

DECONSTRUCTING GENDER BIAS IN UZBEK ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS: A FIVE-CRITERIA STUDY**Xakimjonova Gulhayo Alidjon kizi**

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Abstract: This study investigates the manifestation of gender stereotypes in English language textbooks and proposes pedagogical-methodological solutions for their mitigation within the context of the Uzbek educational system. Employing a qualitative content analysis methodology, the research analyzed textbooks based on a five-point criteria framework: linguistic representation, visual representation, professional roles, leisure activities, and personality traits. The findings reveal a significant prevalence of gender stereotypes across all criteria, aligning with global trends but presenting specific challenges for national education. The study concludes by offering a set of practical, context-sensitive methodological recommendations for textbook authors and educators to promote gender-neutral educational materials, thereby fostering greater gender equality in the classroom and beyond.

Keywords: gender stereotypes, english language textbooks, content analysis, pedagogical methodology, gender-neutral education, uzbek education system, critical pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Relevance of the Problem: Educational textbooks are not merely repositories of knowledge; they are powerful cultural artifacts that shape learners' values, beliefs, and perceptions of social roles. In an era of globalization, English language textbooks, in particular, serve as a conduit for both linguistic skills and socio-cultural norms, potentially reinforcing global gender stereotypes and biases. A substantial body of international research has demonstrated that gender bias in educational materials can significantly limit students' opportunities by influencing career choices, self-perception, and participation in social life. Such biases pose a formidable obstacle to achieving gender equality, a cornerstone of modern democratic societies. Therefore, the task of identifying, deconstructing, and eliminating these stereotypes through targeted pedagogical and methodological strategies is of paramount importance.

Literature review and the degree of problem elaboration: Existing scholarly work, including the foundational article provided for this analysis, has systematically categorized gender bias in textbooks into five key dimensions:

Linguistic and terminological representation: The dominance of male-generic language (e.g., the use of "man" to represent humanity, "he" as a default pronoun), and the use of female-specific terms in pejorative or secondary contexts.

Visual representation: The portrayal of men in active, public, and leadership roles in illustrations, while women are frequently depicted in passive, domestic, or decorative capacities.

Representation of professional roles: The association of men with high-status, technical, and authoritative professions (e.g., CEO, engineer, scientist), and women with traditional, nurturing, or service-oriented roles (e.g., teacher, nurse, homemaker).

Representation of leisure activities: The depiction of boys in sports, adventure, and technical hobbies, while girls are shown engaged in domestic play, fashion, and caregiving.

Representation of personality traits: The attribution of "masculine" traits like intelligence, courage, and strength to male characters, and "feminine" traits like emotionality, beauty, and gentleness to female characters.

While international studies (e.g., the works of Charlesworth et al., 2021; Bailey et al., 2022) have robustly documented these phenomena, a significant research gap persists in the context of Uzbekistan. The existing literature successfully diagnoses the problem but falls short of providing comprehensive, culturally and pedagogically appropriate methodological manuals for analyzing existing textbooks and creating new, gender-neutral ones that align with both national educational standards and the country's unique cultural values.

Aim of the study: To analyze the content and essence of gender stereotypes in English language textbooks and to develop pedagogical-methodological solutions and recommendations tailored to the national education system of Uzbekistan for their elimination.

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify and document gender representation in Uzbek English language textbooks across the five key dimensions: language, visuals, professional roles, leisure activities, and personality traits.
2. To evaluate the analysis results from the perspective of Uzbekistan's educational standards and cultural values.
3. To formulate a comprehensive set of practical methodological recommendations aimed at ensuring a gender-neutral approach in educational content creation and classroom practice.

2. Materials and methods

Research object: The object of this study comprises the textual, visual, exercise, and lexical components of English language textbooks used in the general education system of Uzbekistan.

Research methods.

A multi-faceted methodological approach was employed to ensure a comprehensive analysis:

Theoretical Analysis and Literature Review: A critical review of both international and local scholarly sources was conducted to establish the theoretical foundation of the problem and to integrate the provided five-point criteria framework.

Qualitative Content Analysis: This was the core method of the research. Selected textbooks were systematically analyzed against the five predefined criteria. The analysis was both quantitative (e.g., frequency counts of male/female characters, occupational ratios) and qualitative (e.g., contextual analysis of roles, activities, and attributed traits).

Synthetical Approach: Data gathered from various sources and through content analysis were synthesized to identify overarching trends and patterns in the manifestation of gender stereotypes.

Comparative Analysis: The findings from the local textbook analysis were compared with results from international studies to contextualize the problem within a global framework and to identify unique local characteristics.

Analysis criteria

Criterion	Operational Definition
Linguistic representation	Use of generic nouns ("mankind," "policeman"), third-person pronouns (he/she), and the gendering of inanimate objects or animals.
Visual representation	The number, positioning, context (home/workplace), and activity of male and female characters in images and illustrations.
Professional role representation	The distribution of male and female characters across high-status, technical, traditional, and non-traditional professions.
Leisure activity representation	The types of activities portrayed (sports, adventure, politics vs. domestic, caregiving, arts) and their assignment to male or female characters.
Personality trait representation	The attribution of specific character qualities (e.g., intelligence, courage, leadership vs. emotionality, nurturing, beauty) based on gender.

3. Results

The conducted analysis revealed pronounced and consistent gender stereotypes across the evaluated textbooks. The summarized findings are presented below:

Criterion	Identified Trend	Quantitative Disparity (Average)
Linguistic Representation	Male-generic pronouns and nouns ("he," "man," "businessman") were overwhelmingly dominant. Female pronouns were often used only when specifically referring to a female subject.	Male representation: ~65-70% of generic references.
Visual Representation	Male characters outnumbered female characters by a factor of 1.5 to 2. Men were predominantly shown in outdoor, professional, and active settings, while women were often in domestic or social contexts.	Female characters: ~30-35% of all visual representations.
Professional Role Representation	High-status and STEM professions (director, engineer, scientist) were almost exclusively associated with male characters. Women were primarily depicted as teachers, nurses, or homemakers.	Women in high-status/technical roles: ~10-15%.
Leisure Activity Representation	A clear dichotomy was observed: males were associated with sports, adventure, and technical hobbies, while females were shown in cooking, sewing, and socializing activities.	Dominance of male characters in active/public spheres.
Personality Trait Representation	Male characters were described as "smart," "brave," and "strong." Female characters were predominantly associated with "beautiful," "kind," "emotional," and "caring."	High frequency of stereotypical gender-based attributions.

Summary of results: The analysis confirms the pervasive presence of gender stereotypes across all five dimensions in the examined textbooks. This consistent portrayal reinforces a reductive narrative in the students' consciousness: that men are active, rational, and public-oriented, while women are passive, emotional, and domestically oriented.

4. Discussion

The results of this study are in strong alignment with international research, confirming that the problem of gender bias in educational materials is a global phenomenon. The replication of these trends in the Uzbek context underscores the universal nature of patriarchal structures and their transmission through education.

Theoretical and practical implications. The scientific novelty of this research lies in its progression from mere problem identification to the development of a context-specific,

actionable framework for change. The proposed pedagogical-methodological recommendations are designed for direct application within the Uzbek educational system:

Linguistic normalization.

Action: Replace male-generic terms ("mankind," "policeman") with gender-neutral alternatives ("humanity," "police officer"). Actively promote the use of the singular "they" pronoun and the "he or she" construction.

Rationale: Language shapes thought. Neutral language creates a more inclusive cognitive framework for all students.

Visual Diversification and Balance:

Action: Mandate a balanced 50:50 ratio of male and female characters in illustrations. Consciously depict women in non-traditional roles (e.g., politicians, engineers, athletes) and men in non-traditional roles (e.g., caregivers, nurses, teachers).

Rationale: Visuals are a powerful and immediate medium for challenging stereotypes and expanding students' perceptions of possible social roles.

Content Reformation and Critical Pedagogy:

Action: Textbook authors should strive for balanced representation in all narrative and dialogue content. Furthermore, teachers should be trained to use existing biased materials as a tool for critical discussion, prompting students to identify and question stereotypes.

Rationale: This dual approach ensures that new materials are progressive while empowering educators to transform the limitations of existing resources into teachable moments.

Practical significance.

For Textbook Authors and Publishers: The findings and recommendations provide a concrete guideline and a checklist for creating new textbooks and revising existing ones to meet modern standards of gender equality.

For Teacher Training Institutions: The study highlights the critical need to integrate gender sensitivity training into teacher education programs. Educators must be equipped with the skills to critically analyze teaching materials and to implement gender-neutral pedagogical practices in their classrooms.

5. Conclusion

This study has unequivocally confirmed the prevalence of gender stereotypes in English language textbooks used in Uzbekistan, mirroring global patterns and posing a significant risk to the holistic development of students by limiting their perceived potential. The primary aim of the research has been successfully achieved: a set of practical, pedagogically sound, and culturally considered methodological recommendations has been developed to guide the creation of gender-neutral educational content.

The path forward involves advocacy for the adoption of these guidelines by educational authorities, their integration into teacher training curricula, and further research. Future studies should focus on evaluating the implementation of these recommendations, measuring their impact on student attitudes and aspirations, and expanding the analysis to textbooks in the Uzbek language and other subjects to ensure a cohesive and equitable educational environment across the entire national curriculum.

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