade (2010) for *Interchange* series. They found that females were more activated through participation. However, Roohani (2014) reported that, in the *Four Corner* series, activation of females was realized mostly through possessivation, attributing the tendency to personality or character differences between the two genders. It seems that, in *Vision* series, attempts have been made to draw a gender-neutral picture of role allocations, reflecting an attitude which recognizes both males and females as adventurous, talented, autonomous, and doers of significant activities in their social life.

Under the category of substitution, the results demonstrated that both males and females were frequently personalized. Females were represented more in terms of relational identification, informalization, and indetermination. Males, on the other hand, outnumbered in functionalization, formalization, and semiformalization. However, these difference were not meaningful. According to the findings of the qualitative analyses, both males and females were equally classified in terms of jobs and activities they did. Women were depicted as doing high-status jobs that were previously held by men. It seems that the authors of the books have tried to break with a long tradition that home context is exclusively female and that males are more suited to the wider ranges of activities awaiting them out there in society.

Finally, the results of the present study revealed that males and females were genericized and specified in the same manner, with both social actors being individualized and collectivized in proportions signifying no meaningful difference. Therefore, the individuality of neither sex has been emphasized to the disadvantage of the other. This is not in keeping with the line of the reasoning put forward by Eckret and McConnell (2003), who believe men are more individualistic and competitive and females more cooperative and other-oriented. Also, this finding runs counter to that of the study by Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh (2010) who reported that females were depicted as more independent individuals in the *Interchange* series. It seems that the textbooks writers of *Vision* series have made an effort to keep a balance in this matter and not to reflect the normative attitudes of western cultures espousing individuality more than collectivity.

### **Conclusion**

All in all, one might conclude that *Vision* series do not carry gender assumptions and biases. The findings suggest that the authors did not show bias towards the representation of male and female social actors. Unlike previous ELT textbooks taught in Iran, perpetuating an image of women as housewives who have little opportunity to adopt social roles in the society, the present textbook writers depict females as independent, successful, and famous as males. They are associated with the same highly valued activities as men and are bestowed upon the same positive attitudes as male social actors. Generally speaking, *Vision* series paint a quite neutral picture of both genders.

This impartial representation might could make learners avoid misunderstanding and cultural vagueness and accelerate the process of language learning (Rashidi & Ghaedsharafi, 2015). The importance of taking notice of gender bias in ELT/EFL materials development is important. It could be argued that teaching a language does not boil down to teaching its linguistic content. It also includes imposing a particular ideology on the learners on behalf of

materials developers. This ideological imposition can, for example, influence these learners' minds and attitudes to the effect of marginalization of a particular social group or inculcation of negative attitudes towards sex. Therefore, it is incumbent upon EFL teachers to identify these ideologies and expose them to their learners. In this way, EFL learners could be made aware of the possible hidden agenda built in the process of reconstruction of a particular viewpoint into the textbooks, and take appropriate precautions in their interpretations.

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