

## SUBSTITUTION ROLES IN EFL TEXTBOOKS: INSIGHTS FROM GENDER STEREOTYPING ON ACCOUNT OF CDA

Zahra Nouri

English Department, Faculty of Persian Literature & Foreign Languages, University of Tabriz,  
Tabriz, Iran

Email: Z.Nouri68@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

*Textbooks occasionally function as ideology carriers which glorifies the use of a method of discourse analysis such as CDA that best fits to the context in order to unmask the biased contents. This study has been done to sort out the passage of substitution roles among many dichotomous notions in van Leeuwen's social actor network (2008) through Four Corners EFL textbook series. Results stated that the textbooks acted toward some discursive features of the method in equal way; however, in case with categorization and specification roles, the differences were significant. Research has shown that the textbooks are partially gendered since the idea that women are inferior to men is conveyed through the textbooks which may provide the same cognizance regarding societies' structure.*

**KEYWORDS:** CDA; Gender; Substitution roles; Four Corners

### INTRODUCTION

Individualization and socialization processes play as pivot grounds in order to make adjustments to life. Individualization which subsumes acquiring "one's idiosyncratic personal characteristics" (Handel, 2006, p. 4) relies on socialization in complementary relation since individualization demands adopting particular transformations with the character corresponding to the functional roles in 'community of practice' (Eckert & Maccannel-Ginet, 1992). Seen in these terms, by way of an example, "gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 129) and doing gender entails a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular traces like expressions of masculine and feminine (ibid. p. 126). Although, we acquire the state of being person by our human nature, the state of being in masculine or feminine state is fully accomplished through the structure of the society. Therefore, in order to accomplish the ultimate goal, one has to move from competence toward performance. Considering gender as an accomplishment, focus changes from internal sphere of an individual to communicational and social dealings. It completely fits with van Dijk's society-discourse-cognition triangle (see van Dijk, 2009).

Socializing into different sex roles which is partially conducted by media as an important agent in which education is a part of that results from related organizations' ideology transmission pattern high spotting the dominant values of the society. As a matter of the fact, society is embedded in educational content carrying distinctive discourse structures given to gender groups which are crucial meaning conveying indexes for negotiation and interpretation of gender roles. A logical

corollary is that gender identity is partially constructed and reconstructed as a consequence of normally different contexts which may be implied through media. In other words, they take naturalistic way simulating the natural path through which learners acquire roles attributed to different 'social actors' (Van Leeuwen, 2008). An alternative view of course is that challenges await involvers including learners at every turn of the syllabuses. Questions abound, for as long as learners face with news items, new ways of looking at the world and hence constructing new points of view and beliefs about the roles that society attributes on characters. In fact, the corpses lie in the vicarious effect of witnessing learners of broader vistas of the world which leads to vicarious identity formation. Therefore, the instrumental role of textbooks in creating viewpoint and providing intellectuality hints in relation with society should not be underestimated expressing communal bounds of the society and have to be evaluated based on one-sided realization of the roles in general and gender roles in particular.

For doing so, a method of discourse analysis such as CDA is demanded in order to control the connection between sending and receiving systems. In fact, CDA functions as mediator to connect the surface structure with the reality display underlying it. CDA shows tendency to work in educational area since educational system has political aspect which carries power for benefit of special group or groups. Consequently, it is worthwhile to study the discourse structures in the education domain in relation with power structures in a direct way since education and its organization are useful instruments for employing power.

A chronological sketch of the last 50 years of gender and language studies must be set in the context of current textbooks. For years, there were few if any foundations concerning gender and power representations in the textbooks upon which to base teaching materials. The new steps has only begun to solve some of the perplexity issues regarding gender bias in textbooks.

Linguistics such as Fairclough established the credibility of gender bias-free points, hence providing equal opportunity in learning for all learners. It was in the twentieth century that gender and language studies became practiced and enjoyed considerable popularity. Many researchers provided influential works in the era. The basic premise of the studies in the context was that learning in general and language learning in particular should be bias-free in order to prevent learning impediment. Many researchers have tried to examine gender realizations in textbooks. Regarding the issue, in relation with perpetuation of gender stereotypes by the content of the textbooks, a study was done by Jabeen (2014) in which the result supported the negative portrayal of female social actors in comparison to male actors. Demonstration of male and female actors in different spheres of life was inducible through the corpus since male actors were more activated in category of superior and high positions while inferior roles were attributed to females in order to bring men into the focus of attention and reflect positive attitudes toward them. Therefore, gender equality was failed to be addressed through the curricula.

In the same vein, in an attempt to figure out the gender construction through the written discourse (two short stories), Shaikh and Khan (2012) demonstrated that the authors of the stories intended to bring men into the foreground stage highlighting traditional ideologies related to gender

discrimination while back grounded and marginalized position of women were visible for the gender group which reflects the room for improvement in the area.

In line with the foregoing, a study was carried out by Toci and Aliu (2013) in which they demonstrated that gender fairness was not fulfilled through the books and the authors have not considered gender bias-free treatment in their investigation. Male and female characters were attributed through distinctive professions holding traditional roles by female while dominant and important jobs to male characters through the corpus.

Abdelhay and Benhaddouche (2015) who conducted a study to evaluate widely used Algerian textbooks indicated that “although Algeria is undergoing changes and developments in all domains including gender, this study revealed that society’s old stereotypes are still alive and revived through different, modern and even educational ways” for the benefit of male characters (Abdelhay & Benhaddouche, 2015).

It is interesting that along the time, realization of gender and power was revived and redirected into equal form in some cases, although it is not fully accomplished through the textbooks. It seems that gender treatment has not been hold in the syllabuses the way it assumed to be and a sense of favoritism is perceptible; for instance, while one could find male characters through dominant roles of the society, such is not the case for female characters as social actors. Such a biased content hedges learners into at least relinquishing the notion that textbooks provide them with authentic and real information; thus, promoting intellectuality which may be remembered as distastes by thousands of learners.

Accordingly, due to the overshadowed influence of the issue on learners’ construction of viewpoints and stereotypes, the current study holds to explore substitution roles given to different social actors. Consequently, an attempt has been made to determine the hidden discursive patterns and delineation of male and female social actors which are represented in the texts of the Four Corners series (2012).

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study benefits from van Leeuwen’s social actor network (2008) to address the following research questions:

Is there any difference in representation of men and women throughout Four Corners series in terms of power relations?

Is there any difference in discursive negotiation of cross-gender relations in Four Corners’ dialogic interactions?

## METHODOLOGY

### *Materials*

The selected material is elementary level of Four Corners series. The series is a set of leveled EFL textbooks that carries learners from beginner to intermediate level of proficiency which is described as a complete course in oral communication aimed at adult students who are fundamentally functional in the four skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Four Corners has been authored by Richards and Bohlke (2012). Each book contains 12 units each of which is divided into four parts (a, b, c, & d), including exercises for improving the four skills.

The inducement for the choice of textbooks is governed by the personal interest of the researcher and due to the absence of any investigation dealing with the mentioned textbooks. The Series was published in 2012, which means that, it is a latest product. So, one expects a fair treatment of aspects of gender depiction.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

The first stage in the analysis is to identify the conversation, interaction, and reading sections and determine what typologies to scrutinize. Conducive to fulfil the objectives of the study, all of the utterances in cross-gender conversation, interaction, and reading sections were read critically, focusing on each utterance separately and in conjunction with the adjoining utterances.

### *Data Analysis Procedure*

CDA in its commitment to accounting for the underlying elements and dimensions of power can typically concentrate on syllabuses as tokens of power in the institutionalized discourse of education (Yaghoubi-Notash & Nouri, 2016). Due to the applicability of CDA in research respecting gender inequality, the framework has been chosen to discover gender representation in the textbooks. This study's investigation relies on the following framework for manipulating the data: critically analysis of the textbooks conforming to the features introduced by van Leeuwen's model (2008). The rationale for working in line with the stated framework lies in the fact that it has been found inclusive enough dealing with nearly all aspects of gender representation from social viewpoint. In fact, the textbooks will be analyzed in order to figure out the gender representation in terms of power relations. Van Leeuwen's model has been utilized as central framework in the study to decontextualize the representations of social actors through examining the typologies introduced by the network in male and female social actors' language use. Since textbooks do not constitute all forms of realization, for empirical justification, the following segments of substitution roles of van Leeuwen's social actor network (2008) are regarded as indicators in discourse analysis:

Personalization/Impersonalization, Determination/Indetermination, Nomination/Categorization, Genericization/Specification, and Individualization/Collectivization.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Personalization/Impersonalization*

Social actors are either personalized along with conveying the feature of + human or impersonalized, i.e. conveying the feature of \_ human. Van Leeuwen distinguishes two kinds of impersonalization: Abstraction and Objectivation. “Abstraction occurs when social actors are represented by means of a quality assigned to them by and in the representation and objectivation occurs when social actors are represented by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with action in which they are represented as being engaged” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 46).

Table 1: Chi-square results for comparison of M&F Personalization/Impersonalization roles

| Category          | Male | Female | X2     | df | Sig. |
|-------------------|------|--------|--------|----|------|
| Personalization   | 498  | 328    | 34.988 | 1  | 0.00 |
| Impersonalization | 1    | 0      | -      | -  | -    |

According to Table 1, social actors are almost always personalized except a case through which male social actor is impersonalized. The category of personalization is elaborated more on the following parts with its subcategories.

### *Determination/Indetermination*

Indetermination occurs when social actors are realized as unknown individuals though attributes such as “someone”, “some”, and etc. while the category of determination distinguishes one individual or group from the other. Drawing on social actor network, there are two kinds of determination: Nomination and Categorization. The investigation of the corpus unmasked no instance of indetermination but determination which is provided below with details.

### *Nomination/Categorization*

Some actors are remarked as individualistic reference while other actors share features with others which is controversial issue from critical perspective.

Table 2: Chi-square Results for Comparison of M&F Nomination/Categorization Roles

| Category       | Male | Female | X2    | df | Sig.  |
|----------------|------|--------|-------|----|-------|
| Nomination     | 51   | 42     | 0.871 | 1  | 0.351 |
| Categorization | 71   | 45     | 5.828 | 1  | 0.016 |

Unique identities given to actors through proper nouns with or without honorifics can provide valuable information in case with conversations.

Table 3: Chi-square Results for M/F Nomination Roles

| Category          | Male | Female | X2    | df | Sig.  |
|-------------------|------|--------|-------|----|-------|
| Formalization     | 6    | 2      | 2     | 1  | 0.157 |
| Semiformalization | 14   | 9      | 1.087 | 1  | 1.297 |
| Informalization   | 31   | 31     | 0     | 1  | 1     |

In the corpus, males are more frequently referred to nomination roles than females especially concerning formalization and semiformalization which are indicator of respect toward the

characters which can be regarded as critical element is discourse analysis in terms of power relations. Additionally, three elements of Functionalization, Identification and Appraisal are sub categories of Categorization. Social actors in terms of what they do, what they are, and others' feeling toward actors are respectively indicator of the categories.

Table 4: Chi-square Results for M&F Categorization Roles

| Category          | M  | F  | X2    | df | Sig.  |
|-------------------|----|----|-------|----|-------|
| Functionalization | 38 | 20 | 5.586 | 1  | 0.018 |
| Identification    | 31 | 23 | 1.185 | 1  | 0.276 |
| Appraisal         | 2  | 2  | 0     | 1  | 1     |

As table 4 makes clear, the frequencies between male and female social actors are significant for functionalization category for the benefit of males which means that males are represented in terms of what they do more than females in the corpus. Identification is expressible through three sub-categories of Classification, Relational Identification, and Physical Identification. Classification occurs in the case of defining social actors in terms of different classes such as age, race, gender, wealth, etc. Relational identification refers to social actors via their relationships and physical identification happens through physical characteristics which distinguishes them.

Table 5: Chi-square Results for M/F Identification Roles

| Category                  | M  | F  | X2    | df | Sig.  |
|---------------------------|----|----|-------|----|-------|
| Classification            | 3  | 5  | 0.5   | 1  | 0.48  |
| Relational Identification | 19 | 16 | 0.257 | 1  | 0.612 |
| Physical Identification   | 9  | 2  | 4.455 | 1  | 0.035 |

Regarding classification, female actors outnumbered while considering relational and physical identification, male actors outnumbered yielding significant difference for physical identification between the frequencies of both gender groups.

#### Genericization/Specification

The option between generic or specific reference may provide invaluable information considering the realization of social actors i.e. they may be represented by particular classes or unique individuals.

Table 6: Chi-square Results for Comparison of M&F Genericization/Specification Roles

| Category       | M   | F   | X2     | df | Sig.  |
|----------------|-----|-----|--------|----|-------|
| Genericization | 5   | 6   | 0.091  | 1  | 0.763 |
| Specification  | 372 | 235 | 30.921 | 1  | 0.00  |

Table 6 uncovers that social actors are rarely activated in the category of genericization and mostly activated in category of specification for which the significant difference is evident through chi-square examination. The sub-categories of Specification, Individualization and Collectivization may contribute constructive data related to the issue.



Table 7: Chi-square Results for Comparison of M&F Specification Roles

| Category          | M   | F   | X <sup>2</sup> | df | Sig.  |
|-------------------|-----|-----|----------------|----|-------|
| Individualization | 340 | 208 | 31.796         | 1  | 0.00  |
| Collectivization  | 32  | 27  | 0.424          | 1  | 0.515 |

Through the books explored, the individuality of males has been highlighted with statistically significant difference ( $X^2=31.796$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). As a result, males are depicted as more independent and autonomous individuals which is affirmation of different depiction of male and female social actors in the corpus under investigation.

These findings are in line with Abdelhay and Benhaddouche (2015), Toci and Aliu (2013), Jabeen (2014), and Shaikh and Khan (2012). Simply put, the inferior position of female social actors is inducible for some categories according to the typologies introduced by van Leeuwen.

## CONCLUSION

The present study examined the Four Corners series for realization of male and female characters based on van Leeuwen's social actor network through the theme of substitution and the following results appeared:

The significant difference is displayed for categorization and specification roles which is indicator of features such as autonomy and importance given to males. In points of fact, the surface pattern demonstrates the equal representation of gender, but the results through the application of CDA is not in the same line with surface structure. Although, there have been some modification to present genders in equal manner by bringing females to forefront stage questioning the traditional ideologies, but their importance level and equal representation is not fully accomplished through textbooks.

It seems that under the condition of raising learners' consciousness awareness and making them to be critical thinkers, it is likely that the textbooks under investigation might meet educational needs. More to the context, the indispensable role of teachers in presenting the corpus should not be underrated since they are the right agents in dealing with gender-biased contents, and stimulating learners' consciousness toward the same content. In brief, in educational context, there should be avoidance of any imposition of gender-biased point to the learners by any possible way. It is hoped that the investigation of newly published marketized EFL textbooks for gender and power relations might be able to provide to teachers and syllabus designers in selection and preparation of curriculum since the individuality of learners is an important factor which needs consideration.

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