

**Gender Stereotypes in the Language
School Textbooks: A Comparative Study**



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Summary:

Gender stereotypes are everywhere in the educational setting, including the learning materials, mainly the textbooks. The present research aims to investigate gender stereotypes in the current Arabic, French and English First Year school textbooks which are used in the Algerian Middle school. For this end, this research examines the personal and the physical traits of the male and the female characters. It also examines the professional and the domestic roles of these characters. Regarding data collection, content analysis is used as a method to collect data regarding such gender traits and roles. In this research, it was found that the gender stereotypes prevailed in all the textbooks without exception. Regarding comparison, it was found that the Arabic textbook was the most stereotypical and the English textbook was the least stereotypical while the French textbook remained at the middle position regarding the gender stereotypes.

Keywords: Gender Stereotypes; Language School Textbooks; Comparison.

1. INTRODUCTION

The field language and gender studies, at its early beginning was investigated in different contexts, including the context of media, workplace and education. Regarding the educational context, the investigation of language and gender in the educational setting gave birth to a body of research which is named language, gender and education research. A central topic in this research is that of gender representation in the school textbooks because these learning materials are regarded not

only as important agents of (gender) socialization, but also as (gender) ideology conveyers.

2. Textbooks as Agents of Gender Socialization

Concerning the socialization role that the textbooks play, Zinec-Anima (2002) claimed that the textbooks play a crucial role in the socialization and development of the children through conveying important messages to them about how the social relations are organized as well as about the which values should be adopted.

About the textbook as an agent of gender socialization, Tahan (2015) stated that *"the textbook is an essential vehicle for the socialization of gender at school"*. Amerian and Esmaili (2015, p. 4) added that *"textbooks, not only instruct some information; but they also play a crucial role in transmitting gender roles and social values to students"*.

Furthermore, Baiqiang (2008) explained how the textbooks exactly function as agents of gender role socialization when he stated that the textbook contains historical figures that facilitate the students' gender role socialization and these figures act as role model for the students. Kereszty (2009) also provided an explanation within the same realm when he claimed that the textbooks represent the real life to the children. They offer a variety of experiences, identities, attitudes and interests which define the children's position and strongly influence their life views, gender socialization and the reproduction of the gender inequalities as well as stereotypes in the society.

3. Gender Stereotyping in the School Textbooks

Stereotyping is one form in which sexism manifests in the school textbooks. According to Cook and Cusack (2010, p. 9), a stereotype, in general, is defined as *"a generalized view or preconception of attributes or characteristics possessed by, or the roles that are or should be performed by, members of a particular group"*. Since members are categorized in terms of their gender, there also exist gender stereotypes. Weiten et al. (2012) defined them as beliefs which are commonly shared about the males' and the females' personality characteristics, abilities and roles.

What links the gender stereotypes to the school textbooks is that the textbooks are full of male and female characters which are, according to a great body of previous research, most of the time stereotypically represented. To detect the gender stereotypes in the textbooks, the previous studies investigated the occupations and the traits of the both genders. In so doing, gender stereotyping in the school textbooks manifests into two forms, the occupational stereotyping and the characteristics stereotyping.

3.1. Occupational Stereotyping

Regarding occupational stereotyping, Bataineh (2017) claimed that the examination of the occupational roles is considered as an integral element in almost any research about gender imbalance or balance in the non-school and

school textbooks. The early studies of gender representation in the school textbooks that examined the gender stereotypes (e.g. Schmitz, 1975; Hartman and Judd, 1978; Hellinger, 1980; Porreca, 1984, etc.) found that the males and the females were stereotypically represented in terms of their occupations. The females appeared in indoor activities as caregivers and the males in outdoor activities and as breadwinners. The recent studies (e.g. Nagatomo, 2010; Barton and Sakwa, 2012; Parham, 2013; Aoumeur, 2014; Abdelhay, 2015; Sulaimani, 2017, etc.) also found that the school textbooks still perpetuate the gender stereotypical roles. Hence, both the early and the recent studies proved that the school textbooks are sites where the gender stereotypes are most of the time reproduced rather than resisted.

3.2 The Characteristics Stereotyping

The characteristics stereotyping deals with the characteristics of the males and the females. These characteristics have been investigated in the previous studies to detect gender stereotypes in the school textbooks because they are an essential part in the gender stereotypes. Characteristics stereotyping was examined by both the early and the recent studies (e.g. Hartman and Judd, 1978; Porreca, 1984; Barton and Sakwa, 2012, etc.). Regarding the finding of such studies that explored this category, they found that the females were portrayed emotional and in terms of marriage and their physical state while the males were portrayed independent and courageous. Thus, the characteristics also contributed in reproducing gender stereotypes in the school textbooks as proved by the previous studies, including both the early and the recent ones.

4. The Previous Studies

The great body of research which explored how the language school textbooks portrayed both genders was undertaken in different contexts over the world. More specifically, the ones that explored gender stereotypes are of interest and are stated below.

To begin with the early studies, Hartman and Judd (1978) attempted to review a set of ESL texts for gender representation. They found that the women were portrayed as butt of jokes and as overemotional, but the males appeared as helpful and patronizing. Porreca (1984) also found that the female characters appeared in very few occupations than the males both in the texts and the illustrations. Alrabaa (1985) found that the attributes of both the males and the females were heavily stereotypical because it was found that the females were usually described as being beautiful, obedient and self-sacrificers, but the males were described as being brave, intelligent and as achieving. Moreover, it was found that the males were portrayed in a great majority of occupations, leaving very few ones for the females.

Regarding the recent studies, Mineshima (2008) found that the females appeared in 09 jobs and the males in 10 jobs. Regarding the family roles, he found that the females performed 10 roles and the males performed 09 roles.

However, the bias appeared at the pictorial professions where the males performed 08 jobs, but the females performed only 04 jobs. Barton and Sakwa (2012) found that 73% of the occupations were for the males. Moreover, the males' jobs were various, better paying and of high status, but the females' jobs were not only limited but also stuck to the domestic chore. Concerning the adjectives, it was found that the females were not only described as being emotional, but also those adjectives were linked to the domestic and marriage situations. Otoom's (2014) study also found that the women performed only 41 jobs while the men performed 74 jobs. Concerning the type of the jobs, he found that the women usually appeared in indoor activities and rarely in outdoor activities. However, the men appeared in more outdoor activities. Regarding the characteristics, he found that the women were usually characterized as having the characteristics of compassion, humility, honoring the parents of the husband, taking care of the family, etc, while men were characterized with the characteristics of courage, independence, sacrifice, leadership, etc. Abdelhay's (2015) also found that the males performed 38 sorts of occupations, but the females appeared in only 09 occupations.

Therefore, the findings of the previous studies, including the early and the recent studies, were almost alike in the meaning that they displayed gender stereotyping except very few studies.

5. Methodology

The section of methodology deals with: the corpus which is under investigation, how the data is collected and the criteria which are analysed within this research.

5.1 The Corpus

The corpus of the study covers three school textbooks which are currently used in the Algerian Middle School. They are the First Year Arabic, French and English Middle School textbooks.

5.2. Data Collection

Content analysis is selected as a method to collect data in this study. Busha and Harter (1980) defined it as a procedure which is intended to make the objective analysis of the manifestation of the words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters and even the sentences and the paragraphs within the printed and the audiovisual materials easier. Hence, content analysis is opted because it helps to examine the manifestation of some words, including the traits and the names of occupations, in the school textbooks.

5.3. The Criteria of Analysis

Gender stereotypes are detected in the school textbooks through examining the following criteria:

1. The physical and the personal traits of the male and the female characters.

2. The domestic and the professional roles of the male and the female characters.

6. Results

Males		Females	
Personal Traits	Physical Traits	Personal Traits	Physical Traits
Loving- having a compassionate heart- having an innocent laugh- having a great faith- great- lordly- hero- conscious- peaceful- noble- meek- compassionate- having a big heart-patriotic- dictator- murder- moody- firm- humorous- soft-hearted- austere- altruist- science doting- painstaking- far- seeing- respected- faithful- genius- hard-working	harsh cheek- long ears- rose cheeks- handsome- blue eyes- dirty face- blind- pretty face- thin- giant- muscular	Having a sweet laugh- kind- compassionate- tender-hearted- sweet-ignorant- pitying- loving- not active- not vital- sincere- heroine	Small forehands- large eyes-long and pendulous hair- thin lips- sad eyes-tall- thin- white- skinned- elevated head- hard look- weak sight- gray hair

Table1 : Gender Traits in the Arabic First Year Middle School Textbook

The findings of table 1 indicate that the males appear in 29 personal traits while the females appear in 12 personal traits. Regarding the physical traits, the ratio is (M:F=11:12).

Males		Females	
Professional Roles	Domestic Roles	Professional Roles	Domestic Roles
Doctor- scholar- poet- parachutist- messenger- prophet- teacher- writer- king- soldier- keeper- scientist- clinic head- caliph- musician- czar- emperor- prince- ruler- occupying a state post- minister- inspector- school head- doorkeeper- astronaut- shoe cleaner- farmer-	Taking care of the son- going to the gasoline with the father- using the computer- setting up his books- setting up the clothes- cleaning the shoes- going to the barber shop- going to the mosque- going to the market with the father to buy Eid El-	Teacher	Bringing food to the neighbour- helping the neighbour to do the daily needs- upbringing the child- covering the son- staying up the night with the child- combing the son's hair- helping the son when he thumbles- medicating the patient- going to the

barber- Imam- judge- shepherd	Adha sheep- going to Fi school		school- preparing bread- preparing sweets
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Table2 : Occupational Roles in the Arabic First Year Middle School Textbook

The findings in table 2 show that the males perform 31 professional roles, but the females perform only 01 role. About the domestic roles, the ratio is (M :F=10 :11).

Males		Females	
Personal Traits	Physical Traits	Personal Traits	Physical Traits
Honest- patient- proud	Fat	No traits	Beautiful eyes

Table3 : Gender Traits in the French First Year Middle School Textbook

Table 3 displays that the males appear in 03 personal traits and the females appear without personal traits. As regards the physical traits, both genders appear in 01 trait.

Males		Females	
Professional Roles	Domestic Roles	Professional Roles	Domestic Roles
Pneumology service head- institution head- sports teacher- cook- institutor- writer- post worker- restaurant owner- head of a football team- doctor- minister- balls collector- athlete- APC president- scholar- fisher- king- agronomist- farmer- worker- pilot- pharmacist- firefighter- veterinarian- researcher- energy minister- gardener	Doing toilet- preparing the bath things- reading a newspaper	Cook- writer- teacher- worker- nursemaid- state council president	Settling the bread paste- conserving jam- doing broderie

Table4 : Occupational Roles in the French First Year Middle School Textbook

The findings in table 4 exhibit that the males play 27 professional roles while the females appear in only 06 roles. For the domestic roles, both genders play 03 roles.

Males		Females	
Personal Traits	Physical Traits	Personal Traits	Physical Traits
Great	No traits	No traits	No traits

Table5: Gender Traits in the English First Year Middle School Textbook

Table 5 demonstrates that the males are attributed 01 personal trait and no physical traits while the females are attributed neither personal nor physical traits.

Males		Females	
Professional Roles	Domestic Roles	Professional Roles	Domestic Roles
Teacher- doctor- mechanic- veterinarian- electrician- lawyer- carpenter- dustman- farmer-architect- surgeon- thinker	No roles	Nurse-teacher	No roles

Table6: Occupational Roles in the English First Year Middle School Textbook

Table 6 shows that the males occupy 12 professional roles while the females occupy only 02 roles. Concerning the domestic roles, neither the males nor the females perform such roles.

7. Discussion

Regarding the discussion of the results, it is done separately i.e. the results of each textbook, including those of the occupational roles and those of the traits, are discussed alone.

7.1. The Arabic Textbook

First, regarding postivity and negativity, table 01 shows that the males appear in three negative personal traits which are murder, moody and austere. The females also appear in three negative traits which are ignorant, not active and not vital. Although the males appear in as much negative traits as the females, the females' negative traits compose 25 % of their total personal traits, but the males' compose only 10, 34% of their whole personal traits. In so doing, the males are portrayed more positively than the females.

Emotionally, The females are depicted as kind, compassionate, tender-hearted, pitying and loving while the males are depicted as loving, having a compassionate heart, having an innocent laugh, compassionate, soft-hearted,

gentle, faithful and meek. Even though the males' emotional traits outnumber the females', the females' emotional traits shape 41,66% of their entire personal traits, but the males' shape only 24,13 % of their whole personal traits. So, the females are portrayed more emotional than the males. About the rational traits, the males are portrayed more rational than the females because the males are described as conscious, far-seeing and genius, but the females are not portrayed in any rational trait.

As far as the physical traits are concerned, the males are portrayed having more beauty traits than the females. The males are characterized as handsome and having pretty face while the females are portrayed having no such traits. About the strength traits, the males are also portrayed having more strength traits than the females. The males are represented into two strength traits, giant and muscular, but the females are not represented in any strength trait.

Therefore, portraying the females, less positive, more emotional and less rational than the males and owning no strength traits, strongly advocates the binary traditional gender stereotypes about emotionality, rationality and physicality where the males are expected to be rational and physically strong while the females to be emotional and physically weak. However, portraying the males in more beauty features than the females is not stereotypical as it invalidates the expectation that claims that beauty is a feminine feature.

Second, regarding the occupational roles, table 02 indicates that the females are portrayed in an extremely limited number of jobs. They are portrayed occupying only one job, teacher, which is associated with taking care. Whereas, the males are portrayed occupying 31 jobs which are entirely linked to breadwinning except only two of them, doctor and teacher, are linked to taking care and breadwinning simultaneously. Hence, the females are misrepresented in terms of both the distribution and the kind of their occupations.

About the prestige of the occupations performed, the males appear both in high-status professions like king and Caesar and in less influential occupations like shepherd and shoebblack. But, the females appear in only one profession which is of a high-status.

Domestically, the females are portrayed mostly in indoor and taking care roles, except one outdoor role which is going to school, but the males are portrayed in as much indoor and taking care domestic roles as in the outdoor ones.

Hence, portraying the males in more various jobs which are mostly associated with breadwinning and the females in only one taking care job, on the one hand, and the females mostly in indoor and taking care domestic roles is highly stereotypical. This gender portrayal merely advocates, rather than challenges, the stereotypes which claim that the occupational world is expected to be more masculine than feminine and that the females suit better to perform taking care professions, on the one hand, and that the indoor and taking care

domestic world is the women's responsibility, on the other hand. However, portraying the females in prestigious roles and the males in both indoor and outdoor roles is far from being stereotypical since it perpetuates the thought that the females as well as the males can occupy prestigious roles and that the males can act in both the inside and the outside world.

7.2. The French Textbook

To begin with the traits, table 03 displays that both genders are equally represented regarding both the personal and the physical features. The males and the females jointly appear without any negative, emotional, rational or strength features. Such portrayal is, in fact, neutral because it neither advocates nor invalidates the social expectations about the males and the females. But, regarding the beauty features, the females are portrayed having more beauty features than the males because the females are characterized as having beautiful eyes, but males do not appear having such traits. This representation, in fact, fits to the stereotype that says that beauty is a feminine trait.

Concerning the occupational roles, table 04 demonstrates that the males' professions greatly outnumber the females' (M: F=27:6). Moreover, the females appear in more taking care jobs than the males. All of the males' jobs are breadwinning ones except three taking care jobs, teacher, cook, doctor, but half of the females' jobs are associated with taking care. In this way, the females are misrepresented regarding both the number and the type of the professions performed.

For the prestige of the professions, both genders are portrayed in prestigious and less prestigious jobs. The males perform prestigious professions, king and APC president, as well as less esteemed ones, fisher and gardener. Similarly, the females perform prestigious professions, state council president and nursemaid, as well as less prestigious roles, worker and cook.

Domestically, both the males and the females appear completely in indoor activities.

Thence, representing the males in a variety of professions which are mostly linked to breadwinning while the females in a very limited number of professions which are mostly associated with taking care strongly supports the gender stereotypical expectations that claim that the domain of professions is more masculine than feminine and that females fit better to occupy taking care professions. However, representing both genders occupying prestigious as well as less esteemed professions, on the one hand, and representing both genders jointly in indoor roles, on the other hand, are far from being stereotypical because they rebut the social expectations that require the males to perform high-status professions and outdoor domestic roles which is not the case for the females.

7.3. The English Textbook

Regarding the traits, table 05 shows that the males and the females are neutrally represented regarding both the personal and the physical traits because only the males appear in one personal trait which is not stereotypical.

Moving to the occupational roles, table 06 displays that the males are portrayed performing a variety of occupations, but the females occupy only two roles. Moreover, the males' roles are mostly linked to breadwinning, but the females' are fully linked to taking care. Thus, the females are misrepresented regarding both the distribution of the occupations and their kind. As far as the domestic roles are concerned, neither the males nor the females are portrayed in domestic roles. This makes it a neutral portrayal.

Regarding the prestige of the occupations, the females are shown in only prestigious roles, teacher and nurse while the males appear in both prestigious roles, surgeon and lawyer, as well as in less influential ones, carpenter and electrician.

Therefore, representing the males in several professional roles which are generally linked to breadwinning and the females in very limited number of roles that are fully linked to taking care is highly stereotypical in the sense that it enhances the traditional stereotype that claims that the professional world is expected to be more masculine and that the females fit to perform taking care roles in such world. Meanwhile, representing the females in only prestigious professions is not stereotypical as it doesn't advocate the stereotypical assumption that the men fit better to occupy prestigious professions. Furthermore, representing both genders not performing domestic roles is neutral.

8. Comparison

Concerning the traits, the Arabic textbooks is the most gender stereotypical because it communicates stereotypes regarding negativity, emotionality, rationality and strength traits. Put differently, it portrays the females more negative, more emotional, less rational and having less strength traits than the males. Then, the French textbook comes at the next position regarding the gender stereotypes. It conveys stereotypes only about the beauty traits. Finally, the English textbook takes the last position of being not at all stereotypical.

About the occupational and the domestic roles, the Arabic textbook is the more gender stereotypical than the French and the English textbooks as it carries stereotypes about the distribution of the professions among both genders and the type of those professions, on the one hand, and about the domestic roles that the females perform, on the other hand. However, the French and English textbooks convey gender stereotypes only about the distribution and the type of the professions performed by both genders.

9. CONCLUSION

The Arabic, French and English school textbooks jointly, in a way or in another, convey stereotypes about the males' and the females' traits and

professions, but in different degrees. Such gender representation, in fact, doesn't challenge the stereotypical expectations. It, instead, reinforces them. When compared, it was found that the Arabic textbook is the most gender stereotypical regarding both the traits and the occupational roles. Then, the French textbook occupies the next position while the English textbook takes the last position of being the least gender stereotypical.

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