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## The Representation of Male and Female Social Actors in *Prospect* EFL Series of Iranian Junior High School: A CDA Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the representation of male and female social actors in EFL series of junior high school in Iran, namely, *Prospect 1*, *Prospect 2*, and *Prospect 3*. To this end, Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model was used in order to investigate the way gender is represented in the three textbooks to unveil ideologies behind their manifestation. In the first stage of Fairclough's (1995) framework, i.e., the description stage, five criteria were selected based on Amerian and Esmaili's (2015) study, i.e., I) visibility of women and men, II) women's and men's social and domestic roles, III) women's and men's semantic roles, IV) women's and men's activities, and V) pictorial representation. Then, these factors were interpreted and explained. The results of the study revealed that, in most cases, these textbooks presented a sexist attitude in favor of male actors. It was discussed that this attitude follows a systematic way based on the ideology inherent in Iranian culture.

**Keywords:** *Social Actors, Critical Discourse Analysis, Textbook, EFL, Prospect*

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### 1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach to the study of discourse which tries to present a discursive narrative of social events. According to Fairclough (1989, p.11), CDA is a new "cross-discipline" which has benefitted from the contributions of other disciplines such as "linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and cognitive psychology". In effect, the aim of CDA is to examine social injustice articulated through the use of language. In this regard, power, ideology, and gender are all relevant concepts of text analysis. Specifically, the notions of gender and racism embody an extensive part of discourse analysis research.

According to Fairclough (1989), language is no longer merely seen as a system of sentences, but as discourse, and active creation of 'social practices' by dominant group. "A social practice first of all needs a set of participants", that is to, social actors (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 7). In every text, social actors are represented with certain roles. Repeated representation of social actors in specific roles creates this assumption that these are the norms of social life which must be taken for granted. In fact, allocation of roles to social actors is a matter

of ideological orientation. This clearly indicates the power of language which contributes to the domination of certain social behaviors.

As van Dijk (2001, p. 352) asserts, "Science, and especially scholarly discourse, are inherently part of, and influenced by social structure, and produced in social interaction". EFL textbooks teach ideologies along with language components. For instance, the way gender is represented in these textbooks conveys existing viewpoints of people in the society. Therefore, if learners are exposed to gender biased textbooks, they may establish ideologically biased attitudes toward their society".

The main purpose of this study is to apply the techniques of CDA to analyze and interpret the *Prospect* series, published by Iranian Ministry of Education. This study seeks to identify certain ways by which social actors are represented in the above-mentioned ELT textbooks in order to uncover the hidden ideologies behind these texts. In fact, the representation of social actors is explored to see how the features of discourse are manipulated in order to achieve certain goals.

Therefore, the focus of this study is on the analysis of all types of texts, as well as



pictures in the *Prospect* ELT series. Working within the framework of CDA developed by Fairclough (1989), this study investigates the differences in the representation of males and females. Additionally, the ideological assumptions underlying these textbooks, regarding gender representation, will be discussed.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Theoretical Framework***

CDA is used to signify the previous theory of Critical Linguistics (CL). In the 1970s the role of language in shaping power structures of the dominant group in the society was identified. This change in the attitude occurred while the focus of previous research was mainly on formal features of language rather than societal structures. In fact, the 1970s was the time of alteration of methods of linguistic theory from traditional to critical. The term Critical Linguistics was then adapted for doing the research in the field (Wodak, 2001).

In the 1990s the term CDA replaced CL to denote the specific approach to linguistic analysis. However, both theories are generally concerned with the analysis of structural relationships of power and ideology demonstrated in discourse. As such, the origins of CDA dates back to early 1990s, when prominent figures like Gunther Kress, Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Theo van Leeuwen, and Ruth Wodak gathered together in the University of Amsterdam to debate over new trends and theories of CDA. Moreover, the publication of van Dijk's *Discourse and Society* (1990), Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989), and Wodak's *Language, Power, and Ideology* (1989) ameliorated the growth of the field. After a while, some scholars who were already CDA proponents dissociated themselves from CDA, while, on the other hand, the development of new approaches by other scholars led to great improvements (Wodak, 2001).

The current study is based on Fairclough's (1989) Framework. Fairclough's model explains social conventions as a result of existing power relations in the society. In his view, social institutions contain different ideological-discursive formations (IDFs). Each institution has one dominant IDF within itself. The dominant IDF has the capacity to naturalize its ideologies. Thus, the goal of discourse analysis is to "denaturalize these ideologies (1995, p. 27). In his approach, the emphasis is on "common-sense

assumptions" (1989, p. 2). These assumptions are said to be ideologies. Ideologies, on the other hand, are closely related to power. They are recurred to legitimize social relations and norms of the society.

Fairclough (1989) presents a three-dimensional model to analyze texts. In fact, he identified "text, interaction, and social context" as the main elements of discourse. Correspondingly, he distinguishes between three stages of CDA: Description, interpretation, and explanation. Through this model, Fairclough tries to study the relations between language, power, and ideology. He called this framework Critical Discourse Analysis. In fact, in practice, these three stages of CDA are closely related to each other.

### ***2.2. Empirical Studies***

ELT materials have been studied by different researchers from different viewpoints. The focus of attention in some studies reviewed here is on the way Western culture and ideology is represented in ELT textbooks, and their possible influences on Iranian learners. For instance, one study in the area of CDA and power relations was conducted by Fitzgibbon (2013). In this study, the researcher investigated the ideological content and power relations in *Top Notch 2*. Fairclough's (2001, 2003) CDA framework and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) CIA framework were used for the analysis of texts and pictures respectively. The results of the study revealed that the book mainly dealt with five ideologies including Orientalism, Imperialism, Linguistic Imperialism, Colonialism, and US centrism. These ideas were put into practice mainly through consumerism. In addition, a structured interview was carried out to see students' reactions to the findings of the research. Their answers were categorized into three different themes including, "collective Korean identity, Otherization, and marginalization of Korean norms" (p. 222). All in all, the analysis revealed unequal power relations regarding South Korean learners.

In the same line, Ali Shah and Pathan (2016) investigated cultural representation in EFL textbooks at O'level Sindb Pakistan published by Oxford University Press. The books are *Oxford Progressive English 9* and *Oxford Progressive English 10* both of which were published in Pakistan. Fairclough's (2003) analytical framework

was applied to the study. Since, culture is an umbrella term, it was broken into some sub-themes including religion, ideological representation, language and literature, and customs and traditions. Therefore, the overall conclusion was that these books mostly enhance Western cultural messages.

By the same token, Al Jumiah (2016) investigated language, power and ideology in two high school English language textbooks in Saudi Arabia. The study examined the way social power was presented in these textbooks. In addition, the study tried to convey the way neoliberalism as a western ideology was shaped. In this regard, Fairclough's (1989, 2013) framework was selected. The results of the study were categorized into three sections each of which was related to a research question. They include Sexism, Women's subordination; Neoliberalism, Meritocracy, Individualism; Banking Education. The results affirmed that these textbooks enhance authorizing the superiority of white males. Therefore, it can be concluded that these textbooks produce unequal hidden ideologies.

More recently, Mojavezi and Aslani (2017) investigated the conversation parts of *Headway 2* in terms of social inequality and power dominance. To this end, Fairclough's (1989) model of critical discourse analysis was used. In fact, this study estimated three dimensions of meaning in Fairclough's model, i.e., content, relations, and subject positions. The findings of the study showed that this textbook follows the neo-liberalist ideas. However, due to methodological constraints, the results of the study cannot be generalized to other textbooks of the series.

Among CDA-based investigations, studies on social actors are typical. For example, Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh (2010) investigated *Interchange* (Third Edition) for the representation of social actors in these textbooks. To this end, Van Leeuwen's (1996) social actor framework and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) Transitivity model were applied. The results of the study revealed that "women are represented in *Interchange* series as more prominent, successful, powerful, intellectual social actors, holding high status positions" (p. 86).

In another study, Sadeghi and Maleki (2016) investigated the way social actors are represented in Iran Language Institute (ILI) English series. Van Leeuwen's (1996) socio-semantic social actor framework was used to uncover the way social actors are

represented. Based on Van Leeuwen's (1996) framework, three types of transformation were applied to the study. The first category dealt with deletion. Regarding deletion of either social actors or their activities, Chi-square results of male and female social actors were not significant. The second category dealt with role allocation to see whether activation or passivation has occurred. The Chi-square result for activation was significant indicating that male social actors were represented as being more dynamic. The third category refers to substitution which examines either generalization or individualization of social actors. The results proved that individualization of males was more significant than females. Therefore, the results of the study demonstrated that there are different signs of gender bias in ILI English series, deemphasizing women's roles in the textbooks.

Sarani and Kord (2018) examined the representation of social actors in *Touchstone* series in terms of CDA approaches. To this end, different features related to males and females were identified based on van Leeuwen's (2008) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) models in *Touchstone* series. In this study, linguistic and non-linguistic features of discourse were investigated. Regarding linguistic gender representation, the results of the study revealed that instances of female related ideology were found. On the other hand, the results of visual gender representation showed that male social actors were represented as more salient characters than female actors in this series. The results of non-linguistic features are in line with the findings of this study.

In brief, the previous review of the related literature has indicated that biased ideologies are presented in the studied textbooks. Since *Prospect* series are newly edited and published, no CDA-based analysis of the textbooks has been done. Therefore, a dearth of research is felt in the context of Iran on the CDA-based analysis of the series. Consequently, the present study aimed to investigate the representation of social actors in the series based on the framework of CDA developed by Fairclough (1989).

In this study, the answer to the following questions will be sought:

1. How are male and female social actors represented in the *Prospect* series?



2. If social actors are represented in the series differently, what ideological assumptions can account for the differences?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Instruments**

The data were gathered from the content of three English textbooks. Furthermore, the feature of Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework was used. Each of these instruments is explained as follows:

##### **3.1.1. Prospect Series**

The ELT materials selected for analysis are the *Prospect* EFL series of Iranian junior high school. The data were collected from the content of three student books. These English textbooks are currently taught at the first three levels of junior high school education. The books are published under the supervision of Iranian Ministry of education, and are entitled as *Prospect* (1), *Prospect* (2), and *Prospect* (3). Each book is intended for one academic year at public high schools of Iran. The books do not have any particular character or a defined storyline. Each lesson is designed around a particular theme and a number of functions. All types of texts and pictures in three books were analyzed regarding the presentation of male and female social actors. The criterion for the selection of these series is that English language is one of the compulsory subjects of Iranian high schools. Therefore, these textbooks are designed to be taught to millions of learners across the country.

##### **3.1.2 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model**

Fairclough's model explains social conventions as a result of existing power relations in the society. He presents a three-dimensional model to analyze texts. In fact, he identified "text, interaction, and social context" as the main elements of discourse. According to Fairclough (1995), CDA integrates analysis of text, processes of production, and sociocultural analysis of a communicative event. These are three levels of Fairclough's discourse analysis. Correspondingly, he distinguishes between three stages of CDA: "description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context" (1989, p.109).

##### **3.2 Data Collection Procedure**

Fairclough (1995) developed three stages for doing critical discourse analysis. The current study is conducted based on

these stages. In effect, in the first stage, the analysis is based on a modified version of Amerian and Esmaili's (2015) criteria which is established on the basis of Fairclough's three-dimensional model. These criteria were selected for their practicality and applicability to the purpose of the current study. Therefore, in the first dimension, the following criteria were taken into consideration: Visibility of women and men, women's and men's social and domestic roles, women's and men's semantic roles, women's and men's activities, and pictorial representation. In the second stage, qualitative data is obtained to explain the quantitative data gathered from the previous stage. The aim of the third stage is to reach a conclusion of whether a specific discourse aims to change or defend the current social practices.

##### **3.3. Data Analysis**

The present study is based on two types of analysis: quantitative and qualitative. Regarding quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage were presented. The data was analyzed qualitatively as well. To this end, they were coded and the pertinent patterns were extracted to unveil the hidden ideology of the textbooks.

### **4. Results**

#### **4.1. Representation of Male and Female Social Actors in the Series**

In order to provide an answer to the first research question, the collected data from the series regarding gender representations were presented based on Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model. The results of the frequencies and percentages of the data are given in Tables 1 to 5.

##### **4.1.1. Criterion 1: Visibility of Men and Women**

In order to make decisions about the relative visibility of men and women in the series, three types of representations of women and men characters (i.e., nouns, pronouns, and proper nouns) were counted. The frequency of the nouns, pronouns, and proper nouns are given in Table 1.

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the First Criterion (Visibility of men and women)*

		Frequency	Percent
Gender related nouns	Female	48	49.5
	Male	49	50.5
	Total	97	100.0
Gender related pronouns	Female	134	44.1
	Male	170	55.9
	Total	304	100.0
Proper nouns	Female	80	43.5
	Male	104	56.5
	Total	184	100.0

As it is shown in Table 1, gender related nouns appeared 97 times in *Prospect* series. A comparison between the percentages of female related nouns (49.5%) and male related nouns (50.5%) shows simply a difference of 1% suggesting that the visibility of gender related nouns in the series do not have an unequal distribution, which implies that gender related nouns are equally represented for both genders.

Gender related pronouns appeared 304 times in the series. A comparison between the percentages of female related pronouns (44.1%) and male related pronouns (55.9%) shows a difference of 11.8% suggesting that the visibility of gender related pronouns in the series have unequal distributions, which implies that gender related pronouns are not equally represented for both genders. The findings revealed that male related pronouns are dominant.

The total number of proper names referring to men and women were also counted. Proper nouns appeared 184 times in the series. A comparison between the percentages of female related proper nouns (43.5%) and male related proper nouns (56.5%) shows a difference of 13% suggesting that the visibility of proper nouns in the series have an unequal distribution, which implies that proper nouns are not equally represented for both genders. The findings revealed that male related proper nouns are dominant.

#### 4.1.2. Criterion 2: Women's and Men's Social and Domestic Roles

In the second criterion, the representation of gender, namely, female and male's social roles and female and male's domestic roles were described and interpreted.

*Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the Second Criterion (Women's and men's social and domestic roles)*

	Frequency	Percent
Male-monopolized	24	60.0
Male-dominated	3	7.5
Female-monopolized	7	17.5
Female-dominated	5	12.5
Gender-shared	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0

Of the total of 40 social and domestic roles, there are male-monopolized ( $f = 24$ ,  $p = 60\%$ ), male-dominated ( $f = 3$ ,  $p = 7.5\%$ ), female-monopolized ( $f = 7$ ,  $p = 17.5\%$ ), female-dominated ( $f = 5$ ,  $p = 12.5\%$ ), and gender-shared roles ( $f = 1$ ,  $p = 2.5\%$ ). In other words, male-monopolized roles were found to comprise more than half of the social and domestic roles in the series. This

indicates differences between the gender representations in terms of the social and domestic roles and shows that there is a lack of balance between the two genders. Male-monopolized one is the most dominant role based on this criterion. In contrast, there is simply 2.5% equal sharing on the social and domestic roles between females and males.

#### 4.1.3. Criterion 3: Women's and Men's Semantic Roles

For the third criterion, the semantic roles played by both genders in the series were examined. There were five semantic roles, namely, actor, patient, recipient, experiencer and beneficiary. The results are presented in Table 3.

*Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Third Criterion (Women's and men's semantic roles)*

	Frequency	Percent
Actor (female)	75	31.3
Actor (male)	81	33.8
Patient (female)	17	7.1
Patient (male)	22	9.2
Recipient (female)	4	1.7
Recipient (male)	2	.8
Experiencer (female)	12	5.0
Experiencer (male)	10	4.2
Beneficiary (female)	7	2.9
Beneficiary (male)	10	4.2
Total	240	100.0
Men's semantic roles	125	52.08
Women's semantic roles	115	47.91

As it is shown in Table 3, of 240 total semantic roles in the series, men's semantic roles ( $f = 125$ ,  $p = 52.08$ ) are included with more frequency compared to women's roles ( $f = 115$ ,  $p = 47.91$ ). This implies a male bias in the textbook as a whole where male characters are dominant in terms of the semantic roles. In general, the results of investigating semantic roles indicate that 52.08% of the cases are related to males and 47.91% to females in which male characters' roles comprise of 33.8% as actor roles, 9.2% patient roles, .8% recipient, 4.2% experiencer roles, and 4.2% beneficiary roles. Furthermore, women's share of the semantic roles compose of 31.3% for actor roles, 7.1% for patient roles, 1.7% for recipient, 5% for experiencer roles, and 2.9% for beneficiary roles.

The analysis of the semantic roles revealed that over the 240 semantic roles, men are represented higher than women and there was a slight imbalance in the type of semantic roles assigned for women and men in the textbook, with males found to act as actor, patient, and beneficiary while females were mostly found to act as recipient and experiencer.



#### 4.1.4. Criterion 4: Women's and Men's Activities

There are different activities presented in the series in which men and women are engaged in doing them. To examine the fourth criterion, these activities were described and analyzed in terms of gender. This was done to see if these activities were dominated by one gender. The results showed that the activities which are dominated by females are studying, watching TV, reading books, shopping, playing, and doing housework. In general, analyzing different activities indicated that there were some cases of gender bias concerning the role of males and females in social activities as represented in the series. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

*Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the Fourth Criterion (Women's and men's activities)*

	Frequency	Percent
Talking about people and places (female)	16	4.3
Talking about people and places (male)	21	5.6
Work (female)	16	4.3
Work (male)	78	21.0
Studying (female)	19	5.1
Studying (male)	6	1.6
Doing housework (female)	7	1.9
Doing housework (male)	5	1.3
Watching TV (female)	7	1.9
Watching TV (male)	5	1.3
Reading books (female)	5	1.3
Reading books (male)	3	.8
Engaging in personal activities (female)	4	1.1
Engaging in personal activities (male)	7	1.9
Doing sport (female)	10	2.7
Doing sport (male)	62	16.7
Engaging in social activities (female)	14	3.8
Engaging in social activities (male)	27	7.3
Shopping (female)	6	1.6
Shopping (male)	5	1.3
Playing (female)	7	1.9
Playing (male)	5	1.3
Praying (male)	3	.8
Praying (female)	0	0
Driving (male)	1	.3
Driving (female)	0	0
Going to party (female)	3	.8
Going to party (male)	4	1.1
Traveling (female)	8	2.2
Traveling (male)	18	4.8
Total	372	100.0

Some activities referring to females and males were found to be somehow balanced in terms of the number of occurrences. These activities include shopping, playing, and going to party. However, some activities were found to be greatly biased in favor of men such as work-related activities, doing sport, engaging in social activities, and traveling. For instance, the ratio of representing females in sport activities to males was nearly 1 to 6.

Moreover, males were represented nearly fourfold compared to females in the activities related to works.

As it is shown in Table 4, females were represented in a more limited range of activities than males. For example, the frequency of occurrence of praying and driving for females was zero. Nevertheless, there is also gender bias for some activities in favor of women like studying.

#### 4.1.5. Criterion 5: Pictorial Representation

In order to examine the fifth criterion, the pictorial representations of both genders were described and interpreted. The results are presented in Table 5.

*Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the Fifth Criterion (Pictorial representation)*

	Frequency	Percent
Male only	228	73.1
More male	26	8.3
Female only	41	13.1
More female	8	2.6
Equal share	9	2.9
Total	312	100.0

The analysis of the pictorial representation of females and males in the series reflected that gender distribution was imbalanced and "male only" was found to contribute 73.1% of the overall pictorial representation in the textbook. In general, out of 312 pictures representing gender, a great number of them ( $f = 228$ ,  $p = 73.1\%$ ) are merely related to male characters and 41 pictures to females only. While 8.3% of the pictures presented are related to "more male", simply 2.6% of them present "more female". Besides, simply 2.9% of these gender related pictures show both genders in an equal sharing.

#### 4.2. Ideological Assumptions behind the Differences

Regarding pictorial representation, the results indicated that, in most cases, pictures have forbidden any social communication between the two genders. It seems that the representation of gender in pictures follows a culture-based ideology in which social relationships between the two genders are forbidden. Moreover, although the percentage of visibility of males and females is different in terms of nouns, pronouns, and proper nouns, the overrepresentation of men is inferred through the fact that males' pictures are more than those of females.

Through further investigation, it was inferred that semantic roles varies across units. In some units, men are overrepresented whereas in others women are overrepresented. This is due to the fact

that, in these series, social relationships between the two genders are not depicted. Additionally, activities like shopping, playing, and going to party were found to be somehow balanced between the two genders. However, some activities were greatly biased in favor of males such as work-related activities and doing sport. In fact, men are depicted as the only gender that performs certain types of sport like soccer, basketball, etc.

Furthermore, in terms of social and domestic roles, male-monopolized roles comprised more than half of the social and domestic roles in the series. The roles depicted in these series do not show the variety of roles undertaken by both genders in the current society of Iran. For instance, there are many females who drive or work as doctor, engineer, athlete, etc. However, the series does not depict women in many of the high-status positions. The reason lies in the fact that it follows a traditional biased attitude towards genders.

Hence, the *Prospect* series reinforce biased and stereotyped view towards males and females. This is in contrast to the changes that had taken place in the current society of Iran, specially roles taken by females. This issue sheds light on the ideological position of *Prospect* series' publishers. Generally, the analysis of the series leads us to the conclusion that is similar to that of Esmaili and Amerian (2014). These textbooks demonstrate sexist attitude in favor of males. Furthermore, the textbooks follow a cultural-based ideology in which certain roles are undertaken only by males. This attitude is traditionally inherent in the culture of the society of Iran. Therefore, the series consciously inculcate cultural ideology according to which females are discriminated in order to insist on the segregation of the two genders.

As it was mentioned before, the units that deal with sport are considered the most biased units. While in Iranian schools the same number of sport class is allocated to both genders in the curriculum, there are a web of restrictions imposed by law and custom. However, there are several international Iranian women champions like Lale Seddigh, the race car driver champion, who is known as Iranian Schumacher. Yet, in the series only one picture is dedicated to women athletes.

The same is applicable to work related activities and roles. In the current context of Iran, women are encouraged to work outdoors. One notable example is Marzieh

Afkham, an Iranian diplomat, who is currently serving as the Iran's ambassador to Malaysia. However, laws and policies that segregate against women interfere with women's right to take high status positions. In fact, although in the current society of Iran many women have a seat at the table, they still confront an array of restrictions.

Furthermore, most of the ideas appointed by society confirm ideas from the textbooks. Although sports are encouraged by different institutions, Iranian society restrains women's participation in sport. Correspondingly, in Iranian culture, teaching is viewed as the most suitable outdoor job for women. This idea is reinforced in the series, too. In many cases, in these textbooks, women are presented as teachers, but not managers, doctors, or engineers. Therefore, like institutional determinants, social determinants advocate males' firstness.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the representations of gendered social actors in the *Prospect* series. It further investigated the ideological assumptions behind the differences. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework, the researchers used Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model to examine the representations of male and female social actors within the *Prospect* textbooks. In fact, the content of the textbooks was analyzed based on the three stages of Fairclough's model. In the description stage, the analysis was based on Amerian and Esmaili's (2015) criteria which are established on the basis of Fairclough's model. To this end, some modifications were performed, and ultimately five criteria were taken into consideration. The second and third stages of Fairclough's model, i.e., interpretation and explanation were used to answer the second research question.

The findings of the analysis showed that female characters were represented in lower visibility than males in most of the cases and there were differences in terms of the range of semantic roles given to each gender. The results of the analysis for the social and domestic roles indicated that 60% of the social roles were represented in the series as male-monopolized, whereas the percentage was 17.5% for female-monopolized social roles. In terms of dominated roles there were also differences between women and men. Hence, there was only 2.5% equal sharing on the social roles. Moreover, there were significant differences



in the representation of male and female social actors in the series. In general, the existence of sexist attitudes in these textbooks is not accidental, and it follows a systematic orientation based on the ideology which is inherent in the culture of the society of Iran. Therefore, it seems that males and females are deliberately presented in this way in order to maintain biased and stereotypical norms of the society.

To date, no study has attempted to examine the representation of social actors in the *Prospect* series of junior high school. In spite of that, the results of this study are in line with previous studies on gender representation in former Iranian high school textbooks. For example, in the study by Amal Saleh, Sajjadi, and Yarmohammadi (2006), EFL high school textbooks were examined in order to find the underlying ideology behind these textbooks which attempts to construct certain social relations. To this end, the textbooks were analyzed under the rubric of CDA using van Leeuwen's (1996) framework. The results of the study indicated that females were significantly under-represented, and the frequency and the type of activities males and females occupy were significantly different. It was claimed that the textbooks are systematically developed in this way in order to form a society in which social roles are not evenly distributed in favor of female social actors.

As another example, Esmaili and Amerian (2014) investigated gender representation in some ELT textbooks of Iran, namely *English Book 1*, *English Book 2*, and *English Book 3*. Using Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model, the study revealed that these textbooks presented sexism in which males were presented more than females. It was argued that Persian cultural ideology mirrors the way social actors are represented in these books. That is to say, lack of balance in representing males and females in the *Prospect* series has its base in Iranian culture.

Finally, although this study informed text users about the hidden ideologies in the series, it suffers from some limitations. First, no practical survey has been carried out to confirm the findings of this study. It seems that the use of other instruments such as interview and questionnaire would be helpful in analyzing the validation of the results of this study. Finally, this study analyzed five criteria only (visibility, social and domestic roles, semantic roles, activities

and pictorial representation) in the description stage, but not other elements of creating cultural stereotypes.

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