

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY TEXTBOOKS

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Abstract

This study explores how gender is represented in school and university textbooks. Because textbooks shape how learners understand social roles, the way men and women appear in texts and images can either reinforce or challenge stereotypes. The study examines selected textbooks by counting male and female characters, looking at the professions, activities, and traits given to each, and analyzing the language used to describe them. It combines quantitative content analysis, qualitative analysis, and critical discourse analysis, and compares materials across education levels. Based on earlier research, male characters are expected to be more visible and to hold more public and professional roles, while women are likely to appear more often in domestic roles and be described through appearance and emotion. The findings will add Uzbek data to educational linguistics and gender studies and can help authors, teachers, and policymakers create more balanced teaching materials.

Keywords

gender representation; textbooks; gender bias; stereotypes; content analysis; critical discourse analysis; education; Uzbekistan

This study looks at how men and women are shown in the textbooks that students use in schools and universities. It asks who appears in the texts and pictures, what jobs and roles they are given, who gets to speak and who stays quiet, and which personality traits are linked to each gender. The research can focus on one subject, such as English language textbooks, or compare school books with university ones.

Textbooks are not just neutral containers of knowledge. They shape how students see the world, and the people and roles on their pages quietly teach what counts as "normal" for men and women.¹⁵

¹⁵ Sunderland, J. (2006). *Language and Gender: An Advanced Resource Book*. Routledge.

Students spend years with their textbooks, so the same messages reach them again and again, usually without anyone noticing.¹⁶ If women appear less often, or mostly in family and caring roles, while men appear as leaders, scientists, and decision-makers, students may come to see these patterns as natural.

The topic is also timely. UNESCO and other organizations have pointed out that gender bias in teaching materials is still a worldwide problem.¹⁷ In Uzbekistan, ongoing education reforms and new textbooks make this a good moment to check whether materials reflect equality. Gender-focused studies of Uzbek textbooks are still few, so there is room for an original contribution.

The main aim is to analyze and describe how gender is represented in selected school and university textbooks.

To do this, the study will:

1. Choose a set of textbooks, for example English, literature, or social science books at both levels.
2. Count how often male and female characters appear in texts, dialogues, and illustrations.
3. Look at the professions, activities, and family roles given to each gender.
4. Examine the language used to describe men and women, including adjectives, verbs, and pronouns.
5. Compare school and university textbooks and, if possible, older and newer editions.

Behind this are a few simple questions. Are men and women represented equally? Which roles and traits are linked to each? And do the level of education or the year of publication make a difference?

The study uses a mixed approach. Quantitative content analysis counts male and female characters, names, pronouns, images, speaking turns, and occupations.¹⁸ Qualitative analysis then looks closely at how characters are described and what ideas the texts promote. Critical discourse analysis links these language choices to wider social attitudes and power relations.¹⁹ Corpus tools can help show which words regularly appear next to *she* and *he*. If time allows, a short survey or interviews with students or teachers could show whether learners actually notice these portrayals and how they react.

¹⁶ Blumberg, R. L. (2008). The invisible obstacle to educational equality: Gender bias in textbooks. *Prospects*, 38(3), 345-361.

¹⁷ UNESCO. (2016). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Gender Review*. UNESCO Publishing.

¹⁸ Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE.

¹⁹ Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Longman.

The research has not been carried out yet, so these are expectations drawn from earlier studies, not real findings. Please replace them with your own results.

Studies in many countries suggest that male characters appear more often and tend to speak first and more.²⁰ Women are often placed in domestic or service roles, while men are shown in leadership, science, and public life. Women may be described more through appearance and emotions, and men through action and achievement. Newer editions may show some improvement, but stereotypes could remain in subtle forms such as illustrations and example sentences. University textbooks may have fewer visible characters but more hidden bias in their examples and terminology.

Scientifically, the study contributes to educational linguistics, sociolinguistics, and gender studies, and it brings in data from an Uzbek context that is rarely covered in international research. It also tests content analysis and critical discourse analysis on local materials.

Practically, the findings can help textbook authors, editors, and publishers create more balanced materials. Teachers can use them to spot bias and talk about it with students, and education policymakers can use them to shape guidelines for gender-sensitive textbooks.

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²⁰ Porreca, K. L. (1984). Sexism in current ESL textbooks. *TESOL Quarterly*, 18(4), 705-724; Hartman, P. L., & Judd, E. L. (1978). Sexism and TESOL materials. *TESOL Quarterly*, 12(4), 383-393.