Gender roles in reading stories in EFL textbooks

Kostić, Dolores

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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer i mađarskog jezika i književnosti-komunikološki smjer

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Rodne uloge u u pričama u udžbenicima engleskog kao stranog jezika

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Abstract

The present study examines gender roles in reading stories in EFL textbooks. The theoretical part covers the debate on gender roles and as well as a brief overview of previous research on gender representation in textbooks. The paper also discusses the necessity to represent each gender equally. The experimental part revealed that male characters are more frequently represented in reading stories and that mostly famous people are presented.

Key words: gender, gender roles, EFL textbooks

Sažetak

Ovo istraživanje ispituje rodne uloge u pričama u udžbenicima engleskog kao stranog jezika. Teorijski dio prikazuje raspravu na temu rodnih uloga i kratki pregled istraživanja prikazivanja roda u udžbenicima. Rad također raspravlja o potrebi da se oba roda prikazuju ravnopravno. Istraživanje je pokazalo da su muški likovi zastupljeniji u pričama, te da su prikazane osobe najčešće poznate ličnosti.

Ključne riječi: rod, rodne uloge, udžbenici engleskog kao stranog jezika

1. Introduction

The aim of this research paper is to examine gender roles in reading stories in EFL textbooks. The main focus is on gender roles in reading stories. It sets out to explore whether the representation of each gender correlates with the modern way of life and how people see gender roles in real life. Due to the fact that gender bias exists in real life, it will be very interesting to investigate whether it exists in textbooks as well, because textbooks are an essential part of the teaching process and can affect the students' own perception of gender roles.

Gender roles and their representation in textbooks is a controversial topic among many scholars, therefore it is an important topic for a research. Due to the fact that textbooks have a big influence on students' perception, many scholars believe that textbooks should be bias free and both genders should be represented equally, especially because textbooks remain the same over the course of many years.

The paper consists of the theoretical and analytical part. The theoretical part covers the debate on gender roles as well as the necessity to represent each gender equally and a brief overview on why are reading stories so important for students' perception. The practical part shows the result of the present study whose aim is to explore the most frequent gender roles in EFL textbooks as well as to discuss its implications for teaching and learning.

2. Theoretical background

This research paper discusses two concepts, gender representation in EFL textbooks and gender roles. This section starts with a discussion of gender-biased language and sexism in textbooks. It is quite a controversial topic, mainly because it means different things to each person. Many researchers emphasize the fact that sex is a biological distinction, while gender is a learned behavior. It is important to distinguish between the two and as future teachers to know how to teach our learners about gender, because what they learn can influence their future behavior.

2.1 Gender bias

As textbooks are very important in teaching, many researchers have tried to establish whether they are gender-biased and if so, how to improve them. It is important to mention that sex and gender are different. Gender "designates the social, cultural and psychological aspects of males and females in particular social contexts; " (Titus 1993:41). Sex, however, is "the biological aspects of a person " (Titus 1993:41).

Several well-known research studies have proved that gender bias is still visible in textbooks, as is evident in Jannati's (2015) review. Thus, Stockdale (2006, as cited in Jannati 2015) in her examination of the representations of men and women in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook noticed the existence of gender bias.

Saarikivi (2012, as cited in Jannati 2015) investigated gender representation in two Finnish EFL textbook series and the analysis revealed that the analyzed textbooks were gender biased in line with the hegemonic ideas of gender in the Finnish society.

Lee (2006, as cited in Jannati 2015) examined twenty EFL textbooks used in Hong Kong to determine whether there had been changes in the nature of gender representation over the past decade. He found that gender stereotyping was still a prevalent problem in textbooks despite the changes in the status of women in Hong Kong society.

Macionis and Plummer (2008, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) explain that gender discrimination is unequal treatment of gender which leaves members of one sex at a disadvantage. Discrimination and patriarchy is measured by gender gap. They continue explaining that

gender gap is the measure of the levels of inequality between men and women. Gender gap is the most obvious in such areas as family roles, household production, and work. According to Wharton (2012, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) gender inequality is fostered by a gender biased representation of a gender. Gender-bias is the preference or prejudice of one gender towards the other. Usually women are those who are trivialized and diminished in relation to men. Holmes (2007, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) describes that gender inequality derives from patriarchy, a social system in which men have come to be dominant in relation to women. As a consequence of patriarchal system, gender is treated according to stereotypes. According to Inifiri (2012, as cited in Brusokaité 2013), gender stereotyping is treating men and women as being different and having totally different qualities regardless of abilities or capabilities. Therefore, stereotyped perception of gender and gender roles lead to gender discrimination and gender disparity in the society.

2.2 Sexism

Sexism is defined as a set of attitudes and behaviors that lead to an assumption that one sex is superior to the other (Titus, 1993). According to Benokraitis and Feagin (1999, as cited in Swim, Mellot and Stangor 2004), sexism comes in many different forms: blatant, covert, and subtle sexism. They define blatant sexism as obviously unequal and unfair treatment of women relative to men, whereas covert sexism is defined as unequal and unfair treatment of women that is recognized but purposefully hidden from view. Both blatant and covert sexism are intended, but only covert sexism is hidden. In comparison to these two forms, subtle sexism represents unequal and unfair treatment of women that is not recognized by many people because it is perceived to be normative, and therefore does not appear unusual. Thus, like covert sexism, subtle sexism is hidden but unlike covert sexism, subtle sexism is not intentionally harmful.

Lips (1997, as cited in Swim, Mellot and Stangor 2004) states that sexist language is learned at an early age and can be considered a linguistic habit. According to Parks and Roberton (1998, as cited in Swim, Mellot and Stangor 2004) people may use sexist language for a variety of reasons, such as: it is traditional, it is ingrained in current written and spoken language and can be difficult to change, people lack knowledge about what constitutes sexist

language, people do not believe that such language is sexist, or people are attempting to protect established social hierarchies.

According to Cameron (1990, as cited in Gharbavi, 2012) gender-biased language in textbooks can affect students adversely and it creates an oppressive world for them because this gender-biased language most often is unjustified and unfair. Porreca (1984, as cited in Dominguez, 2003), who conducted several researches on the topic of sexism in some of the then current EFL textbooks, named six categories that help discovering sexism in textbooks: occurrence (both visual and textual), occupational roles, nouns, firstness, masculine generic constructions, and adjectives associated to either sex. Moreover, many researchers claim that the negative representation of genders in EFL textbooks can affect students' social life negatively.

Dominguez (2003) claims that in textbooks which were written by men, women's household chores were exemplified by cooking, changing diapers, doing laundry. Men, on the other hand, were depicted fixing the car, changing electrical bulbs and/or mowing the lawn. It would be useful to make a research on that topic on modern textbooks, because there is a possibility that the gender of the author is not connected to possible gender biased language and sexism.

There are several researches that prove sexism exists in textbooks. Porreca (1984, as cited in Tahan, 2015) analyzed ESL textbooks for gender manifestation. She examined the representation of females in texts and images, occupations, male and female nouns frequency, firstness, the types of adjectives used for males and females and their frequencies generic masculine nouns (man) and pronouns (he). She concluded that "sexism continues to flourish in ESL textbooks"(Porreca 1984: 718). Porreca also pointed out that "although females comprise slightly over half the population of the United States, they are represented only half as often as males in both text and illustration" (Porreca 1984: 718).

It is important to be aware of signs of sexism and sexist language, because it could influence the way we talk and behave. According to Swim, Mellot and Stangor (2004) people who are relatively unaware of subtle sexist behaviors, either because they do not notice them or do not consider them to be sexist, could be the ones who are most likely to engage in such behavior. That is, they may be less concerned about engaging in subtle sexist behaviors because they do not see the behaviors as problematic.

2.3 Gender roles

Gender roles are closely connected to the occupational roles that are given to male and female characters in any stories. It is very important to discuss whether stories follow the modern way of thinking about gender and gender equality, or if the stories still have traditional occupations and roles in the world.

Kim (2007, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) conducted research on EFL textbooks published in Korea and revealed that a woman is mainly presented as a housewife wearing an apron, doing house chores and fixing meal for children. This seems to be the typical and usual representation of female roles in all the textbooks regardless of culture.

According to Davies (1995, as cited in Brusokaité 2013), men are obviously depicted as belonging to public sphere whereas women are depicted as belonging to domestic sphere. The researcher provided an example of illustration of the Eid celebration in a mosque where the participants were exclusively men and boys. Even though the celebration is family orientated, no women or girls were shown in the picture.

The same pattern of gender roles representation is shown in EFL textbooks published in Nigeria. The analysis conducted by Mustapha (2012, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) demonstrated that females are assigned home-based roles whereas males have outside-the-home roles. The gender gap between domestic and social spheres is very wide.

Mutekwe and Modiba (2012, as cited in Jannati 2015) evaluated gender sensitivity in a number of EFL textbooks in the Zimbabwean secondary school curriculum followed by a focus group interview carried out with a purposive and gender stratified sample of students. The study revealed that the analyzed textbooks contained gender biases, imbalances and stereotypes and a great deal of patriarchal values and ideologies were embodied in them.

However, some investigations presented different result with respect to gender roles. Mineshima (2008, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) examined EFL textbook and revealed that men and women respectively are engaged in household chores, however, a closer analysis showed that the workload for males and females is not equal. Women more often cook, clean, do the laundry or do the dishes.

The evidence above clearly proves that textbooks are very important in shaping one's view of gender stereotypes. Law and Chan (2004, as cited in Yang 2016) argue that people

internalized views of gender stereotypes are formed by different socialization agents (e.g. schools) and other socio-cultural processes. Moreover, Keresty (2009, as cited in Yang 2016) suggests that gender-specific expectations, norms, and behaviors portrayed in textbooks may contribute to social inequalities in the society. It is necessary to resolve any gender discrimination in textbooks, because it may affect students' motivation and life view.

2.4 Potential influence of gender bias in textbooks on learners

Gender bias in textbooks is the concept of the traditional representation of men and women, especially if one is overrepresented compared to the other. There are many studies that emphasize the importance of gender equality in textbooks, because textbooks have a great influence on learners. According to O'Neill (1982) the use of textbooks in EFL classes is so extensive; it is considered a global component of the teaching process. It is an aiding tool not only for the teacher but also for the students.

Tahan (2015) claims that the EFL textbooks are considered the main source for examining gender representation as they are designed to reflect the most common and dominant features of gender representation in a society. According to Haddad (2009, as cited in Brusokaité 2013), teaching materials frequently include gender-bias items. Women are depicted as shy, weak and passive in contrast to men who are depicted as adventurous, heroic and clever. Women are rarely represented as managers, pilots, lawyers, scientists, doctors and heads of state. Consequently, stereotyping of gender roles creates the attitude and view that certain occupations are regarded as being meant either for males or females.

Brusokaité (2013) explains that gender bias in textbooks can manifest itself in many ways: in a text it is done through the use of language which devalues members of one sex and fosters the notion of male supremacy through the use of the generic masculine pronoun, the generic usage of the word *man* and affixing-*man* in its generic use in the primary place, male *firstness* in both sex phrases, titles and the use of verbs as well as adjectives to describe males and females. She adds that the levels of analysis can differ from *lexical to visual or textual content.*

Gharbavi (2012) claims that educators are concerned about sexism and writers' attitudes in textbooks because some textbooks may have destructive effects on students' personality. For

example, preponderance of males in the math textbooks may suggest to female students that mathematics is not really for them. A biased representation of female and male can lead to students' sense of what is *normal* for women and men in our society. In other words, the content of the textbooks helps reinforce gender as a social division and perpetuate inequalities between men and women. Experts and authorities in education also believe that the health and mental, social, cultural and scientific growth of every learner depends on a balanced and appropriate system of education.

According to Swim (2004, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) gender bias in textbooks is called *subtle sexism*. Subtle sexism, she explains, represents unequal and unfair treatment of women but is not regarded to be direct sexism because with regard to conventional stereotypes it is assumed to be a norm. The subtle sexism in textbooks can also be called *hidden* or *unseen* because it is placed *between lines*. To specify, the biased items are not directly related with the content of the subject, however, they have a strong connection with the implied meaning that could be taken for the background analysis. This is very important, because learners can pick up the subtle signs and read between the lines.

Williams (2011, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) states that it is necessary to distinguish between conscious and unconscious learning. Williams continues explaining that conscious learning is related with learning something consciously. In contrast, unconscious learning is taking up things without realization. Gender roles, occupations, appearances, behavior patterns are hidden in the content of textbooks. These are all parts of subtle sexism that learners can easily notice, especially in a written form.

Sunderland (1992, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) described three negative effects that gender-bias in EFL may cause: EFL materials have an unconscious influence on females affecting their social behavior and cognition of gender roles, it can cause negative learning performances, and it may have a big impact on later usage of language outside the classroom.

Davies (1995, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) states that gender-bias in textbooks can cause long term drawbacks on learners' performances and their social behavior. He continues explaining that the biased ways in which sexes are presented influences not only learner's perception of gender identity but also limits his or her understanding of the other sex making it inferior or superior. The difficulty comes from the tight link between tendencies in society and the representation of it in the textbooks. He thinks that the only way to fight with biased texts is to teach individuals not to think in a biased manner. This means that the teacher is responsible to

notice any gender biased text and teach the learners not to apply any inappropriate descriptions into the language. Nayyar and Salim (2003, as cited in Jannati 2015) claim gender bias should be redressed and there must be a balance in representation of both genders in society.

Sudo (2007, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) notes that learners who are not familiar with gender issues and gender-bias free language may fail to use the target language in real life correctly. The changing gender tendencies and language reforms influence the necessity of using the *correct* language.

Haddad (2009, as cited in Brusokaité 2013) stresses the importance of teachers' attitudes and practices concerning gender-bias issues in textbooks by providing teacher training and raising awareness of the problem. If textbooks are biased, the teacher is a person who has to control the process of learning and create gender-bias free environment in the classroom by improving the material or putting the emphasis on achieving gender equality. This piece of advice should be a great compass to all teachers as they are the ones who ultimately teach the learners how to view gender and how to behave towards it. It was mentioned before that gender is a learned behavior. Therefore, teachers should be aware of what they teach and how they teach it.

3. Analytical part

3.1 Aim and purpose

The present research is an attempt to investigate how EFL textbooks, which are currently used in Croatian high schools, portray the two genders (male and female). The research was conducted both in terms of gender visibility and roles in reading texts. The main purpose is to help teachers pay more attention to the reading texts offered in the textbooks and raise awareness of possible gender biases to students, therefore creating a more appealing classroom environment. The research findings could help teachers adapt their teaching methods with additional materials and provide learners with a better learning experience.

The main research questions are:

1) Which gender is more frequently represented in the reading texts?

2) Is there any difference between the roles of male and female characters?

3) Which occupational category is more visible in the reading texts?

4) Is there a difference in gender roles between the textbooks themselves?

3.2 Sample

The textbooks chosen for this research were *Tune up* and *Solutions,* four textbooks from each series. Tune up 1 was written by Boris Anić, Petra Buljević, Susan D. Curtis and Milena Gilić Tune up 2 was written by Milena Gilić, Irena Pavlović, Ivana Škarica Mital and Andy Tomlinson. Tune up 3 was written by Rebecca Charry Roje, Mirna Linčir Lumzi, Ivana Škarica Mital and Blanka Treselj. Tune up 4 was written by Rebecca Charry Roje, Irena Pavlović and Ivana Špiranec. They were all published by Profil in Zagreb. On the other hand, all four Solutions textbooks were written by Tim Falla and Paul A. Davies and published by Oxford Press.

Reading texts from each textbook were carefully analyzed. For the scope of this research only those stories which contained male and/or female characters were included. This means that stories that did not contain human characters, such as a story about a famous building, were not included in this research. Following the given condition, not all reading texts could be included in the scope of this research. Each textbook has a different number of reading stories. The stories that did not contain male and/or female characters, or did not provide a description on the character's profession, were not included in this research. Following the given criteria, the total sample included 54 stories that met the criteria: twenty stories from the *Tune up* series twenty stories from the *Tune up* series and thirty-four stories from the *Solutions* series.

3.3 Procedure

The research was conducted by examining the male and female characters in each selected reading story. The textbooks were examined in depth. Some authors (Cohen and Manion as cited in Gharbavi, 2012) say this step of content analysis is called mass observation which is very important for the researcher, who has to go through all the textbooks to find the data needed for his research.

The most difficult part of categorizing some of the occupations was that, at first, they could not seem to fit any of the categories. Also, some occupations or descriptions were mentioned only once and therefore, could not fit anywhere. That was the case with the category of regular people. There were many occasions when a story was told from a viewpoint of a boyfriend, husband, activist, photographer, policeman, etc. and sometimes this occurred only once in one single story. It was difficult to give a general and neutral name for a category that contains a huge amount of occupations or personal descriptions, especially if it only occurred once. That is why the name regular people/professions were chosen; it seemed to describe, for example, both a husband and a soldier, because they are all regular everyday people. Finally, as this research focuses on occurrence (textual) and occupational roles, a quantitative analysis was used for this step.

3.3.1 Famous people

This category is the most numerous one, as will be seen late on. The category contains both real and fictional characters. Some of the characters are well-known, such as Charlie Chaplin, James Bond, Queen Victoria, but some characters were described as famous in the text itself. Such was the case with a doctor, who is not a world-wide famous doctor, but the description in the text indicated that he was well-known and respected. Therefore, characters like him were included into this category.

3.3.2 Regular people/professions

As mentioned before, this was the most difficult category of all. When comparing all the stories together, there are some cases when some professions occur only once, such as an activist or a photographer, and these descriptions and professions had to be fit into a general category. After the other categories were named, this seemed as a perfect category to comprise of all the regular descriptions and professions, some of which only occurs once.

3.3.3 Student/teen

Although it may seem as a self-explanatory category, it is important to mention that this category contains both students and young children whose age was sometimes determined through an illustration next to the text, because the text itself did not contain that kind of information. This category is very important for two reasons: first, because these are textbooks for young learners and second, because it is important to see how and in what number they are represented in reading stories offered by the textbooks chosen.

3.4 Results

In this chapter, the results of the analysis are presented. Every textbook from each of the series is analyzed separately, and the results of each are presented in the tables bellow. At the end, a comparison is shown between the two textbook series.

After inspecting all the materials, the collected data needed for this research were written down and categorized into groups, according to their roles. Three categories were made to represent all the characters: famous people (scientists, kings and queens, musicians, artists, etc.), regular people/professions (husband, wife, mother, boyfriend, policeman, firefighter, soldier, etc.) students/teen (of all ages). These categories were chosen because each occupation needed a general category to fit into, and looking through all the occupations, these categories seemed as a perfect solution.

3.4.1 Textbook analysis

Tune up 1.

This book contains five reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first reading story which was used is called *Are you talking about me?* where we are introduced to the story of a male psychologist/professor. The next story called *Slam* tells the story of several characters: a mother, a boyfriend, a male teacher, a male art student and a female student. The next story called *Leave to remain* introduces three women and their different stories and it is only said that they are poor. After that we have a story called *Visions of future* where we have a surprising number of famous people. In this story there are nine famous male characters: Ridley Scott, Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Stanley Kubrick, Arthur C. Clarke, Gene Rodenberry, Larry and Andy Wachowski and Keanu Reeves. The story is a short description of famous SF films. The last reading story in this book is called *The importance of self-esteem*, which offers a short overview on self-esteem amongst teenagers, but only two male students are represented in this story. The table below shows how many male and female characters are presented in Tune up 1.

Table 1: Depiction of genders in **Tune up 1**.

DEPICTION	**FEMALE**	**MALE**
Famous	-	10
Regular people/ professions	4	1
Student/teen	1	3
TOTAL	**5**	**14**

The table clearly shows that in Tune up 1. male characters are present in all categories, mainly in the categories of famous and student/teen characters, while females are considerably less visible.

Tune up 2.

This book contains five reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first reading story in this book is called *(Just) A little bit different* which presents the ideas of a famous educational philosopher Rudolf Steiner. This is the case when the character might not be world famous, but the text itself describes him as such. The next story called *England in the 16th century*, talks about Queen Elizabeth I and William Shakespeare, both of them were categorized as famous people. The next story, *The fun they had*, has several characters: a male and female students, male inspector, male and female teachers and a mother. The last four characters are put into the category of regular people/professions for the reasons described above. *Brand washed* tells a story of the young Martin, who was chosen to be a member of Lego's advisory board. According to the story, he became very famous and successful; therefore, he is put into the category of famous people. The last story called *They caught him- and gave him a job* tells the story Frank W. Abagnale, a famous con artist who now works for the FBI, is also in the category of famous people. Table 2 shows how many male and female characters are present in Tune up 2: both genders are visible in each category, but again there are more famous male than female characters.

Table 2: Depiction of genders in **Tune up 2**.

DEPICTION	FEMALE	MALE
Famous	1	4
Regular people/ professions	1	1
Student/teen	1	1
TOTAL	**3**	**6**

Tune up 3.

This book contains six reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first reading story in this book is called *Beauty through the ages*, which depict the stories of: Immanuel Kant, Queen Elizabeth I and the British model Twiggy. They were all put into the category of famous people. After that there is a story called *Facebook "Friends", Not friends* which presents two characters, Mark Zuckerberg and a male student. The next story, called *The Catadores of Jardim Garmacho*, tells the story of Lorival Francisco dos Santos, a worker at a garbage dump. He is another example of a profession only mentioned once and is therefore put into the category of regular people/professions. The next story called *No impact man* tells the story of a father, mother and their daughter, so the first two were put into the regular people/jobs category, whereas the last one was put into the student/teen category. After that comes the story called *A damsel in distress or a modern day heroine?* about Bella, the characters from the Twilight trilogy. Although she is a fictional character, she was put into the category of famous people. The last story is called *This old town* and presents the stories of Dorothea Lange, a famous photographer and a mother, who is put into the regular people/professions category. Table 3 bellow shows how many male and female characters are presented in Tune up 3.

Table 3: Depiction of genders in **Tune up 3**.

DEPICTION	**FEMALE**	**MALE**
Famous	4	2
Regular people/ professions	3	1
Student/teen	-	1
TOTAL	**7**	**4**

The results show that female characters are more visible than male characters in this textbook.

Tune up 4.

This book contains four reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first story is called *The Queen and I* and tells a story of a fictional famous queen and a married couple. The next story is called *One is never too young to make a difference* and tells the story of an environmental activist Severn Cullis-Suziki, a twelve-year-old, who became known as *The Girl Who Silenced The World for 5 Minutes.* Therefore, she is put into the famous category. The next story is called *Bullets stall youthful push for Arab Spring,* which presents the story of three male activists turned prisoners, a female activist, a king and a male headmaster. This is another example of a profession, so to say, that had to be put into a general category. The last story in this book is called *Mitsuko Uchida-the plight of the music prodigy pushed too far, too fast* and it mentions two famous male musicians and two famous female musicians. Table 4 shows how many male and female characters are presented in Tune up 4.

Table 4: Depiction of genders in **Tune up 4**.

DEPICTION	FEMALE	MALE
Famous	4	3
Regular people/ professions	1	7
Student/teen	-	-
TOTAL	**5**	**10**

This table shows that male characters are more visible than female characters in the reading stories in this textbook.

Solutions 1.

This book contains six reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first story called *Surfing superstar* tells the story about a famous female surfer. The next story, called *They do that?,* contains short descriptions of famous movies in which famous actors and characters, such as Charlie Chaplin and James Bond, are mentioned. The next story called *A life for sale* tells the story of a male student and a man who sold his identity online. This is another example of a specific type of a character who is mentioned only once, and because there is no further personal information provided, he is put in the category of regular people/professions. *Crazy ways of getting around* provides the story of three famous male inventors. *Cyber crime* offers the story of a male criminal and a female character that got her identity stolen. Both of them are put in the category of ordinary people/professions. The last story is called *The vampire returns.* It is about famous writers and characters, such as Bram Stoker and Edward Cullen. Table 5 shows how many male and female characters are presented in Solutions 1.

Table 5: Depiction of genders in **Solution 1**.

DEPICTION	FEMALE	MALE
Famous	5	15
Regular people/ professions	1	3
Student/teen	-	1
TOTAL	**6**	**19**

The table above shows that there are considerably more male characters that female ones. The most represented category is famous people.

Solutions 2.

This book contains ten reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first reading story in this book is called *Hearing colors* which represents a male teacher and male student. The next story is called *Identity crisis* and has multiple characters: two famous male characters (Jason Bourne and Leonard Shelby), a regular female character, a famous male who became famous because of his medical case and a male doctor. *Woman's work?* tells the story of a male nursing teacher, a female air-traffic controller and a female teacher. They are put in the category regular people/professions. The next story is called *A fire walking hypnosis* and tells the story of a male doctor and two famous male psychics. *50 years on* offers the stories of several famous people, politicians and journalists. *Kaspar Hauser* is about a male character who claimed to have grown up in the total isolation of a darkened cell, which is why he got famous. The next story is called *Can science help you find love?* and tells the stories of two female doctors and a female fitness instructor. They were all put into the regular people/professions category. The next story is called *The world's luckiest man alive* and tells the story of Frano Selak, a Croatian music teacher, who got famous for surviving many accidents. *Alonzo Clemons* tells the story of a famous artist and his mother. The last story, *Richard Warwo,* tells the story of an officer who turned into a famous artist and about Margaret Thatcher. Table 6 shows how many male and female characters are presented in Solutions 2.

Table 6: Depiction of genders in **Solution 2**.

DEPICTION	FEMALE	MALE
Famous	2	13
Regular people/ professions	7	3
Student/teen	-	1
TOTAL	**9**	**17**

The table above shows that there are considerably more male characters that female ones. The category of famous people has, again, numerous characters.

Solutions 3.

This book contains nine reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first reading story is called *Maths prodigy* which tells the story of a famous male student. He was put into the category of famous people. *How the other half live* is about two famous male inventors and two rich and famous female characters. *Closing the generation gap* is about a female student and her parents. The parents are put in the regular people/professions category. *Freedom of speech* is about three famous male and three famous female characters, comedians and politicians. *Jail breakers* is about three male students and their stories. The next story is called *Drinking stories* and has several characters: a male goat keeper, the Pope, Emperor Shen Nung, King Charles II, princess Catherine of Braganca and dr. John Pemberton, the inventor of Coca Cola. The goat keeper is another example of a profession that is only mentioned once and is put in the category of regular people/professions. *You've got mail* tells the story of King Henry VIII, Queen Victoria and Roland Hill. *Mistaken identity* tells the story of a family: a mother, father and daughter. The parents are in the category of regular people/professions. The last story is called *Getting ahead* tells the story of a famous male character and three famous female characters. Table 7 shows how many male and female characters are presented in Solutions 3.

Table 7: Depiction of genders in **Solution 3**.

DEPICTION	FEMALE	MALE
Famous	7	10
Regular people/ professions	6	5
Student/teen	2	4
TOTAL	**15**	**19**

The table above shows that there is almost an equal representation of both genders in each category.

Solutions 4.

This book contains nine reading stories which are relevant for this research. The first story is called *Sporting origins* and tells the story of one male student and four famous male characters. *Lords of the flies* tells the story of three boys. *Love conquers all* tells the story of a soldier and s girl, both of them are put in the category of regular people/professions. *A new direction* tells the story of four famous female characters and a father. *Wild life warrior* tells the story of Steve Irwin and his wife, both of them put into the category of famous people. *Sleep-deprived teenagers* tell the story of Dr Luci Wiggs, a research fellow at Oxford University's Section of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. *Time travel for beginners* presents several famous male characters: H.G. Wells, Albert Einstein, Robert Heinlein and Carl Sagan. *Conspiracy theories* also present several famous people: Princess Diana, Michael Michel, David Alexander, Elvis Presley, Patrick Leman, Harold Holt, Bart Sibre. The last story is called *Immortality* and mentions Jorge Luis Borges. Table 8 shows how many male and female characters are presented in Solutions 4.

Table 8: Depiction of genders in **Solution 4**.

DEPICTION	**FEMALE**	**MALE**
Famous	6	17
Regular people/ professions	-	4
Student/teen	1	4
TOTAL	**7**	**25**

The table above shows that there are considerably more male characters that female ones. The most represented category is famous people.

3. 4. 2 Comparisons of the *Tune up* series and *Solutions* series

The results presented above were summed up in Table 9 to compare the results. All the textbooks from the *Tune up* series show that, when we look at them as one unit, there seem to be more male characters than female characters. In the category of famous people, there are ten more male than female characters represented. In the regular people/professions category there is just one more male character, while in the student/teens category there are three more male than female characters. There is obvious evidence that male characters are better represented in this series of textbooks, at least as far as reading stories concerned. When we look at all the textbooks from the *Solutions* series, it seems that male characters are even better represented compared to the *Tune up* series. In the category of famous people, there seems to be a big difference between the two genders. There are fifty-five male characters and twenty female characters, which clearly shows that male characters dominate when it comes to role models and people to look up to. In the regular people/jobs category there is just one more male character, while in student/teen category there are seven more male than female characters.

Table 9: Comparison of all the textbooks

TUNE UP 1-4	**FEMALE**	**MALE**	**SOLUTIONS 1--4**	**FEMALE**	**MALE**
Famous	9	19	Famous	20	55
Regular people/ professions	9	10	Regular people/ professions	14	15
Student/teen	2	5	Student/teen	3	10
TOTAL	**20**	**34**	TOTAL	**37**	**80**

The evidence above clearly shows that in all textbooks male characters are represented better than female. In each series of textbooks, in the category of regular people/professions, there is one fewer female. The difference is almost unnoticeable. The problem is that the other two categories show much greater difference between the representations of the genders. The student/teen category should have equal representation of both genders, because it is about young people and their lives, of the same or similar age as the learners reading their stories. In both series of textbooks there is an obvious difference between the genders, and male characters are better represented. The most represented category is *famous people*, while surprisingly the least represented category is *student/teen*. Also, a slight bias between the genders is visible in both textbooks, as males are represented in a bigger number in each category than females. This category is full of people who should be role models for future adults and their stories might affect a learner's life choice, so it is sad to see that female characters are so poorly represented. In the *Tune up* series we have ten more male characters than female characters, while in the *Solutions* series we have thirty-five more male characters than female characters. This should not be the case, because textbooks should offer motivation and positive role models for each learner and each gender.

4. Discussion

The results show a great difference between the representation of male and female characters in each textbook. Male characters are more visible and more frequently represented in every textbook, in all the reading texts combined. Males are the most visible gender. There is a slight difference between the textbooks themselves, because in the *Tune up* series the difference between the representations of the two genders is not as noticeable as in the *Solutions* series. As for the gender roles, famous people are the most visible ones and males are better represented in this category. The findings show that when it comes to role models and peers, people to look up to, there are much more male characters. Therefore, the findings confirmed that male characters will be more visible in the researched textbooks and that there is a certain gender bias when it comes to reading stories.

Reading is a private and personal process that every learner goes through individually. Therefore, the reading stories offered in the textbooks should be bias free, especially when it comes to representation of learners' peers and the stories of potential role models. These findings show a sad truth that textbooks are gender biased and they send the message that mostly men get successful in the world. The textbooks also send the message that both genders can be successful in doing regular jobs and being regular people, while being famous by discovering something or doing something great is reserved for mostly male characters. Learners who read these stories can easily pick up that there are more male characters represented than female characters.

Teachers should be very aware of the gender biased stories and offer additional materials to their learners. Teachers should adapt their teaching methods and give additional information on female role models, both peers and famous people. Teachers should point out that there is a gender inequality and teach their learners about tolerance and accepting everyone equally.

The limitation of this research could be the fact that not all reading stories could be included, because they lacked male and/or female characters and some personal information, therefore twenty stories from the *Tune up* series and thirty-four stories from the *Solutions* series were analyzed. It is possible that a bigger scale research including more textbooks would give different results. It is important to note that because more stories from the Solutions series were included, the difference between the representation of male and female characters in the

two series is also bigger. There is the possibility that if we analyzed the whole textbooks, not just reading stories, maybe there would not be such an obvious gender bias.

It would be interesting to see how reading stories have changed since the first editions of the textbooks in comparison to today to see if, and how the textbooks respond to those changes. Further research may include testing whether the nationality and gender of the writers of these textbooks is connected to gender bias present in the textbooks.

5. Conclusion

This research analyzed the gender roles and their representation in reading stories in the most frequent textbooks used in Croatian EFL classrooms. The findings indicate that there is a difference in gender representation and male characters are more visible in these stories. There is also a difference between gender roles, especially when it comes to famous people. There is a slight difference between the textbooks themselves, but some of it is due to the number of reading stories that could be included into this research. Textbooks are the focal point of any class and the curriculum is based on them so it is important for them to be as bias free as possible. Teachers are a central point to any class and they should recognize the faults of a textbook and provide additional materials to learners to facilitate their learning and motivate them.

Times change faster than a textbook from a school system, and as teachers might not affect the textbooks as much as they would want to, they can introduce alternative materials to their learners. Reading stories may influence learners in many ways, so teachers need to fill in the gaps that textbooks leave open.

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