



## Gender Delineation in High School English Textbooks: A Study of Prospect 3 And Vision

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### Abstract

This study examines gender representation in two mandatory Iranian EFL textbooks, Prospect 3 and Vision 1, used in secondary schools. Employing the "Criteria for Analysis of the Equality of Gender Representation" scale, a content analysis was conducted based on two primary categories: pictorial and verbal elements. The pictorial analysis assessed female visibility in illustrations, while the verbal analysis examined the use of subjects, objects, verbs, nouns, and pronouns. The study adopted a qualitative approach within a criterion-driven framework, supplemented by quantitative methods to enhance validity. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were applied for numerical analysis, alongside qualitative content analysis. The findings revealed persistent gender stereotypes in the visual content, with male characters appearing in 68% of illustrations compared to 32% for females. However, verbal elements showed improvement, with a reduction in male bias; male pronouns outnumbered female pronouns by a ratio of 1.7:1, marking progress from previous studies. Despite these changes, gender imbalance remains evident. These findings highlight the need for further revisions to promote equitable gender representation in educational materials, offering insights for curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers striving for gender-inclusive learning environments.

**Keywords:** content analysis, ELT materials, gender stereotypes, gender equality, Iranian textbooks

### 1. Introduction

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, textbooks serve as fundamental tools that shape both linguistic acquisition and cultural understanding. As Nunan (1999) posits, textbooks are "the main component of any instructional program, and it is difficult to imagine a class without them" (p. 98). Beyond their pedagogical significance, textbooks function as cultural artifacts that convey societal norms, including those related to gender (Suchana, 2024). Consequently, the representation of gender in educational materials has become a critical area of scholarly inquiry, given its potential influence on learners' perceptions of gender roles and social expectations (Salisbury et al.,



2023). The way gender is portrayed in textbooks can either reinforce traditional stereotypes or contribute to a more equitable representation of men and women, thereby impacting learners' cognitive and social development (Lee, 2016).

Despite global progress toward gender equality, textbooks often reflect deep-seated biases that perpetuate social inequalities. Research indicates that gender stereotyping in educational materials frequently positions women in subordinate roles while portraying men as dominant figures (Heilman et al., 2024). Rauf et al. (2024) argue that such biases mirror historical patterns of gender oppression, where men have traditionally held positions of authority while women's contributions have been undervalued. This phenomenon is particularly concerning given that textbooks play a crucial role in shaping learners' understanding of social structures and self-perception (Amini & Birjandi, 2012). Moreover, as language serves as a medium for constructing social identities (Arias Álvarez & Bernardo-Hinesley, 2024), addressing gender bias in educational materials is imperative for fostering a more inclusive learning environment (Holmes, 2008).

Extensive research has documented gender imbalances in EFL textbooks, with numerous studies highlighting the predominance of male representation over female characters (Zheng & Han, 2024). For example, Foroutan (2012) found that men are frequently depicted as decision-makers and leaders, whereas women are often relegated to domestic or secondary roles. Linguistic patterns further reinforce gender hierarchies, as male-associated terms often carry more positive connotations than female-associated ones (Carroll et al., 2024). These biases extend beyond language acquisition, influencing learners' broader social perceptions and aspirations. Given the centrality of textbooks in transmitting both linguistic and cultural knowledge, it is essential to critically evaluate them to ensure they contribute to gender equity rather than perpetuate outdated stereotypes (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010).

While the issue of gender bias in English Language Teaching (ELT) materials has been extensively studied in Western contexts, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding Iranian EFL textbooks. Although previous studies have identified instances of gender bias in Iranian educational materials (Amerian & Esmaili, 2013), a systematic analysis of contemporary textbooks is necessary to assess whether progress has been made toward achieving gender balance. The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining gender representation in two widely used Iranian high school textbooks: Prospect 3 and Vision 1.

Utilizing Rifkin's (1998) framework for analyzing gender representation in educational materials—originally applied to Russian textbooks—this study evaluates the extent to which Iranian textbooks portray women in equal, subordinate, or marginalized roles in comparison to men. Specifically, the research examines both textual and visual representations of gender, offering a comprehensive analysis of gender portrayals within these educational resources.

The findings of this study will contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality in education by identifying areas where Iranian EFL textbooks may require revision to align with contemporary principles of gender equity. By raising awareness of gender biases present in educational materials, this research aims to inform curriculum designers, policymakers, and educators about the importance of selecting and developing textbooks that promote balanced gender representations. Ultimately, this study aspires to support wider efforts to challenge gender-based stereotypes and foster an educational environment that encourages gender equity and social inclusion (Bowles & Klein, 2024).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Gender Representation in Educational Materials

The role of educational materials, particularly textbooks, in shaping learners' perceptions of gender roles has been widely acknowledged in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Textbooks are not only instructional tools but also cultural artifacts that convey societal values, including gender norms (Suchana, 2024). Previous research has consistently found that textbooks can either reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles, making their analysis a crucial endeavor in the pursuit of gender equity in education (Salisbury et al., 2023). The content of textbooks significantly influences learners' understanding of gender roles, often shaping their long-term attitudes and behaviors (Lee, 2016).

### 2.2. The Impact of Gender Bias in Textbooks

When gender biases are embedded in educational resources, they perpetuate existing social inequalities by reinforcing stereotypical roles. Research has shown that women are frequently depicted in subordinate or passive roles, whereas men are more often portrayed as active and dominant figures (Heilman et al., 2024). The Human Development Report (as cited in Heidarian, 2011) highlights the economic disparity between men and women, despite women contributing significantly to the global workforce. This gender bias in textbooks can have profound implications, affecting learners' self-concept, aspirations, and career choices (Amini & Birjandi, 2012). Gender representations in textbooks are critical in constructing learners' social identities, influencing their linguistic and behavioral development (Arias Álvarez & Bernardo-Hinesley, 2024). Addressing these biases is essential to fostering a more equitable learning environment (Holmes, 2008).

### 2.3. Previous Studies on Gender Bias in EFL Textbooks

A considerable body of research has examined gender bias in EFL textbooks across different cultural contexts. Studies have consistently found an overrepresentation of male characters and a marginalization of female figures in educational materials (Zheng & Han, 2024). For instance, Foroutan (2012) analyzed EFL textbooks and discovered that men were frequently depicted in leadership roles, whereas women were relegated to secondary or domestic positions. Similarly, Carroll et al. (2024) found that linguistic choices in textbooks often carry implicit gender biases, with male-associated terms conveying more positive connotations than female-associated terms. These biases are not limited to textual content but also extend to visual elements, where men appear more frequently in professional settings compared to women (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010).

### 2.4. The Hidden Curriculum and Its Influence on Gender Perceptions

Beyond explicit textbook content, the "hidden curriculum" refers to the implicit messages conveyed through educational materials regarding social roles, including gender expectations (Heilman et al., 2024). The hidden curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of gender norms, often reinforcing societal stereotypes (Phuong & Vanderstraeten, 2024). The underrepresentation of women in textbooks limits learners' access to diverse role models, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and aspirations (Kordjazi, 2012). Educators and curriculum designers must critically evaluate textbooks to ensure they provide balanced representations that promote gender equity (Foroutan, 2012).

## 2.5. Gender Bias in Iranian EFL Textbooks

While extensive research has been conducted on gender representation in Western EFL textbooks, studies on Iranian textbooks remain relatively scarce. Existing research indicates that Iranian EFL materials often reflect traditional gender roles, reinforcing male dominance in both textual and visual representations (Amerian & Esmaili, 2013). Given the evolving roles of women in Iranian society, it is essential to examine whether contemporary textbooks have made progress in achieving gender balance. This study aims to fill this research gap by analyzing gender representation in two Iranian high school textbooks, Prospect 3 and Vision 1.

## 2.6. Theoretical Framework: Rifkin's (1998) Model

To systematically analyze gender representation in Iranian textbooks, this study employs Rifkin's (1998) framework, which was originally developed for examining gender bias in Russian educational materials. The framework categorizes gender representation into two primary domains: pictorial and verbal elements. The pictorial analysis examines aspects such as the presence or absence of female figures, their positioning within images, and their depicted activities. The verbal analysis focuses on language use, including the frequency of male and female pronouns, roles attributed to each gender, and adjectives used to describe male and female characters. By adapting this model, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of gender portrayals in Prospect 3 and Vision 1.

## 2.7. Empirical Studies on Gender Bias in Educational Materials

Empirical research on gender bias in educational materials has provided substantial evidence of the disparities in gender representation. Studies conducted in various educational contexts have shown that gender biases manifest in different ways, including the frequency of male versus female characters, the types of roles they are assigned, and the adjectives used to describe them (Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2008). For example, Gooden and Gooden (2001) analyzed children's picture books and found that male characters were significantly more prevalent than female characters, often occupying leadership roles while female characters were depicted in supportive or domestic roles.

In Iran, Amerian and Esmaili (2013) examined Iranian high school EFL textbooks and found that male characters appeared more frequently in dialogues, narratives, and illustrations compared to female characters. Their study revealed that while some progress had been made in integrating female characters into diverse roles, traditional gender stereotypes remained prevalent. Similarly, Lee and Collins (2010) found that although there had been some improvements in the visibility of female characters in textbooks from Australia and Hong Kong, gender imbalances persisted, particularly in professional roles.

A critical review of the literature indicates that gender bias in EFL textbooks remains a global issue, with significant implications for learners' perceptions of gender roles. While studies have documented persistent gender imbalances in educational materials, there is a need for continued research to evaluate whether newer textbooks reflect progress toward gender equity. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse by examining gender representation in Iranian high school textbooks, offering insights that may inform curriculum development and educational policy. By addressing gender biases in textbooks, educators can foster a more inclusive learning environment that empowers all students, regardless of gender.

### 3. Research Questions

To address the research gap and examine the extent of gender bias in Iranian EFL textbooks, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent are male and female characters represented in the pictorial elements of Prospect 3 and Vision 1?
2. How are male and female characters linguistically represented in the verbal elements of these textbooks?
3. What types of social roles and characteristics are attributed to each gender in these educational materials?
4. Have Iranian EFL textbooks made progress in achieving gender balance compared to previous studies on gender representation?

### 4. Method

#### 4.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to examine gender representation in Iranian high school EFL textbooks, specifically Prospect 3 and Vision 1. Content analysis is an effective method for systematically analyzing textual and visual content, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how gender roles are depicted in educational materials (Krippendorff, 2018). The study focuses on both verbal and pictorial representations of gender, utilizing Rifkin's (1998) framework for analyzing gender representation in textbooks. The pictorial analysis examines the presence, positioning, and activities of male and female figures in textbook images, while the verbal analysis assesses the frequency and roles of male and female pronouns, gender-associated adjectives, and the societal roles attributed to each gender in textbook narratives and dialogues.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, two independent coders analyze the textbooks, and discrepancies are resolved through discussion. The study adheres to qualitative research trustworthiness criteria, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations are observed, ensuring objective and unbiased analysis of publicly available educational materials. By conducting this study, the research aims to provide insights into the extent of gender bias in Iranian EFL textbooks, contributing to the broader discourse on gender representation in educational settings. The findings are expected to inform curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers in creating more balanced and inclusive instructional materials.

#### 4.2. Materials

Rifkin (1998) identified three categories of gender representation studies in textbooks: (a) text-driven studies, (b) stereotype-driven studies, and (c) criteria-driven studies. This study adopts the third category, which emphasizes the establishment of criteria for data examination prior to analyzing textbooks. The "Criteria for Analysis of the Equality of Gender Representation" scale developed by Rifkin (1998) serves as the framework for the content analysis. Rifkin identified eighteen criteria for evaluating gender representation, categorized into two main domains: 'pictorial' and 'verbal'. Pictorial Analysis

The pictorial category assesses the visibility of females in illustrations and photographs. The criteria include:

1. Presence or absence
2. Foregrounding or backgrounding
3. Representation as children or adults
4. Motion versus stasis
5. Captioned or unnamed
6. Professional versus domestic settings
7. Captioned in title or not

#### **4.3. Verbal Analysis**

The verbal category focuses on the analysis of textual elements, such as subjects, objects, verbs, nouns, and pronouns. The criteria for verbal representation encompass: 8. Named versus ambiguous references 9. Reference to characters 10. Respectfully named or not 11. Pronoun usage 12. Subjects, objects, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs 13. Unique verbs, adjectives, and adverbs 14. Precedence in mention 15. Domestic versus professional roles 16. Occupations 17. Notable characters 18. Targets of jokes 19. Authors

Since 2013, Iran has witnessed a movement toward publishing new textbooks, with a focus on updating the curriculum every year to replace old materials over a six-year cycle. English language education has also been impacted, introducing new textbooks titled Prospect 1, 2, and 3 for junior schools and Vision 1 for high school. These textbooks mark a shift in teaching methodology from grammar translation to communicative language teaching (CLT), although some gaps persist.

The current study evaluates the newly published textbooks, specifically Prospect 3 for ninth-grade students (2015) and Vision 1 for tenth-grade students (2016), to ascertain any advancements in gender representation.

Prospect 3 consists of six lessons, each containing ten sections: (A) title page, (B) conversation, (C) practice, (D) new words & expressions, (E) language melody, (F) grammar, (G) find it, (H) listening, reading, and writing, (I) reading, speaking, listening, and writing, and (J) role play. The materials include a student book, workbook, and class audio CD.

Vision 1 comprises four lessons, each with ten sections: (A) title page, (B) get ready, (C) conversation, (D) new words & expressions, (E) reading, (F) grammar, (G) listening & speaking, (H) pronunciation, (I) writing, and (J) what you learned. It too includes a student book, workbook, and class audio CD, and is unique in that it was implemented without prior pilot testing.

The analysis focuses on the representation of gender in the student books of these two series.

#### **4.4. Procedure**

A quantitative analysis was employed to assess the representation of males and females in both pictorial and verbal components of the Prospect 3 and Vision 1 textbooks. Given their design for young learners, these textbooks feature a variety of activities, including puzzles and conversation exercises. As

the conversations are limited, the analysis for Prospect 3 concentrated on the "conversation," "language melody," and a passage in the "find it" section. In contrast, the Vision 1 analysis examined "conversations," "new words and expressions," "reading," and "grammar" segments. It is important to note that certain reading passages displayed neutral gender representation.

All illustrations, photographs, cartoons, and graphics within the textbooks were analyzed to evaluate female representation. To ensure reliability, two independent raters assessed the frequency of gender representation using Rifkin's checklist, and their results were compared to achieve inter-rater reliability.

#### 4.5. Statistical Analysis

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The quantitative analysis focuses on the frequency of male and female representation, while qualitative analysis explores the adjectives, adverbs, and verbs associated with characters to discern patterns in gender representation. Initially, a quantitative approach was employed to calculate the relative frequency of pictorial and linguistic elements representing males and females. Descriptive statistics were used to present the frequency of each criterion, allowing for a clearer comparison of the results. The pictorial and verbal elements were categorized separately. Raw data were tabulated, converted to statistical values, and chi-square tests were applied to evaluate gender representation against expected values, determining the degree of gender equality reflected in these educational materials.

The qualitative analysis assessed the adjectives, verbs, and roles of characters in the textbooks, seeking patterns that reveal how gender is depicted in various reading sections. This dual analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of gender representation and aids in determining whether the statistics indicate any inherent biases. Through this combined analysis, the study aims to highlight any advancements or setbacks in gender equality as reflected in the Prospect 3 and Vision 1 textbooks, providing valuable insights into their implications for educational practice.

### 5. Results

This study presents the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative section includes frequency counts and percentages for the pictorial and verbal components of the high school English textbooks Prospect 3 and Vision 1. Subsequently, the chi-square test will be employed for each criterion to assess the statistical significance of the results. The qualitative analysis will evaluate each textbook, focusing on both pictorial and verbal elements.

#### 5.1. Quantitative Analysis

This section delineates the quantitative analysis of Prospect 3 for 9th-grade students and Vision 1 for 10th-grade students, addressing both pictorial and verbal components separately.

##### 5.1.1. Variability Due to Gender in Pictorial Components

The initial research question investigates potential gender disparities in the frequency of images utilized in Iranian high school English textbooks. Each textbook will be examined independently.

**5.1.1.1. Pictorial Analysis of Prospect 3.** As depicted in Table 1, 79.26% of the images in the Prospect 3 textbook feature males (107 total), with the majority appearing in the foreground (98) and in

motion (87). In contrast, only 20.74% of the images depict females (28), with 24 in the foreground and 22 in motion. No female images were named in captions.

**Table 1**

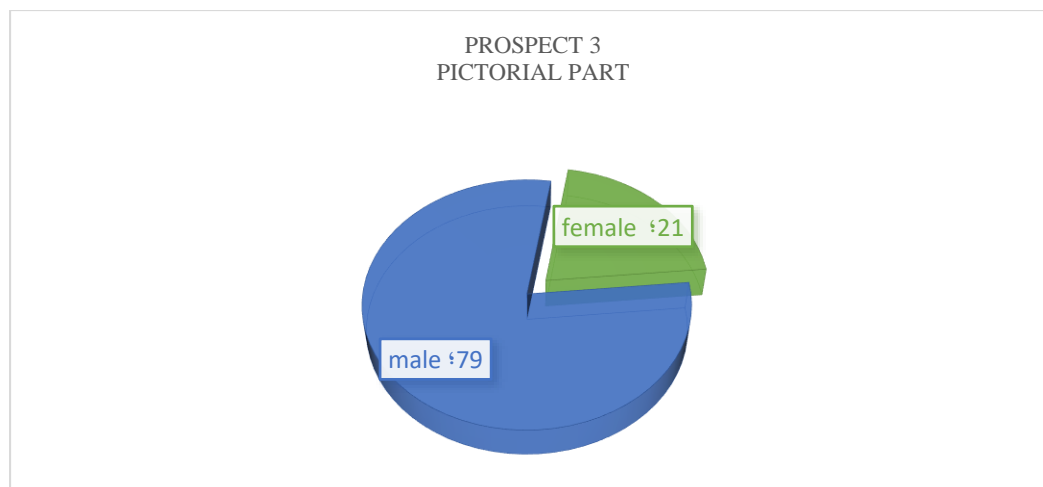
*Displays the Frequency Counts and Percentages Related to the Pictorial Aspects of Prospect 3*

Criteria	Female (F)	Female (%)	Male (F)	Male (%)
Total	28	20.74	107	79.26
Fore-grounded (f)	24	19.67	98	80.32
Backgrounded (b)	4	30.77	9	69.23
Children (ch)	14	29.17	34	70.83
Motion (m)	22	20.19	87	79.81
Stasis (s)	6	23.08	20	76.92
Named (n)	0	0.00	1	100.00
Professional (p)	10	28.57	25	71.43
Domestic (d)	3	33.33	6	66.67
Captions (c)	0	0.00	0	0.00

Figure 1 illustrates this data visually.

**Figure 1**

*Pictorial Part of English for School Textbook Prospect 3*

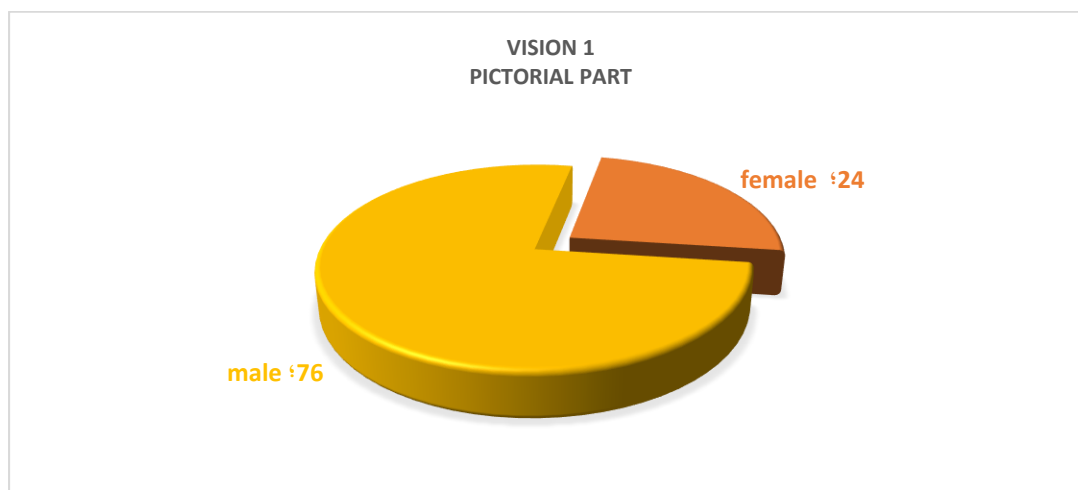


To test the first null hypothesis, a chi-square analysis was conducted. The observed and expected frequency counts for both genders in the pictorial section of Prospect 3 are presented in Table 2 and the chi-square results are shown in Table 3

**Table 2**

*Frequency of Genders in the Pictorial Section of Prospect 3*

Gender	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Female	111	249	-138
Male	387	249	138
Total	498		

**Figure 2***Pictorial Part of English for School Textbook Vision 1*

Given the chi-square value of 8.867 and a significance level of 0.003 ( $p < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant difference in the frequency of pictorial representation between males and females in Prospect 3.

**Table 3***Chi-square results of Prospect 3*

Chi-square	DF	Sig.
8.867	1	0.003

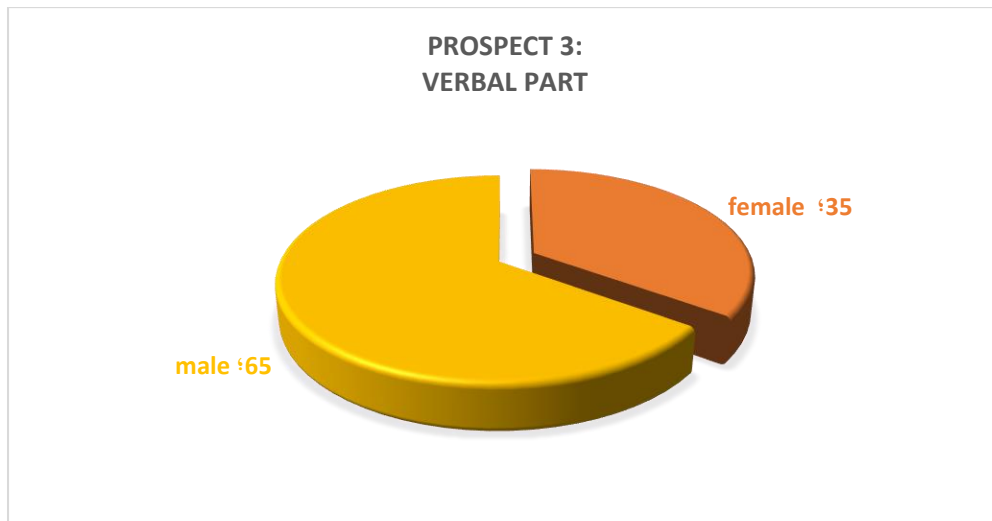
**5.1.1.2. Pictorial Analysis of Vision 1.** Table 4 summarizes the frequency counts and percentages of gender representation in Vision 1. Table 4 reveals a similar gender bias in Vision 1, with males represented in 76.47% of the images (26 total), while females account for only 23.53% (8 total). The majority of male images (22) appear in the foreground and 14 in motion. In contrast, female representation is less prominent, with only 6 images in the foreground and 5 in motion. No female images are named in captions. Figure 4.2 presents a graphical representation of this data.

**Table 4***Frequency of Gender Representation in Vision 1*

Criteria	Female (F)	Female (%)	Male (F)	Male (%)
Total	8	23.53	26	76.47
Fore-grounded (f)	6	21.43	22	78.57
Backgrounded (b)	2	33.33	4	66.67
Children (ch)	4	40.00	6	60.00
Motion (m)	5	26.32	14	73.68
Stasis (s)	3	27.27	9	72.73
Named (n)	0	0.00	1	100.00
Professional (p)	3	21.43	11	78.57
Domestic (d)	0	0.00	0	0.00
Captions (c)	1	25.00	3	75.00

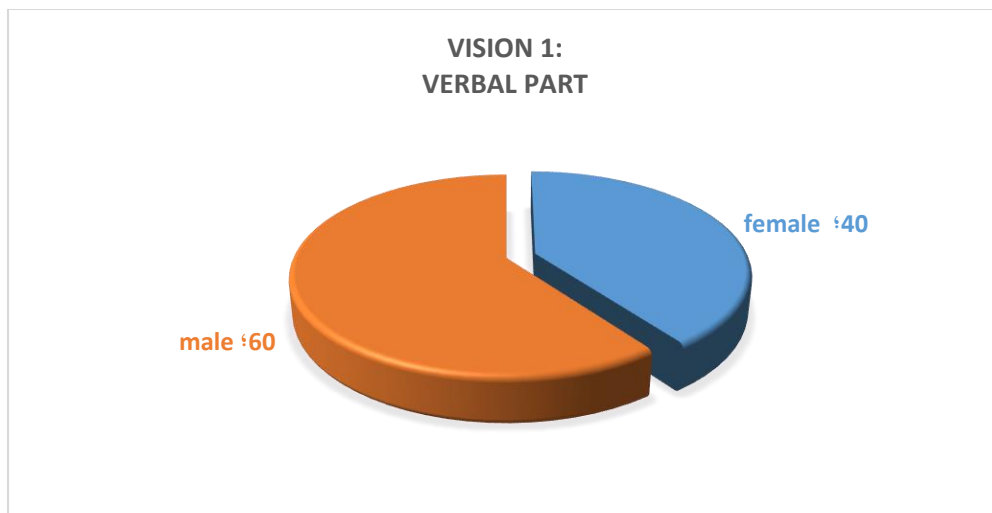
**Figure 3**

*Verbal Part of English for School Textbook Prospect 3*



**Figure 4**

*Verbal Part of English for School Textbook Vision 1*



The chi-square test for Vision 1 is summarized in Table 5

**Table 5**

*Chi-square Test for Vision 1*

Gender	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Female	32	64	-32
Male	96	64	32
Total	128		

The results of the chi-square analysis are depicted in Table 6.

**Table 6***Chi-square Analysis of Vision 1*

Chi-square	DF	Sig.
8.533	1	0.043

With a chi-square value of 8.533 and a significance level of .043 ( $p < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming a significant gender disparity in the pictorial component of Vision 1.

**5.1.2. Variability Due to Gender in Verbal Components**

**5.1.2.1. Verbal Analysis of Prospect 3.** Table 7 displays the frequency counts and percentages for various verbal components in Prospect 3.

**Table 7***Frequency and Percentages for Verbal Components in Prospect 3*

Criteria	Female (F)	Female (%)	Male (F)	Male (%)
Named Reference	30	37.50	50	62.50
First Named	30	37.97	49	62.03
Diminutive	0	0.00	0	0.00
Respectful	0	0.00	0	0.00
Subject	1	100.00	0	0.00
Object	10	55.56	8	44.44
Unique Verb	39	36.79	67	63.21
Unique Adjective	3	23.08	10	76.92

The analysis indicates that while female characters are acknowledged, male characters dominate in frequency and representation across various criteria.

**5.2. Qualitative Part**

This section presents a qualitative analysis of the pictorial and verbal elements in two textbooks—English for Schools Prospect 3 and English for Schools Vision 1—to assess gender representation.

**5.2.1. Qualitative Analysis of English for Schools Prospect 3 Textbook**

The pictorial examination of English for Schools Prospect 3 uncovers a notable gender disparity, with women depicted significantly less frequently than men. Male figures are prominently illustrated in action-oriented roles, frequently occupying foreground positions, whereas women are often relegated to the background or shown in less dynamic poses. Male characters are portrayed in a wider range of professional roles, such as police officers, soldiers, and firefighters, which are traditionally associated with masculinity. In contrast, professions like teaching and reception work are illustrated with both male and female representations.

Interestingly, the textbook features some unconventional portrayals of men performing domestic tasks, such as setting the table, which occurs three times throughout the text. Despite these instances, the overall depiction strongly favors male representation in both domestic and professional spheres, corroborating findings from the quantitative analysis indicating a clear gender imbalance. Textual analysis further substantiates these observations, revealing that male references outnumber female ones by a ratio of approximately three to one. Males are typically referred to by their full names,

while female characters are seldom addressed with respectful identifiers. This disparity transcends superficial representation, extending to the professions associated with each gender, with female roles being less diverse and often less esteemed. Although women appear more frequently in domestic contexts, their portrayal lacks depth and positive connotations. The verbs attributed to male characters—such as "go," "buy," "climb," and "burn"—suggest a more active engagement compared to those used for female characters, which include "study," "help," and "take care of." Throughout the six lessons in this textbook, themes like "Personality," "Travel," "Festivals and Ceremonies," "Services," "Media," and "Health and Injuries" are addressed without a distinct gender focus. Nevertheless, qualitative insights indicate a stagnation in progress toward achieving gender equality.

### **5.2.2. Qualitative Analysis of English for Schools Vision 1 Textbook**

The English for Schools Vision 1 textbook was similarly evaluated for its pictorial content. An analysis of the illustrations indicates a continued predominance of male figures, who frequently appear in both action-oriented and background roles, while female characters are notably less represented. Male figures often dominate dynamic, professional contexts, suggesting an enduring gender bias in visual representation. However, a significant exception is noted in Lesson 3, where a female character is prominently featured in a central professional role, indicating a potential shift toward increased visibility for women. Despite this instance, overall findings reveal minimal progress in achieving gender parity within the textbook.

The verbal analysis, encompassing conversations, vocabulary, reading texts, and grammar sections, included a review of 16 texts. Among these, nine were classified as gender-neutral, utilizing generic pronouns such as "we" and "they" without specific gender references. Topics such as "Saving Nature," "Wonders of Creation," and "Endangered Animals" are addressed without bias, further demonstrating the textbook's intent to promote egalitarianism. Nonetheless, quantitative findings reveal that male references surpass female references in personal pronouns and named characters. This imbalance cultivates a perception of male dominance, portraying them as more powerful figures. While the ratio of named characters is nearly equal, respectful naming conventions remain skewed, with males referred to by respectful names twice as frequently as females.

The verbs associated with male characters exceed those related to female characters, reinforcing a more active portrayal of males. However, the verbs used for both genders, including "study," "work," and "teach," reflect a balanced representation. Descriptive adjectives also reveal disparities; terms such as "energetic," "great," and "successful" are more frequently applied to males, while females are primarily described with terms like "young," "happy," and "interested." In summary, although both textbooks aim for gender-neutral content, qualitative analyses expose ongoing biases in representation. These findings highlight the critical need for continued efforts to foster equitable depictions of genders in educational materials, underscoring the importance of advancing gender equality in language education.

## **6. Discussion**

The findings of this study, which explores the gender representation in the English high school textbooks "Prospect 3" and "Vision 1." It addresses the significant differences in the frequency of pictorial and lexical representations of females and males. Additionally, it examines the social roles and

characteristics attributed to both genders, as well as how they are depicted within these educational resources. The research concludes with implications for the findings and suggestions for future research.

The analysis was conducted using Rifkin's criteria (1998) for evaluating gender representation in the pictorial and verbal sections of the selected textbooks.

The first research question investigated the significant difference in the frequency of pictorial representations of males and females in "Prospect 3" and "Vision 1." The findings indicated a marked disparity, with a predominance of male images. For instance, in "Prospect 3," only 24 images featured females compared to 98 images of males, highlighting a positive bias towards male representation. Furthermore, males were depicted in motion 87 times, while females were represented in motion only 22 times. A similar pattern emerged in "Vision 1," where, in professional settings, only 3 images depicted females against 11 for males. These findings are consistent with previous research, such as Baghdadi and Rezaei (2015), which identified a bias favoring males in English high school textbooks. Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2008) also reported a similar trend in Malaysian EFL textbooks, reinforcing the notion that males are frequently portrayed in various professional roles compared to females. Alarmingly, there was no significant improvement in gender equality representation in the pictorial sections of the newer textbooks analyzed.

Regarding the second research question, which explored lexical representations in the verbal sections of the textbooks, the results indicated a less pronounced disparity. In "Prospect 3," females were more frequently presented as the subject of sentences, while males were not used at all in this context. Females were referenced as objects 10 times compared to 8 times for males, and in domestic settings, females appeared twice, with no male representations. This aligns with traditional views of gender roles, suggesting that women are primarily associated with domesticity. Previous analyses of English high school textbooks (Hosseini Fatemi et al., 2011) revealed that males held a greater diversity of occupational roles than females, and the current study confirmed this trend, with males depicted 12 times in professional settings compared to 6 times for females. Notably, the analysis revealed that the gap in pictorial representation was significantly greater than in the verbal section.

The third and fourth research questions examined the types of social roles and characteristics attributed to each gender. Despite the quantitative results indicating minimal disparity in the verbal sections of "Vision 1," qualitative analysis suggested progress towards gender equality, with an increased use of gender-neutral language. This contrasts with Hosseini Fatemi et al. (2011), who found significant gender imbalances in previous versions of English high school textbooks. Similarly, Rifkin (1998) noted gender disparities in both pictorial and verbal representations in Russian textbooks, and Hall (2014) observed similar imbalances in Iranian EFL textbooks.

Textbooks play a crucial role in second language acquisition, serving as primary sources for conveying intercultural messages (Oakes & Saunders, 2004). When textbooks exhibit gender bias, they can shape learners' perceptions, potentially leading to a skewed worldview that favors certain nationalities, races, or genders over others (Kobia, 2009). The language employed in educational resources is vital in the gender socialization process, as it reflects sociocultural dynamics (Foroutan, 2012). The portrayal of gender roles in textbooks has lasting implications, influencing students' perceptions of appropriate behaviors and careers (Lee, 2014). Despite some authors recognizing the importance of avoiding stereotypical roles, a reluctance to challenge traditional representations remains evident. For instance, consistently depicting nurses as female and members of disciplinary forces as

male does not reflect contemporary social realities. Textbooks should strive to provide balanced representations that resonate with societal diversity (Lee & Collins, 2010).

### **7. Conclusion and Implications**

The body of research on gender representation in EFL textbooks indicates a consistent bias favoring males, evident in both the frequency of appearances and the range of professions depicted. This study aimed to investigate and analyze gender representation in "Prospect 3" and "Vision 1." The quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed significant gender disparities in pictorial representations, with less bias observed in the verbal sections compared to previous textbook editions. Although progress has been made in reducing bias in verbal representation, further efforts are needed to achieve equality and eliminate persistent stereotypes (Hall, 2014). The findings suggest that textbook publishers may overlook gender representation issues or may be complicit in perpetuating traditional stereotypes (Amerian & Esmail, 2013). As Abbas-Nejad-Konjin (2012) poignantly noted, despite societal challenges, Iranian women continue to advocate for gender equality and challenge existing inequalities.

This study offers valuable pedagogical implications for curriculum designers, teacher educators, and practitioners in foreign language instruction. As Esen (2013) noted, textbooks play a critical role in modern education, serving as functional means of transmitting knowledge and values. The selection process for these resources must be scrutinized, as it can reflect broader societal biases (Tan, 2000). Curriculum designers should prioritize gender equity in textbook content to foster an inclusive learning environment that encourages active participation from all students. Furthermore, it is crucial for teacher educators to conduct workshops on the impact of gender bias in textbooks and to promote strategies for enhancing gender equality in educational materials. Teachers, as influential figures in students' learning, should model respect for gender equity in academic contexts. By leveraging the power of textbooks and teachers, it is possible to cultivate an educational landscape where gender equality is not only visible but actively promoted, thereby shaping learners' perceptions of gender roles in society (Bandura, 2001; Lee, 2014).

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### **Authors' Contributions**

All authors have conducted the study, collected data, analyzed and interpreted the data, and written up the manuscript.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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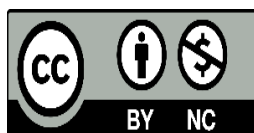
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