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Гендерные репрезентации в учебных книгах EFL: корпусное исследование

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Проблема и цель. С помощью этого корпусного тематического исследования авторы осуществляют гендерную репрезентацию в четырех учебниках английского языка как иностранного (ELF), рассматривая «изучение английского языка» с точки зрения грамматики. В частности, в исследовании наблюдаются частота встречающихся местоимений «он» и «она», ассоциации четырнадцати глаголов действия с определенным полом и выявляются различия в гендерной репрезентации между учебниками для 3 и 4 курсов.

Методология. Для анализа проблемы был составлен корпус «Сделай сам» (Do-It-Yourself – DIY) с выбранными текстами, сохраненными индивидуально из каждого учебника.

Для сбора и анализа данных в настоящем исследовании используется смешанный подход. Применяя AntConc, сначала извлекаются числовые данные, затем они качественно анализируются и интерпретируются.

Результаты. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о недостаточной грамматической представленности женского пола. Кроме того, было выявлено, что определенные действия были связаны с определенным полом. В частности, заметным было позиционирование женских местоимений с домашней деятельностью или домашними делами, такими как приготовление пищи, в то время как мужские местоимения были связаны с такими действиями, как оплата счетов или ремонт автомобилей. Хотя оба пола одинаково участвовали в диалогах, контекстуальный анализ местоимений предполагает, что порядок упоминания в предложениях отражает мужское превосходство. Тем не менее, последние два уровня учебников показывают аналогичное представление пола, как и предполагалось.

Заключение. Анализ местоимений и глаголов в данном исследовании выявил неравномерное и предвзятое представление пола в учебниках, что имеет отношение к будущему образованию. Тем не менее, это всего лишь тематическое исследование, и выводы не могут быть итоговыми. Наконец, авторы считают, что дальнейший анализ гендерной репрезентации в учебниках курса с точки зрения других грамматических аспектов даст еще более полные результаты.

Ключевые слова: гендерная репрезентация; корпус DIY; учебники EFL; местоимения; глаголы действия.

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Gender representation in EFL course books explored through a corpus-based study: A case study

Abstract

Introduction. Through this corpus-based case study, the authors examine gender representation in four English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course books, “Exploring English”, through a grammatical perspective. Particularly, the study observes the frequencies of pronouns ‘he’ and ‘she’, the association of fourteen action verbs with a certain gender, and differences in gender representation between Course book 3 and 4. To analyse the issue, a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) corpus is compiled with texts selected and stored individually from each course book.

Materials and Methods. A mixed approach is used to collect and analyse the data for this study. By using AntConc, the study firstly retrieves the numerical data which are further analysed and interpreted qualitatively.

Results. The findings suggest underrepresentation of women. In addition, certain actions were associated with a particular gender. More specifically, noticeable was the positioning of feminine pronouns with domestic activities or chores such as cooking, while masculine pronouns were linked with actions such as paying bills or repairing cars. Although both genders participated equally in dialogues, the contextual analysis of pronouns suggests that the order of mention in sentences reflects masculine supremacy. Nevertheless, the last two levels of the course books suggest a similar representation of gender as hypothesised.

Conclusions. The pronoun and verb analysis in this study revealed the uneven and biased representation of gender in textbooks which is concerning for the future of education. Yet, this is only a case study and findings cannot be generalized. Lastly, the authors consider that further analysis on gender representation in the course books from other grammatical aspects would provide even more comprehensive results.

Keywords

Gender representation; DIY corpus; EFL course books; Pronouns; Action verbs.

Introduction

Language is a powerful tool which can shape our thoughts. The discussion on the power of language dates back to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language influences one's view of the world (Sapir, 1929). However, the relation between language and gender in textbooks has attracted attention since the 1970s. Among the first studies on gender representation in textbooks are (Porreca, 1984; Ashby and Wittmaier, 1978; and Coles, 1977).

Although gender issues in texts are pervasive, English as a Foreign Language (ELF) textbooks in developing countries are not largely analysed (Sunderland, Cowley, Rahim, Leontzakou, and Shattuck, 2000). In Kosovo gender issues are examined only in native language textbooks. Therefore, this corpus-based project intends to examine gender representation in four EFL course books. It centres on the area of sociolinguistics, specifically on the construction of gender through language in texts. The analysis is conducted from a grammatical perspective, mainly parts of speech, of a written corpus. The project aims to show whether the texts present women and men equally and their roles unbiased by attempting to answer the following questions:

RQ1: Do the course book texts reveal equal representation of both genders through the frequency of gender-specific pronouns?

RQ2: How are gender roles in the course book texts constructed through the use of action verbs?

RQ3: Do Course book 3 and 4 show any differences in gender representation?

The motivation for this project derives from the fact that textbooks are considered agents of socialisation and have significant pedagogical impact on gender conceptions (Mineshima, 2008). Learners rely on the information provided in textbooks to form opinions on different topics (Gupta and Yin, 1990). Gender biased

representation affects the learners' perception on what is typical for women and men in the society. Gender stereotypes against women can cause feelings of devaluation and lowered expectations to female students (Gharbavi and Mousavi, 2012). Consequently, to discuss this issue a brief literature review is presented in the subsequent chapter.

Literature Review

The following selected studies in the literature review are assets to the present project due to the approaches used in examining gender issues which foreground the discussion of this analysis. Nevertheless, prior the review of existing literature on gender in textbooks, it is important to define that sex is a biological element whereas gender is a social construction (Butler, 2002).

A study which indicates the existence of gender issues in Albanian language textbooks in Kosovo is Hyseni, Lljunji and Kabashi-Hima (2007). The authors analyse seven reading textbooks in Albanian where 90 indicators are found which reinforce the leading male role in the texts. The findings confirm the NUL hypothesis that new Albanian language textbooks for primary and lower secondary schools lack sensitivity in educating students regarding gender roles. Additionally, interviews with teachers and students support the evidence found through the analysis.

Gender stereotypes in ELF grammar textbooks through corpora are analysed by Lewandowski (2014) using a diachronic approach. The contrastive analyses of two corpora (with 1970-80s and 21st century textbooks published in the UK) show increase of female characters in the texts after 20 years. The findings from both corpora show that women are commonly described by their looks. Compared to

the old ELF textbooks, the new ones show more women in primary jobs.

Through a similar corpus-based approach, Lee (2018) analyses gender representation in Japanese EFL textbooks through a mixed approach. The analysis of four popular series of EFL textbooks published in 2011 reveal gender-inclusive vocabulary such as *waitperson*, and the neutral feminine address title *Ms*. However, the male-first trend prevails throughout the texts which indicates the secondary role of women.

Conversely, Amerian and Esmaili (2015) examine three volumes *American Headway Student Textbooks* from a grammatical perspective through critical discourse analysis. It results that activities such as driving, working, eating in a restaurant, studying, and playing/doing sports are dominated by men. Alternatively, making, shopping, and going to parties are performed by women.

Barton and Sakwa (2012) analyse the second book of the textbook series *English in Use* used in Ugandan lower secondary schools. The content analysis shows that women are twice invisible than men. Female are excluded also from real life settings such as classrooms. Even when women are visible in certain units, they are stereotypically represented. Caretaker, emotional, child-bearer, and cook are some of the most frequent associations made with women, while men are given high-status jobs as doctors, judges, or managers.

The array of studies described hitherto offers insights on gender issues that exist in EFL textbooks. Most of the discussed studies found that females are unrepresented, stereotyped, or negatively portrayed in contrast to their counterparts. While there is deficiency in studies

analysing gender in EFL textbooks used in Kosovo, the presented perspectives and results assist the current project in comparing and contrasting its findings.

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses are set in accordance with the research questions. Initially, women are underrepresented in texts through generic pronouns as ‘he’ and ‘she’ (Blumberg, 2008)¹. This leads to the first hypothesis that (H1): the frequency of gender-specific pronouns is expected to reveal that women as less visible than men in the texts. Alternatively, verbs express different activities which are performed frequently by either gender (Sunderland, 2006)². Therefore, it is hypothesised that (H2): gender roles are stereotyped through the actions associated with a certain gender in the texts. Lastly, since Course book 3 and 4 belong to the same edition it is considered that (H3): gender presentation remains same in the last two course books.

Research Design

Corpora can be used to illustrate many aspects regarding women and men’s language (Lindquist, 2009)³. It allows examining how women and men are referred in texts, how gender roles are constructed in the society, and how genders are represented throughout different periods.

Developing a Course book DIY Corpus

Four *Exploring English* course books, currently used in all lower secondary schools in Kosovo, are chosen for analysis. Consent and access to the electronic versions were received

¹ Education for All Global Monitoring Report. *Education for All by 2015—Will we make it?* (Paris: UNESCO 2008). URL: <http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001555/155509e.pdf>

² Sunderland J. *Language and Gender: An Advanced Resource Book*. New York, Routledge, 2006.

³ Lindquist H. *Corpus Linguistics and the Description of English*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

from the owner of the printing house. A Do-it-Yourself (DIY) corpus of 43,155 words is created

by selecting and storing text chunks as txt files from each course book separately (see Table 1).

Table 1

Size of the DIY Corpus

Level	Number of words
Course book 1	5473
Course book 2	7634
Course book 3	14350
Course book 4	15698
Total	43155

Stratified random sampling is used to select the texts. The sample includes varieties of texts for analysis such as reading passages, dialogues, picture descriptions, fill-in the gap exercises, and questions. These texts are selected because they provide context where gender roles can be examined. Only listening exercises are excluded since tape scripts are not provided, therefore it is impossible to understand the context.

The number of words per course book is not equal since the first two course books contain less text and more pictures. The data is analysed through the free concordance tool AntConc since it is an unannotated DIY corpus. Annotation was omitted because it does not assist further answering the research questions and any form of annotation would be time-consuming for this time-limited project. Similarly, the corpus mark-up done is delimited to contextual information on the course books as further mark-up is not essential for the analysis.

Methodology

This project uses a mixed approach to collect and analyse the data. Employing different methods or presenting various perspectives on the same issue supports the rationality and implications of the study (Kirk and Miller, 1986). The quantitative method examines the frequencies of gender-specific pronouns (*She* and *He*) and provides numerical results on gender representation. Additionally, fourteen randomly selected actions verbs from the first course book (every 5th verb from the index of verbs) are observed to show whether certain actions are stereotypically associated with a particular gender (see table 2). The random selection is done to avoid sampling bias by the researcher. The verbs are chosen from the first course book because they will most probably reappear in the other three course books. Moreover, they are selected and analysed in singular and plural, as well as in their present, past, and continuous forms using AntConc with the help of the wildcard (*). Each instance is observed in context, excluding manually irrelevant concordance hints.

Table 2

Randomised selection of action verbs

List of verbs	
Buy	Pay
Cook	Repair
Drive	Shine
Fly	Speak
Grill	Teach
Leave	Watch
Make	Write

Results

This chapter provides the results based on the data with the frequencies of pronouns and

association of action verbs with gendered subjects in the identified instances (see table 3).

Table 3

Frequency of verbs in the four course book texts

Verbs	Course book 1	Course book 2	Course book 3	Course book 4
Buy	7	21	25	11
Cook	2	1	5	3
Drive	1	19	9	19
Fly	2	7	2	8
Grill	1	1	1	0
Leave	7	9	22	13
Make	4	29	23	33
Pay	2	1	11	5
Repair	2	1	1	6
Shine	2	2	1	1
Speak	2	10	6	11
Teach	1	2	2	2
Watch	7	16	8	12
Write	3	4	15	11

Gender visibility

Figure 1 shows that the gender-specific pronoun *he* appears more frequently throughout the four course books than the other pronoun *she*.

With the increase of the word number in the course books, also the visibility or invisibility of these two pronouns increases.

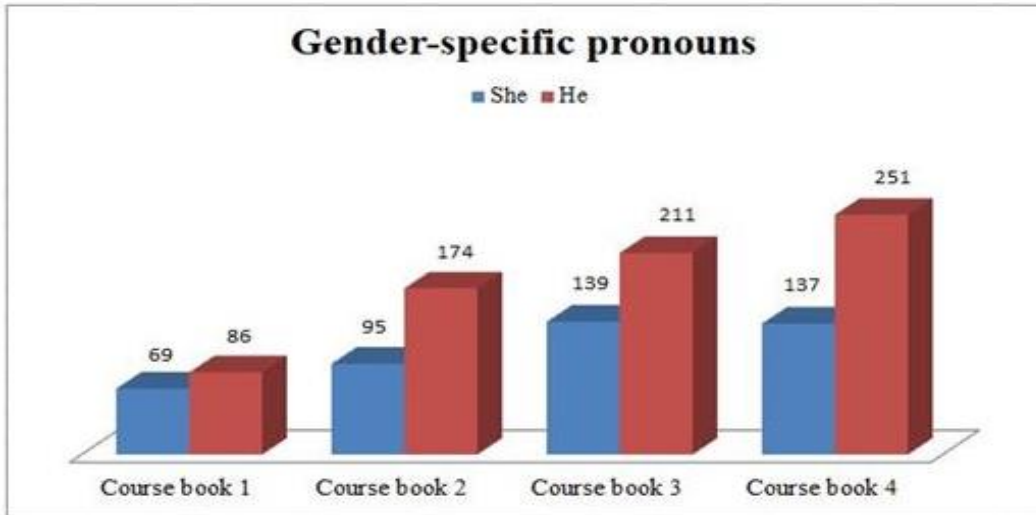


Fig. 1. Gender representation through gender-specific pronouns

Action verbs in Course book 1

To present the association of action verbs with a specific gender, four distinctions need to be made. *She* is used when the action verbs are associated with feminine nouns or pronouns; *He* is used when the same actions are linked with masculine subjects; *Both* refers to feminine and masculine nouns or pronouns which appeared together in a structure; whereas *Neutral* represents

subjects where the gender could not be identified through the context.

Figure 2 reveals actions such as *buy, cook, make* and *teach* performed more by feminine nouns or pronouns, while masculine subjects are associated with *drive, grill, repair* and *watch* in Course book 1. *Fly, leave, speak,* and *write* show an equal association with both genders.

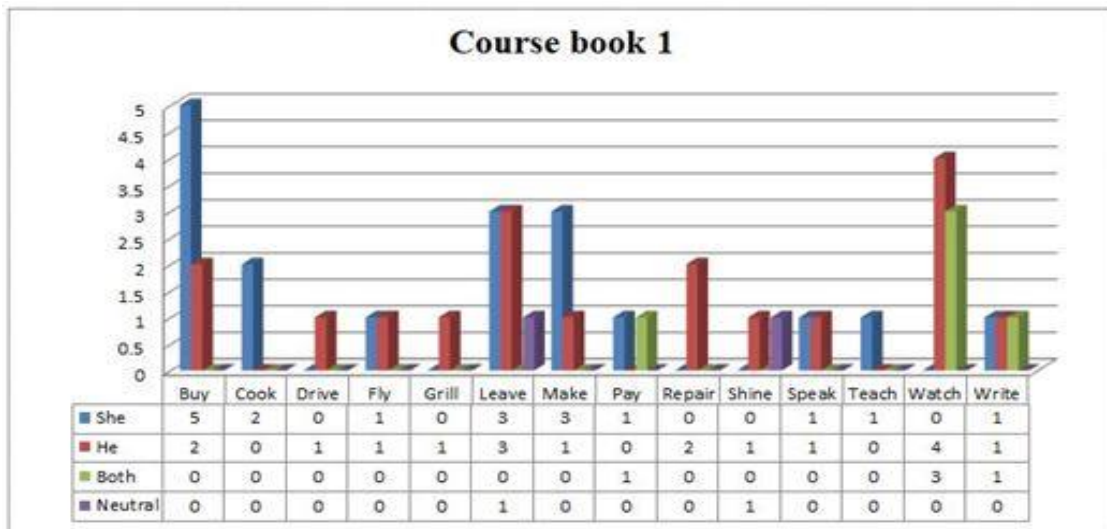


Fig. 2. Associations of action verbs with gender-specific pronouns in Course book 1

Action verbs in Course book 2

Course book 2 presents distinct associations of actions with women or men. In Figure 3 the numbers are higher and indicate discrepancies

between *drive*, *leave* and *watch* which are clearly men dominated, while *buy*, *fly*, *make* and *teach* are more women dominated. However, there is an increase of *make* associated with *she*.

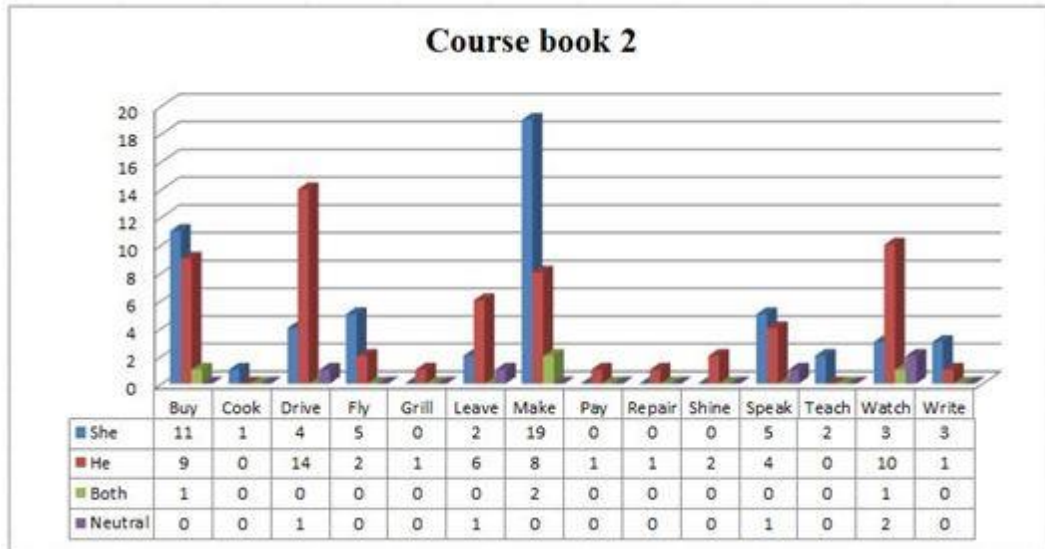


Fig. 3. Associations of action verbs with gender-specific pronouns in Course book 2

Action verbs in Course book 3

Conversely, in Course book 3 most actions are predominantly associated with masculine nouns or pronouns. *Buy*, *drive*, *leave*, *pay*, *speak*,

watch and *write* in Figure 5 are performed by masculine subjects. *Cook* and *make* are mainly associated with *she*.

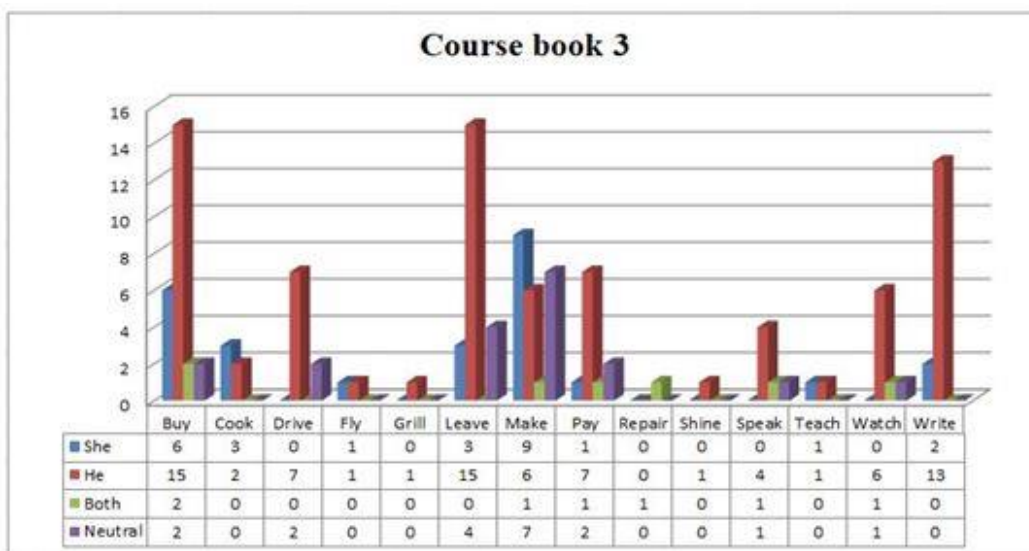


Fig. 4. Associations of action verbs with gender-specific pronouns in Course book 3

Action verbs in Course book 4

Similarly, in Course book 4 certain actions are performed by masculine subjects. However,

Figure 5 indicates a slight increase in actions such as *buy, leave, speak, watch* and *write*, which are performed by feminine subjects.

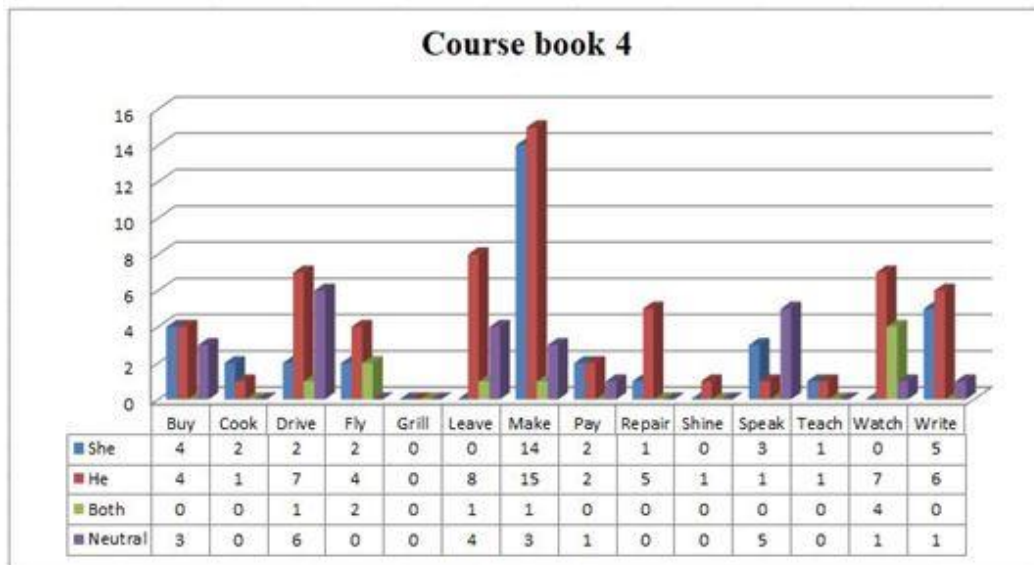


Fig. 5. Associations of action verbs with gender-specific pronouns in Course book 4

Discussion

Considering that the project is a case study and it is unlikely to ascertain the representative the corpus, this chapter intends to treat the findings cautiously, avoiding groundless generalisations (McEney, Xiao and Tono, 2006)⁴. The results in the four course books reveal underrepresentation of women through gender-specific pronouns. Although Jones, Kitetu and Sunderland (1997) argue that in textbooks men mostly initiate conversations, this does not apply for the texts analysed in this project. The texts show initiation of conversations from both genders. Nevertheless, the contextual analysis of pronouns suggests that the order of mention in sentences reflects masculine supremacy. The high frequency of male-firstness in the order of mention could be attributed to the fixed expression ‘he or she’ (Lee and Collins, 2008).

Hence, the results in Table 2 reveal masculine gendered pronouns as more frequent and in the four texts, thus confirming the first hypothesis that women are less visible in the course book collection.

When it comes to the qualitative analysis and the peculiar association of action verbs with a certain gender it is difficult and almost impossible to objectively examine the findings. After manually mapping all concordance hints, the instances are analysed individually. While there is an attempt to present women as adventurous through their association with the verb *fly*, women are still assigned domestic roles through the verb *cook* and *make*. In several instances, *make* indicates the preparation of food or drinks by women for their families. Alternatively, men are given decision-making roles as in ‘make a very wise decision’, ‘made out a check for five

⁴ McEney T., Xiao R., Tono Y. *Corpus-based Language Studies: An Advanced Resource Book*. London, Routledge, 2006.

thousand euros' and 'make a lot of money'. *Buy* is also an indicator that women in the analysed texts are more likely to perform actions of buying food, ingredients and clothes; whereas buying cars, books, and expensive presents for their partners are more performed by men (see appendix 1). However, 'he's making coffee' or 'she's repairing the engine' suggest that the actions are not completely biased. Yet, *grill*, *pay*, *repair* and *watch*, especially watching TV, sport and games are mostly depicted as male-dominated activities. The constant association of men with *drive*, particularly fast or dangerous driving presents men as risk-takers (Emilia, Moecharam and Syifa, 2017). These results partly confirm the second hypothesis that gender roles are stereotyped through action verbs because certain instances show both genders performing different activities.

Lastly, this project aims to answer whether level 3 and 4 indicate differences in gender representation. The two course books are compared because they have almost similar and larger numbers of words than the first ones. The findings reveal women as less visible in Course book 4. While in Course book 3 the frequency of 'he' associated with specific actions is significantly high, the numbers are lower in Course book 4, particularly with actions such as *buy*, *leave*, *pay* and *write*. Although there are changes on gender representation between the last two levels in terms of women and men visibility and their roles; the differences do not reveal positive representations of women. These findings support the third hypothesis that Course book 3 and 4 present gender similarly. Nevertheless, Yang (2012) argues that even when textbooks try to avoid gender asymmetry and stereotyping, it is difficult to achieve equality since women and men are physically different and as such engage in different activities.

Conclusions

This study aimed at examining gender representation in four EFL course books using corpora. Firstly, the quantitative analysis of basic numerical information illustrates the frequencies of gender-specific pronouns and confirms the asymmetrical representation of gender, specifically the invisibility women in the sample. Additionally, the qualitative observation indicates that certain actions are stereotyped or tend to be performed more by either women or men, although there is an effort to neutralise gender-specific actions. Finally, the last two course books show varying results, thus not rejecting the third hypothesis. Yet, neither of them suggests more positive representations of women throughout the texts. As such, it can be concluded that female characters are underrepresented and stereotyped in the selected texts.

As stated above, the categorisation of verbs is done manually; therefore, some instances might be unintentionally tabulated twice. The analysis is delimited to fourteen verbs; other verbs might provide different insights. Additionally, the unbalanced number of words per course book does not allow further comparisons between the texts. However, the case study could contribute to creating the background for future research using the same sample, whereas the perspective and methods employed can be applied for further examinations in other texts. The project provides some understanding on gender representation through action verbs, yet it could be reinforced by examining other grammatical aspects. Lastly, the findings could help teachers who use the course books to identify gender issues in the texts and provide their own examples using both genders simultaneously.

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