

FRAILITY, THY NAME IS WOMAN: GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN PAKISTANI HIGHER SECONDARY TEXTBOOKS

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ABSTRACT

Gender representation in the curriculum has been widely explored particularly in the textbooks published by western publishers. However, it is still an unexplored scenario in the textbooks used in under-researched countries, such as Pakistan. In this paper, we maintain how writers despite giving equal representation to both genders still exploit either of the genders through language use. We analyse the way male and female characters appear in a textbook taught at the higher secondary level in Pakistan. The analysis shows how apparently strong female actors are imperceptibly subdued by the male actors to confirm gender stereotypes. In a broader perspective, this paper intends to increase awareness regarding fair language use without disadvantaging any of the genders involved. At a micro level, we aim to encourage learners and teachers to treat the texts with a critical focus in order to identify the dis/empowerment of individuals and groups through language use.

Keywords: CDA, curriculum, ESL, EFL, gender construction, identity, language and power, Pakistani learner social practices, textbooks

INTRODUCTION

Gender is not merely a physical difference between two human beings. It is rather associated with sociological, psychological, economic and many other factors. Holmes (2009) believes that gender describes the social customs, expectations, and values affixed to the concepts of femininity and masculinity. Wharton (2005) also notes that books categorised as gender biased may represent more males than females, offer stereotypical images of males and females, and treat a masculine perspective on experience as the social norm.

It is, therefore, vital to provide learners with texts that support their perception of the world in a more balanced way. Textbooks in Pakistani schools are the main resource for teaching in classrooms (Ullah & Skelton, 2013; Asghar, 2013). Therefore, it is important that social perspectives and representation of genders are constructed cautiously because they would influence learners' perception of the actual world and shape their views to determine their reaction to the reality they are exposed to through the texts. This study aims to highlight that textbooks should not train learners to view life in stereotypical perspectives, rather to help develop social practices for a maximum biased-free and balanced society.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gender representation in textbooks is significant for ultimately influencing and shaping learners' identity and their perception of the world. Biased representation of gender may impact learners' behaviour and attitude towards gender-related issues, and consequently forming their social practices. Many scholars confirm that a false portrayal or false perception

of gender perspectives in textbooks could lead to falsely perceived outer world by learners (e.g. Petersen & Lach, 1990; Adler, 1993; Liu, 2005).

Many studies (e.g. Sulaimnai, 2017; Aydınoglu, 2014; Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Shteiwi, 2003; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2018; Kuruvilla & Thasniya, 2015; Nakamura, 2002; Pakuła et al., 2015) have emerged from different countries highlighting the bias representation of gender in EFL/ESL textbooks. A sheer number of studies (e.g. Blumberg, 2015; Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012; Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2008; Mustapha, 2013; Norton, 2000; Sunderland, 2000b; Sunderland, Cowley, Abdul Rahim, Leontzakou, & Shattuck, 2002; Rind, 2015) concluded that underrepresentation of women in English as a foreign language(EFL)/English as second language (ESL) textbooks has deleterious effects on students. These effects include the students' comprehension of the textbooks, the students' academic and career choices, the students' understanding of social equality, and the students' development of social values, behaviour, and self-esteem.

In 2000, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched a global movement called "Education For All". The movement aimed to eliminate gender disparity in education and to provide good quality education to women by the year 2015 (UNESCO, 2015). As a result, the UNESCO funded many research projects on education and gender in different countries including Pakistan (Blumberg, 2015). In 2001, educational reforms were introduced in consequence to the Pakistani government's agreement of the UNESCO Education for All goals (Blumberg, 2015). The ministry of education clearly stated, "efforts will be made to eliminate gender bias in textbooks and curriculum" (Ministry of Education in Pakistan, 2003, p. 22). Despite the Pakistani ministry of education efforts, all the studies until this day reported that no improvements in the gender representation in ESL textbooks were found.

Mirza (2004) analysed 194 textbooks from Pakistan's four provinces (Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) for six subjects: English, Urdu, science, mathematics, social studies, and Islamic studies. The findings showed that women were almost invisible in the textbooks. The representation of women was only 20.9% of all the sample textbooks. Women were visible in 23.1% of total characters, 25.7% of the pictures, 9.8 % of the professional characters, and 15% of the occupational roles. Mattu and Hussain (2003) reported that EFL textbooks in Pakistan depict women in stereotypical roles that give a clear message that women's only appropriate and legitimate role is to perform the household tasks of nurturing and caring for the family (Mattu & Hussain, 2003). After nearly a decade from the curriculum reforms in 2001, several studies reported that women are still underrepresented in ESL textbooks in Pakistan. Ullah and Skelton (2013) investigated twenty-four school textbooks of Urdu, English and Social Studies taught in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The study revealed that male characters are dominant in all the sample textbooks. The text and images vividly demonstrate men deciding about excursions and family matters, taking family out, owning the house, and giving instructions and advice. Females, on the other hand, were represented in stereotypical gender roles limited to "the three Cs – cooking, cleaning and child rearing" (Ullah & Skelton, 2013, p. 187). Khurshid, Gillani & Hashmi (2010) investigated four textbooks (two Urdu and two English) taught in secondary schools in Pakistan. The study showed that females are underrepresented in all the sample textbooks. Female characters composed 28% of the English textbooks and were portrayed 76 times as housewives and 15 times as working women. Shah (2012) investigated English language textbooks taught in four cities (Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Mirpur AK, and Murree) in Pakistan. The analysis also revealed a biased representation of gender in English language textbooks.

Hence, the present study contributes to the existing literature, which has emerged from Pakistan by exploring the representation of gender in reading texts in locally designed ESL textbooks.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In a critical paradigmatic perspective, this paper undertakes its stances under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis (CDA) by considering the issues of language and power and power relation in society. We have analysed the texts through the framing of texts i.e. how the content of the text is presented and the sort of angle or perspective the writer is taking through syntax structure (Paltridge, 2006). We also use the framework of field to look at the contents of the stories in order to investigate what kind of participants are important and what kind of processes have been associated with them. Due to the large size of the texts, the analysis is confined to the content level analysis only rather than including the clause analysis as well.

Bloor & Bloor (2007) suggest that a CDA analyst should look at the world as an alien. Where we value this advice for its validity, we also believe that it is rather impossible to look at anything completely as an alien. In analysing the texts, we have aimed to be impartial within human capacity, however, being a human and having lived in this world we have to be a member of a social group. We naturally have analysed these texts from the perspective of our position as members of a specific cultural group. Readers from other cultural backgrounds may, at times, differ from our stance because it is rather challenging to view various cultural contexts by totally alienating oneself from any culture. For example, in case of a western text *Button Button* one of our British colleagues did not see anything unusual in Norma's character in term of performing "usual" domestic responsibilities such as receiving visitors or locking house in the presence of a male family member, which two of the authors found quite unusual in the Pakistani context. Therefore, there could be a limited scope of the influence of the analysts' schematic knowledge on the analysis made in this paper. This status, however, does not necessarily colour our opinion though it naturally reflects our primary beliefs and attitudes as analysts.

THE TEXT

The sample ESL textbook is edited by the official textbook board and curriculum in Pakistan, and published by Punjab Textbook Board which is a government owned department solely responsible for publishing textbooks for all levels. The textbook is taught at higher secondary level in Pakistan, and it includes fifteen literary texts taken from English, American and Urdu literature. The literary texts have been abridged/simplified and/or translated from famous short stories written by known authors of English, French, Persian, Urdu and probably from some other languages. The total word count for the textbook is 24,127 words. There are no illustrations in the textbook. The textbook is printed in black and white A5 size. As Asghar (2013) points out, the textbook consists of 15 short stories out of which 11 short stories are abridged versions of English/American literature and two stories are abridged translations from Urdu literature, one from Persian literature and one story is a translation from a folk tale with no reference to its origin. Two of the main objectives of teaching this textbook include developing critical thinking skills and developing awareness towards other cultures among learners (National Curriculum for the English Language, 2006).

Following Asghar (2013) we divided the texts into two groups based on the apparent cultural contexts of the texts (Table 1). The texts have been divided into foreign texts (FT hereafter), 1-10: mainly American/English, and Pakistani texts (PT hereafter), 11-15: Pakistani literature translated from Urdu into English.

Table 1. Summary of short stories in the textbook (Asghar, 2013)

Foreign Texts (FT)	
Button Button	A couple comes across an offer of a getting a big amount for pressing a button, which would result in killing a person somewhere in the world. The wife accepts the offer and gets insurance of her husband who apparently dies as a result of pressing the button.
Clearing in the Sky	A father narrates to his son how sheer out of his dedication and hard work, he cultivated a piece of land at a very difficult mountainous location.
Dark they were and Golden-Eyed	The earth has been destroyed and the mankind has started a new life at the Mars. One man keeps trying to go back to the earth despite the opposition of everyone, but one day decides to stay where he is.
Thank you Ma'am	A woman treats a child with love and affection who tried to snatch her handbag to buy suede shoes.
The Piece of String	A poor villager is falsely accused of stealing money. He spends all his life in clarifying his position but nobody believes in him until after a flood sweeps away everything except his grave.
The Reward	A boy wants to be an acrobat, and is successful in achieving his goals after consistent efforts and after facing a lot of difficulties.
I have a Dream	An abridged version of Martin Luther King's speech about freedom and equality for all mankind.
The Use of Force	A sick child is not willing to let the doctor examine her throat. The doctor has to use force to examine the child's throat and prescribe the medication.
The Gift of the Magi	A poor young girl sells her beautiful hair to buy a strap of watch which was the most valuable asset of her husband. On the other hand, the husband sells the same watch in order to buy golden hair clips for his wife.
The Angel and the Author – and Others	At a Christmas eve, the writer humorously and sarcastically talks to the Recording Angel about the details of his trivial acts of charity in order to be rewarded hereafter.
Pakistani Texts (PT)	
The Gulistan of sa'adi	Short stories in classical Iranian context to highlight wisdom of everyday life.

The Foolish Quack	A foolish villager tries to treat people without using common sense and receives punishment by people after killing sick woman.
A Mild Attack of Locusts	Apparently in a colonial context, a white family, with the help of local population, tries to save the crops from the attack of locusts. They could not save completely but still they are contented that they could some part of their assets.
God be Praised	A poor clergyman finds it hard to keep both ends meet. He spends whole of his life expecting God to sort out his difficulties – especially the marriage of his daughters. Apparently it seems to happen.
Overcoat	A well-dressed young man meets his end while he was strolling on the Mall. During his postpartum, it was discovered that under his precious overcoat he was in rags.

However, Asghar (2013) argues that these texts cannot be specified categorically, particularly in the case of the local texts where three texts seem to be in the Asian context rather than in Pakistani context. This division among the texts offered a good opportunity for a comparative discussion of (on) differences of representations of various participants within each text.

Classification of participant roles according to gender

In all the fifteen texts (Table 1), there are 17 female characters and 35 male characters (Table 2). These are the participants who are the main actors in the texts. Alongside these main actors, there is a number of people mentioned as silent individuals/groups who are not included in the numerical analysis. Table 2 shows those non-active participants who have been named in the text but have not been actively involved in the plot of the stories. This category includes participants with their first/surnames and/or with title roles, for example, father, mother etc. Among 17 female characters, three female characters (Norma, Cora and Mrs. Jones in texts 1, 3 and 4 respectively) in FT have been portrayed as an active, independent and strong characters who argue and compete with male characters in one way or the other. Eight female characters in texts 8, 9, 12, 13, 14 and 15 are inactive in terms of responding to circumstances or showing their individual opinion of feelings. Two females from this group are in the foreign texts whereas six female actors are in PT. Four female children are also among 17 female actors.

Table 2. Gender classification

	Both genders	Male		Female	
		# appearance	%	# appearance	%
Main Characters (FT)	20	14	70	6	30
Named non-active characters (FT)	9	6	67	3	33
Main Characters (PT)	13	12	92	1	8
Named non-active characters (PT)	10	3	30	7	70
Total	52	35	67	17	33

In all the fifteen texts, 67% main actors are male in the texts, which shows that the default gender throughout the textbook is male. In both groups of foreign and local texts, the ratio of non-active female participants is higher (33% and 70% respectively) than males in the same category, which also emphasizes male being the default gender in the texts. In addition to fourteen male actors, there are five male children. Text 11 is comprised of brief tales with main male actors in all cases where all of these male actors dominate the plot in each text. All these male characters have a positive connotation except in texts five (a poor man, accused of theft, though finally was declared not guilty). In text 12 (a foolish quack) who harms people but apparently receives no penalty and in text 15 (apparently a well off young man who is discovered to be poor after his death). In texts 7, 10 and 11, there are only male characters with no or only an indirect reference to female characters.

CDA of the texts

Gender visibility

By gender visibility, we mean what is the quantitative ratio of gender representation in the texts. This information also helps to highlight how each gender has been depicted as functioning actively. In frequency count of male and female subjective pronoun, male characters were mentioned with a high percentage in both groups of texts despite the fact that some of the texts had female central characters. The frequency count of two subjective pronouns "He" and "She" in the foreign texts also reflects the similar tendency of the male being referred more frequently than female. Obviously, the texts also have other references to gender such as possessive and objective pronouns, first and surname of characters, nicknames etc. Practically it was not possible to count each gender-related noun with ending up in several small categories possibly with no significant information other than frequency of reference to each gender. Out of all the possible categories, the category of gender-based subjective pronoun was selected because it is used more frequently than possessive and objective pronouns.

Table 3. Frequency count of pronoun

	Number of count		Percentage	
	He	She	He	She
Pakistani Texts	159	20	88.82%	11.17%
Foreign Texts	227	187	54.83%	45.16%
Complete Textbook	386	207	65.09%	34.90%

Interestingly, no female performs the main role in Pakistani texts. The ratio of 55% and 45% in the use of male and female third person pronoun respectively shows the male gender as dominant in foreign texts (Table 3). The ratio of male visibility is much higher in Pakistani texts where it reaches 88% and 11% between male and female respectively. Overall, the textbook includes 65% of male subjective pronouns as compared to 35% of female, which is almost half of the former. It is interesting to note the higher ratio of masculine pronoun is also meaningful when we look at the texts in the foreign group. Out of 12 texts, five texts (1, 3, 4, 8, 9) were clearly about females with central or main role. Among the rest of the seven texts, the female role did not get projection though the female characters had equal potential to replace the male characters.

The quality of gender activity is also visible in the frequency count of pronouns where the pronoun "He" has been assigned with a variety of processes in contrast to the use of "She"

which is mainly assigned with verbal or material processes. Assigning certain processes to a gender indicates the general attitude towards both genders with enhanced or reduced representation, as happened in this case. The female characters in Pakistani texts either are dependent on male gender (e.g. God be Praised) or not mentioned at all (e.g. the Foolish Quack & Gulistan of Sa'adi) or portrayed in the background (e.g. Overcoat). All the three instances are generally in line with the contemporary Pakistani cultural norms. Though the situation might be largely different in a few big cities, this is the default attitude towards female gender in the majority of small cities and almost in all rural areas.

Gender construction

Gender portrayal refers to the ways male and female characters appear through the roles assigned to them in the plot, and the processes attributed to them through the linguistic use. In the Pakistani texts, the gender roles are pre-defined. The female characters in these texts are weak and dependent on males. For example, In God be Praised, Zabunnisa (wife) and Mehrunnisa (daughter) in this text have no freedom of expression in any aspect of daily life, showing an utter adhere to male dominance. There is a gender based high power relationship among all the family members. The father takes all the decisions from buying a piece of cloth or rewarding children to finalise the marriage of the daughter.

In Gulsitan of Sa'adi, emphasis on either male or genderless references is significant in the historical setting of the text composed in twelfth-century Persia. It was a time when segregation of both genders was strict and women had limited role within the four walls of the house. This is why there is only one reference to a female character – mother, the most respectful female figure in Asian and particularly in Islamic social system. Even this reference to the female actor appears inactive and secondary to other male actors – the father and the son. In the Foolish Quack, the text treats male as a default gender taking into account a woman as a victim, who is weak and "exclaimed" to be cured. On the other hand, the male patient is too strong even in his ailment, to be victimised.

In Overcoat, the main character is assigned with all the possible processes (material, existential, verbal, behavioural and mental) as compared to the female characters that have been assigned with only two processes i.e. material and verbal. This tendency apparently denotes the limited role of females in society, at least at the time period when the text was created. All the three female actors appear with male actors: the girl with a man and the two nurses as assistant to a male surgeon. The supremacy of male characters in both cases reflects the social order of the participants i.e. a male dominant society.

In the western texts, female gender has apparently been portrayed as someone enjoying independent and equal status to the male gender. However, male characters have been at an advantageous position in almost all the texts. Though this advantageous position does not always seem to exploit the weak position of female, it does support the supremacy of the males over the females. In the western texts, there are five female characters: Norma, Cora, Mrs. Jones, the mother, Margaret and Della. Among these, Norma, Cora and Mrs. Jones emerge as individuals who have leading and domineering role.

Cora is a strong female character who consistently argues with her husband Harry on various issues. Later, Cora assumes the role of a protector for her husband who is scared and disturbed. Harry also acknowledges her superiority when he desperately needs her consent to go back to Earth, implying that she had a decisive role in finalizing their stay on Mars. However, the theme of the short story remains focused on Harry, who apparently outshines Cora in all aspects in spite of his comparatively less strong personality and lack of quick decision-making.

The three other characters (Margaret in *A Mild Attack of Locusts*, the mother in *The Use of Force* and Della in *The Gift of the Magi*) are depicted as housewives, dominated by their husbands, though at times they strive to act independently. In the case of Margaret, the power relation between the male and female characters can be observed in the text where the female character is shown as a passive observer of the circumstances. Unlike a usual woman of the west, she totally relies on the male characters for everything. In a situation when the whole of the village is out to save their crops, she can only run to the window to look at the hill and watch.

The foreign texts are not an exemption in terms of portraying both genders with stereotype characteristics. Asghar and Al-Bargi (2014) illustrate one of the texts in this group (Text 9) to establish how the author has stereotypically depicted gender representation.

Asghar and Al-Bargi (2014) maintain that the way language empowers the one gender over the other by using stereotype processes for both genders (Table 4). Most of the processes attributed to Della portray her as a weak individual heavily relying upon her spouse despite the fact that she was able to regulate her economic concerns independently to buy the Christmas gift for her husband. On the contrary, Jim emerges as a typical strong man and demonstrates a variety of human expressions determining his dominant and protective personality. Asghar and Al-Bargi (2014) argue that because of her tears, her emotions and loss of her hair, described in more detail than Jim's watch, Della might gain the sympathy of readers whereas Jim is likely to gain admiration due to the language use.

**Table 4. Comparison of Jim and Della's attributes/processes
(Asghar & Al-Bargi, 2014, p 185)**

Della	Jim
<i>"She started trying to remove"</i> – as if she is covering a mistake.	He <i>"was never late"</i> – never done something undesirable.
<i>"A tear ran down"</i> - sign of weakness	He <i>"folded his arms"</i> – a gesture of aggression or at least that of an ability to have <u>self-defence</u> in contrast to showing weakness on Della's part.
<i>"Moved quickly"</i> – not prepared	<i>"Stepped in"</i> – confident and composed
<i>"Heard"</i> – passive action	<i>"Felt"</i> – active and independent action
<i>"Cried"</i>	<i>"Smiled"</i>
<i>"Sat near the door"</i> – waiting for Jim	<i>"Sat down"</i> – to comfort himself
<i>"Said"</i> – more submissive/explanatory	<i>"Asked"</i> – interrogatory, more authoritative

To summarise, in spite of the fact that female characters struggle to prove their presence, the authors in all cases, both Pakistani and western texts, choose to eclipse the struggle of female characters by establishing male hegemony and superiority.

The ethical outlook of both genders

By looking at the ethical outlook, we refer to the moral values associated with each gender to create an overall image of the personality. A significant aspect of the female gender is reflected in the two most powerful female characters – Norma and Cora. In text 1, it is noteworthy that the writer chooses a female character to assume the main role, ignoring the male actor Arthur who equally has the potential to initiate the action of the story. The writer's preference to Norma for performing this particular action could be traced in the historical and biblical reference to the story of Adam and Eve where Eve, like Norma, is considered responsible for the fall of Adam. Viewing Norma's character in this context suggests that women despite having equal status with men in western society, as depicted in this text, are perceived as weaker and easier prey to temptation. Arthur's superior moral outlook sharply contrasts with Norma's falling for greed. It is meaningful that a male writer assigns her a leading role only to put the blame of disaster on her in the end.

The same reference to male hegemony is reflected in Text 3. The text also seems to have an underlying theme of Adam and Eve. Though "Eve" in this case does not ignite the disaster but she supports the option to the disaster. The way Eve's persuasion led to a new adventure on Earth, Cora's contentment with living at Mars led to a new Martian adventure. Looking from the gender viewpoint, Cora has been depicted as an average person despite her deep sense of responsibility and strong personality in taking care of the whole family, fulfilling domestic responsibilities and supporting her husband even though she does not seem to be convinced. On the contrary, Harry outshines the crowd merely because of his intellect and commitment and dominates the rest although other people in some way do not support him in his venture.

The main character in *The Foolish Quack* though has been shown as an ignorant and silly person but he does not face the consequences for his irresponsible acts as a female character Norma in text 1 has to face. The character in *The Piece of String* has been accused of theft but at the end he is declared not guilty. In *Thank You, Ma'am*, the boy commits mugging but the latter part of the text portray him innocent who tries to snatch purse only to buy suede shoes. All these examples demonstrate that males have greater ethical strength than females.

Gender authority

In terms of gender authority, we analysed the texts to examine if any particular gender is empowered over the other. In this respect, we found that all the women in the fifteen texts, no matter strong or weak, are dominated by males who have the final decision-making power despite the convincing arguments made by these females. In *Button Button*, Arthur uses his authority to end the discussion on pressing the button. Though they had a big debate on the issue, Arthur uses his right not only to quit the discussion but also to close it permanently. Norma, despite all her arguments, does nothing but adheres to his decision and stops the discussion.

In *Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed*, first Harry refuses to accept Cora's proposal of staying on Mars. In the end, Cora seeks her husband's consent to go back but this time, he adamantly refuses to return which gives the final decision-making power to Harry. It reflects an equal status in the conjugal relationship on one hand, on the other it shows a continuous struggle between both partners who are in conflict to accept each other at an equal status and want to dominate each other whenever they get a chance.

The mother in *The Use of Force* emerges as powerful and independent to welcome the visitors and let them in, later snubbed harshly by her husband. In this situation, the leading woman seems to become a traditional caring mother whereas the passive husband gets back to his assertive role in snubbing his wife in a clear harsh tone in the presence of a visitor. In the western perspective, switching over to various roles might not be awkward but in Pakistani society, genders normally have pre-determined roles, which are exchanged in only unusual circumstances. Such a situation is unlikely for Pakistani readers who generally view female gender as an active, independent and authoritative in all spheres of life.

In the western texts, one group of texts, which refers to individuals only, represents male as default gender and refers to female gender only when it is necessary. For example, the writers of such texts as *The Reward*, *I have a Dream* or *The Author and the Angel* – and others could have preferred female gender as the main character but all of the writers chose to use male as a default gender. In *I Have a Dream* the author makes frequent references to male gender, but there is only one reference to female gender and even that is in a weak form i.e. girl, accompanied by male fellows. In the struggle of freedom, female gender is expected to contribute to the extent to join boys' hands only as "girls". Such a tendency towards genders reflects the prevalent social behaviour of that time.

Gender stereotype

All the female characters in the foreign texts perform the house chores without having any help from men. In *Button Button*, Norma is shown doing all the house chores after getting home, whereas her husband is always found reading newspapers after work. Norma initiates arguments and her husband, when fails to convince her, ends the conversation showing indifference to what she thinks or feels.

In *Dark they were and Golden-Eyed*, Cora seems to do the entire household whereas Harry would be busy in building a rocket. Despite the fact that Harry would not listen to her, she does everything to make him feel better. One reference in *The Gift of the Magi* reflects that Della has also some default domestic chores: preparing meals and waiting for the husband. Likewise in *A Mild Attack of the Locusts*, Margaret is asked to get the kettle going.

In *Thank You, Ma'am*, the text refers to the main character frequently as "the woman" (a particular person) when she performs some strong or "manly" action whereas she is mostly referred as "she" (a third person pronoun) when she performs ordinary processes. Obviously, the writer has to use a word, and in most cases a third person pronoun to refer to a female character. However, the use of "she" is an unconscious choice as compared to the use of "the woman" which is a conscious choice. The writer decides to choose various attributes and uses "the woman" to refer to certain actions. Such a preference may be interpreted as that the writer does not find the unmarked choice of "she" for certain action by a female character and prefers to use a stronger attribution such as "the woman". Such a preference by the writer indicates a choice to oddly refer to a female actor when she happens to perform non-stereotype female roles.

These examples support that the female gender has the default responsibility for household tasks and other stereotype female roles. In the Pakistani texts, there is no reference to the house chores partially due to less frequent references. In the text *God be Praised* only women seem to do the house chores without any direct reference made to this most probably because it is one of the default responsibilities of women in Pakistani domestic culture.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated gender representation in a locally designed ESL textbook used in Pakistan. The study used CDA to explore gender construction in the literary texts introduced in the sample textbook. Though the literary texts in the textbook have been taken from a variety of cultural contexts, the CDA of the texts showed a biased attitude towards gender representation.

Although a small number of literary texts in the sample textbook portrayed females as main actors, the overall representation of female characters was significantly less than that of the male characters. The study showed that male characters were the leading characters in 92% of the Pakistani texts, and 70% of the foreign texts. More than that, the literary texts portrayed female characters in the stereotypical gender role of house holding. For example, Della in *The Gift of the Magi* were depicted preparing meals and waiting for the husband, and Margaret in *A Mild Attack of the Locusts* was asked to get the kettle going. The results of this study corresponds with a large body of literature emerged from different countries in general, and Pakistan in particular (See, e.g. Sulaimnai, 2017; Aydınoğlu, 2014; Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Shteivi, 2003; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2018; Kuruvilla & Thasniya, 2015; Nakamura, 2002; Pakuła et al., 2015; Mattu & Hussain, 2003; Mirza, 2004; Khurshid, Gillani & Hashmi, 2010; Shah, 2012). Similar to this study, the overall results of the literature exploring gender representation revealed female underrepresentation and gender stereotypes in EFL/ ESL textbooks.

Apart from the gender imbalance, male dominance is marked with decision-making power, authority and stereotypical roles in all the literary texts of the textbook. Even apparently, strong and independent female actors have to submit to male hegemony. Despite showing physical courage (as in the case of Norma and Mrs. Jones), or higher intellectual calibre (as in the case of Cora, Mrs. Jones and the mother) or greater sincerity and devotion (as in the case of Della, Zabunnisa and Mehrunnisa), all the female characters have always been placed in a secondary position when they adhered to the final decision taken by their male family member. Such a portrayal reflected a gender based high power relationship among all the family members. Ullah and Skelton (2013) highlighted the same attitude. The researchers pointed out that texts and images in ESL textbooks in Pakistan reflect male-dominated family systems whereby males, irrespective of their age, act as the primary authority figure, and control family affairs, women, children and property. Ullah and Skelton (2013) add that the representation of women in secondary position is not restricted to family matters. Women are depicted inferior to men throughout the textbooks even in political and professional situations. The researchers gave an example of the representation of Fatima Jinnah in a locally designed ESL textbook. According to them, “Fatima Jinnah is represented as a supporting, modest and honest sister and nurse of her brother Quaid-i-Azam M. Ali Jinnah without any reference to her independent political career during the freedom movement and as a presidential candidate in the 1965 election during Ayub Khan Regime” (Ullah and Skelton, 2013, p.189).

It cannot be denied that almost all of the literary texts in the sample textbook are comprised of late twentieth-century literature and do not reflect the contemporary societies of respective cultures. However, the sample textbook does not make a clear reference to the period to which these texts refer. For this reason, students are most likely to take the cultural values and social roles assigned to both genders in these texts for representative of contemporary society. In fact, many scholars (e.g. Moore, 2007; Sulaimani, 2017; Gharbawi and Mousawi, 2012; Rind, 2015) confirm that biased representation of gender in EFL/ESL textbooks could contribute to an inaccurate understanding of social and cultural reality and norms of a society. Hence, such a biased representation of gender in the sample textbook gives learners a false

perception of the real world. More importantly, it may well influence the learners' own identity and shaping their social practices. Even if learners are informed of the timeframe in which these texts have been set, it does not ensure that gender construction in texts would stop influencing their perception of gender role in general. Also, these literary texts are taught to secondary level learners, who are at the formative stage of building their perception of the outer world. It is, therefore, imperative that textbooks are reviewed with the gender perspective in mind to provide a balanced and gender-sensitive education for all learners, and avoid the lasting impact of stereotypes presented in textbooks and in other related teaching and learning material.

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