



A Comparative Study of Gender Representation in Iranian English High School Books and TouchStone Series: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 19 December 2020 Revised: 04 April 2021 Accepted: 27 June 2021 Online: 24 November 2021</p>	<p>This The present study aims to critically compare Iranian English high school books, namely Vision 2 & 3 with TouchStone 2 & 3 to disclose how male and female genders are represented. For this purpose, some factors, including the frequency of male and female characters, the frequency of male and female genders in terms of photographical presentation, and the ratio of ownership by male and female genders were calculated, interpreted, and explained in light of Fairclough's (2001) three-dimension critical discourse analysis model. Results revealed that although both series of textbooks suffer from gender bias in favor of the male gender, the Iranian English high school books privilege the male gender compared to TouchStone 2 & 3. It was hypothesized that this inequality in gender representation in the Iranian English high school books might trace back to the cultural context of Iran wherein the females have been more or less marginalized. However, the authors of TouchStone 2 & 3 may have tried to mirror equality status between males and females in the western world. It was concluded that different stereotyped gender representation with the prevalence of an androgenic view in the Iranian English high school books has its roots in methodological and epistemological failures rather than strict adherence to Islamic ideology or Iranian cultural norms because Islam has adopted an egalitarian stance about sexes in society and other areas. Finally, in light of the findings, some pedagogical implications are proposed.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Critical discourse analysis Gender representation Ideology ELT textbooks EFL context</p>	

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1. Introduction

Course books are an indispensable part of educational materials used by second language (L2) teachers across the world. They play a very crucial role in L2 education since it is generally through course books that L2 learners get touch with the target language and the target culture. That is why for L2 teachers, educational materials equal to course books. According to Tomlinson (2013), course books may serve some important purposes. For example, they may adopt an instructional role by informing L2 learners about the intended language. They may adopt an experiential role by offering enough exposure to the intended language in use. They may adopt an elucidative role by evoking language use, or even they may adopt an exploratory role by facilitating discoveries about the second language in use. Additionally, as Tomlinson (2013) stresses, as the major material for every course, course books are considered as a very influential source that may shape or reshape students' attitudes and behaviors inside or outside of classrooms. This occurs by presenting linguistic and non-linguistic contents and cultural views either directly or indirectly. Cultural views are packed with every course book as a hidden curriculum. They are more effective than official curriculums. This hidden curriculum may have a noticeable effect on students' awareness, perception, and knowledge consciously or subconsciously (Liu, 2013; Solhi et al., 2020). As noted by Brym & Lie (2007), "... a hidden curriculum teaches students what will be expected of them in the larger society once they graduate" (p. 105).

In the domain of English Language Teaching (ELT), Widdowson (1990) notes that the contents of course books aim to cultivate two kinds of knowledge: systematic knowledge and schematic knowledge. The former refers to the systematic features of languages, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics; the latter deals with the acquired knowledge about the cultural settings of the intended language. As L2 learners learn a language other than their mother tongue, they concurrently learn cultural aspects and the way its native speakers view and perceive the world. Put it simply, learning a second language occurs by acquiring a second culture. Due to the paramount significance of course books in L2 education, it is highly essential for L2 teachers to critically evaluate the textbooks available at the market to make the best choice for their students. In fact, for L2 teachers, being equipped with the ability to critically evaluate teaching materials is of paramount importance (Tomlinson, 2013). This ability enables L2 teachers to examine ELT textbooks in terms of presentation and gradation of language skills and language component, L2 learner autonomy, politics behind the ideologies represented, appropriateness of tasks, motivating passages, and culture promotion (McDonough et al., 2013). In a sense, with a critical evaluation of

textbooks, L2 teachers can see how cultural views are represented. For example, they can examine if there is bias toward a particular gender.

In the past, to assist L2 teachers to have a comprehensive understanding of the critical features of quality textbooks, various features have been highlighted. For instance, course books have been subjected to critical analyses in terms of themes, textual characteristics, and ideological patterns (Farooq, 1999; Muto-Humphrey, 2005). Additionally, ELT textbook analysis has addressed race, culture, gender, and social classes and how they have been treated (Johansson & Malmsjö, 2009). Numerous studies have also addressed the ways through which themes and topical matters are treated in content analysis (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Baik, 1994; Dendrinos, 1992). Their findings evidenced that certain types of people are depicted positively (for example, White Caucasian characters); in contrast others might be presented negatively (for example, individuals living in disadvantaged circumstances). Western cultures are portrayed as superior in contrast to the non-Westerners as the deprived (Stanley, 2001). It seems that such critical investigations can be helpful for L2 teachers to know how hidden cultural views and values are conveyed to L2 learners (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Dendrinos, 1992).

All of the educational materials more or less carry a particular ideology and attitude. The ideologies and attitudes are inserted in educational materials by authorities and material developers so that students think and behave in a particular way (Namaziandost et al., 2018; Tomlinson, 2013). Ideology, as a process happening within discursive events and processes, allows transformation and flexibility to be made salient within discourse text, in general, and discourse, in particular. It can, however, result in an illusory interpretation of discourse. Ideologies, indeed, are embedded in texts (Fairclough, 1995, 2015; Van Dijk, 2009, 2014). Therefore, it seems essential to critically analyze educational materials from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective to disclose the ideologies and attitudes behind them.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Fairclough's CDA Model

In the literature, the critical approach to discourse, as Fairclough (2015) notes, was emerged to call into question the social beliefs and practices that have been admitted as 'natural'. But, in reality, they have been 'naturalized'. In every culture, there is usually one common accepted way to view

the world. It has been emphasized and preached by its members over a long period of time. To understand this complex process, CDA “seeks to make visible the ‘common-sense’ social and cultural assumptions (or ideologies) which, below the level of conscious awareness, is embedded in all forms of language that people use” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 22). As Fairclough (1989) notes, language and discourse should be seen as a social practice. From this perspective, not only should critical discourse analysts deal with the analysis of a text and its processes of production and interpretation, but they should also consider the potential connections between text, processes, and their social contexts. To do so, critical discourse analysts need to give adequate attention to both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of the institutional and social structures (Fairclough, 1989).

Additionally, Fairclough (1995) suggests that a discourse consists of three complex, interrelated elements, namely social practice, discourse practice (e.g., the production, distribution, and consumption of text), and text. He states that analyzing a specific discourse needs analysis in all of these elements and their inter-relationships. There are relationships between features of texts, how texts are combined and interpreted, and the nature of its social practice. In the discourse of news, for instance, texts are concerned with the news reports that we can see and read in newspapers (e.g., words on a page). The production and consumption of the news reports refer to interactions. And, contexts involve the background of the reported events and the contextual and social reality (Fairclough, 1995). Considering these interrelated dimensions of discourse, Fairclough (2015, p. 25-26) suggests a principled, multi-stage procedure in the implementation of CDA:

- The first stage is description at which the formal properties of a text, such as vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures are described. By drawing upon the analytical properties in the functional grammar, the linguistic features of the intended text at all levels are defined.
- The second stage is interpretation at which the connection between a text and interactions is verified. This stage is concerned with the inter-textual dimensions of text production from the views of different stakeholders, such as educational authorities, materials developers, and teachers.
- The third stage is explanation which deals with the linkage between “interaction and the social context with the focus on social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 25-26). It is the stage at which

the ideology hidden in the text is excavated and the relationship with the language use is disclosed.

The operational form of this model would be explained a little more here. According to Fairclough (1992, 1995), actual text, discourse practice, and social practices are three levels of CDA. The first level is the textual level. This is the main level of Fairclough' model and has a mutual relationship with the other two levels. He also argues that "text analysis can be organized in terms of four major headings which are vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure" (Fairclough, 1992. p. 75). He suggests that vocabulary concerns only words and grammar deals with how words are combined to make clauses and sentences. How these sentences are connected together is related to the cohesion aspect. Finally, the structure of text attends to large-scale organizational properties of text (Fairclough, 1992). He notes that texts are produced in particular ways in particular contexts and they are used in social contexts differently. Furthermore, this use could be either individual or collective. That is, a person need to know who has produced the text (spoken or written), for what purpose the text has been produced, under what conditions it has been produced, under what conditions it is read, and finally how it has been published (Fairclough, 1992). The third dimension of Fairclough's model is social practices. They include ideologies, hegemonies, and hierarchies which hold the power in the culture and society of the produced discourse. He adds that social practices entail the norms that people have accepted and learned from their society. Moreover, as a part of a particular social practice, discourses are produced in a unique cultural and historical context. This study, therefore, aims to examine the ideologies behind gender representation in Vision series and TouchStone series. The study, as we argue, may help us disclose the hidden ideologies concerning gender representation in the textbooks. It may also disclose the fundamental discursive strategies (e.g., representation, depiction) that may function positively or negatively in shaping students' attitudes toward gender concepts.

2.2. Gender-Representation in ELT Textbooks

The term 'gender' is regarded as "a 'system' of practices that are far-reaching, interlocked, and exist independently of individuals" (Wharton, 2012, p. 9). Gender tied with social interactions is guided and managed by social constraints that a particular society's members are supposed to follow. As Brym & Lie (2007) note, social interactions are defined and determined by three major features: status, roles, and norms. Status refers to the position taken by a person. Social roles are

concerned with how people need to behave in consistent with their status. Social norms deal with the conventions that manage social role performance. In consequence, social roles and norms are highly influential in shaping gender concept. To be gendered, the social interaction features that outline the behavior patterns must be followed. Hence, gender roles are defined as acquiring and acting the socially accepted features for a certain sex (Macionis & Plummer, 2008). In addition, gender characteristics are attributed to men and women and are the normal conventional structured features ascribed to their social roles (Aşık, 2017; Chafetz, 2006; Parvin & Nasrin Khan, 2017).

Connecting this discussion to the current study' purpose, it is clear that all students with different ages and language proficiencies are material-sensitive learners. That is, the systematic and thematic knowledge embedded in a course book is taken for granted by students. They consider the materials packed with a textbook as a truth representing the correct phenomenon of the surrounded world. They usually frame their cognitive and affective framework in line with the view presented by educational materials. Hence, the hidden ideologies in educational materials may affect students' attitudes and perceptions about the gender concept. Sunderland (1992) notes that three adverse effects may be created by ELT textbooks contaminated by gender-bias: First, ELT materials may have an indirect impact on female students by influencing their views of gender roles and social behaviors. Second, it may have negative effects on students' learning. Third, students' later usage of language inside and outside the classroom may be negatively affected by the presented social roles of gender in educational materials. Additionally, students may fail to use the target language in real-life situations appropriately if they are not familiar with gender concepts and gender bias free-language. According to Sudo (2007), materials developers need to consider the gender concept to develop materials that encourage students to use L2 language. The educational materials should not act as an obstacle for L2 learners in using the appropriate linguistic structures. ELT materials developers need to consider gender issues, act in favor of gender equality, and fight against gender stereotyping (Haddad, 2009). Moreover, since L2 teachers play central roles in L2 instruction, as Haddad (2009) notes, L2 teachers' attitudes and practices concerning gender-bias issue in should be shaped correctly by holding pre-service and in-service teacher training courses. By raising gender-bias issue, L2 teachers would be equipped with the required knowledge to create a free of gender-bias environment by modifying educational materials and emphasizing gender equality in classes.

2.3. Related Studies in the Literature

Here, some relevant studies are critically examined to lay the groundwork for the current study. In a study, Keshavarz & Malek (2009) investigated social relations, subject positions, and the context in the conversation models of Iran Language Institute textbooks and True to Life textbooks. Their findings indicated the two textbook series had devoted equal social status to both genders. Furthermore, their results disclosed that the two textbook series had mainly catered to Capitalism ideology. Further, Elhami (2013) examined two series of ELT materials, namely Iranian high school English books 2 & 3 and Top Notch 2A & 2B, to show how male and female characters are represented. Following Fairclough's three-dimension model of CDA, the findings revealed that both textbook series suffered from gender bias in favour of the male gender. Moreover, the results showed that gender imbalance representation existed to different degrees in both ELT materials.

In another study, Kazemi and Yarian (2014) investigated the gender stereotypes in Iranian English textbook of grade 7 junior secondary high school in terms of content analysis. The frequency of pictures, dialogues, and texts for each gender gave big data and helped the investigator describe the apparent content of relations numerically. The results revealed that there was a significant discrimination between the two genders privileging the male gender. Such stereotype was observed in the frequency of names, pictures, jobs, social visibility, appearance, clothing, and behaviors. Similarly, Jamalvandi (2014) conducted a study to assess the appropriateness of the English textbook designed locally by the Ministry of education for a pre-university course. The required data were gathered mainly through questionnaires covering categories of gender representation, communication, culture, connections, comparisons, communities, and general elements. These factors were associated with areas such as language skills, language components, and attraction of the activities. Results revealed that teachers were moderately satisfied with the textbook with regard to the intended items. In addition, the findings showed that the cultural representation was not sufficient in the textbooks. Likewise, in a study by Jannati (2015), along with examining how the social gender identity is displayed through adjectives and pictures to make the way for cross-cultural comparison of gender roles, an attempt was made to disclose the perception and importance of gender concept as mirrored in textbook pictures. To this aim, the researcher analyzed the Iran Language Institution (ILI) Pre-intermediate course books series carefully. The researcher used linguistic and visual analyses to critically examine the gender

representation in the Coursebooks series. His results disclosed that the ILI pre-intermediate series was biased against the male gender.

Furthermore, Demir and Yavuz (2017) explored the gender representations in an ELT Turkish textbook series, named Yes You Can. This series was developed and published by the Ministry of Education for students at state high schools. Their study examined nine different categories to disclose how the gender-biased components in the textbook series are presented. To this aim, they analyzed both verbal and pictorial contents on a page-by-page basis. Their findings revealed that, to a large extent, the gender inequality throughout the textbook series was violated in favor of the male gender. Finally, Al Kaye et al. (2020) explored the gender representation in EFL textbooks using the CDA framework of Faurclough (1995). They gathered the required data from the content of the international ELT textbooks series, namely interchange 1A& 2B and the ELT textbooks taught to undergraduate students at Al-Balqa Applied University. To disclose inequalities or power imbalance between male and female genders, some variables, such as women and men's social and domestic roles, visibility of women and men, women and men's activities, women and men's semantic roles, and pictorial representation were examined. Their findings indicated that the EFL Jourdan textbooks were biased in favor of male gender in particular roles and activities.

2.4. Purpose of the Study

Though a range of studies has inspected the previous Iranian English high school textbooks from diverse perspectives (e.g., Esmaili, 2010, Jamalvandi, 2014; Janati, 2015; Nazari, 2010;), there is a paucity of research on gender representation from CDA perspectives in Vision 2 & 3 books which have been designed, published, and practised for the first time in Iran. This series textbook aims to cater for the communicative needs of Iranian high school students. In line with this, the present study aims to uncover how gender concept, as a particular area of CDA, in educational contexts has been represented in Iranian English high school books. Additionally, it aims to understand how curricular content might be politically and culturally indicative of certain dominant ideologies. To meet these objectives, the following research questions are put forward:

- Is there any distinction between Iranian English textbooks Vision 2 & 3 and TouchStone 2 & 3 in terms of frequency of male and female characters?
- Is there any distinction between the Iranian English textbooks Vision 2 & 3 and TouchStone 2 & 3 in terms of frequency of photographic presentation of male and female characters?

- Is there any distinction between the Iranian English textbook Vision 2 & 3 and TouchStone 2 & 3 in terms of male and female's ownership?

3. Research Method

Two series of ELT textbooks were selected, investigated, and analyzed from a CDA point of view that were Iranian High school English books (Vision 2 & 3) and TouchStone 2 & 3 books. The former series has been designed and developed to be taught nation-wide by English language teachers and learners in Iran's state high schools. According to Alavi et al., (2016), in contrast to the previous English textbooks (Right Path to English), these English textbooks have been designed based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching approach. Vision 2 & 3 are practiced in state high schools as a compulsory course two 90-minute sessions per week. In contrast to Right Path to English, which have been developed based on the tenets of the Audio-Lingual method, the newly designed books, as the writers claim, are according to the principles of communicative approach, and cover all four language skills. Each textbook entails three units. Every unit consists of get-ready, conversation, new words and expressions, reading, grammar, pronunciation, listening and speaking, and writing parts. TouchStone series (2nd ed.), one of the world's most successful ELT textbook series, has been designed in a four-level series for cultivating English in adult and young-adult learners with different proficiency levels (e.g., introductory, beginner, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate). This textbook series has been designed and revised to mirror the most current and communicative approaches to L2 learning and teaching. It has been considered as an innovative ELT textbook series, which has gained huge attention and interest by EFL/ESL teachers and students for a long time. Its authors claim that in designing and developing the textbook series they consulted with lots of teachers and students and included their suggestions to make the series student- and teacher-friendly. This edition involves updated content in every unit, grammar practice, and opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills. In TouchStone series, both accuracy and fluency have been given enough attention. The syllabus of the series aims at boosting simultaneously systematic and thematic knowledge. The textbook series has been built on this principle which claims that L2 learners should use the second language in communicative contexts to achieve a goal and to do a task. The fundamental principles to develop this series can be summarized as follow: Presenting natural language in natural contexts; creating opportunities for genuine interaction; enabling students to use the language taught in personalized ways; including noticing as part of learning; fostering good learning habits and autonomous learning and making learning enjoyable and rewarding.

In order to gather the required data, the researchers used document analysis which is a principled procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents (Bowen, 2009). In light of the research questions, some evaluative factors were investigated: how both male and female genders are appeared in both series of ELT textbooks frequently; how frequently both male and female genders' pictorial representation is represented in the two series of ELT textbooks; and how frequently both male and female genders' ownership is distributed in the two series of ELT textbooks? To answer these evaluative questions, the researchers went through the textbooks carefully page by page. Then, the collected quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics to calculate the frequency, percentage, and distribution of the intended categorical elements. In the next stage, the two series textbooks were compared in terms of lexical prescriptiveness, agency representation, content predilection, under-representation, development methodology, and epistemology. Then, they were critically analyzed and interpreted in accordance with Fairclough's CDA model.

4. Findings

The first research question investigated if there was any distinction between Iranian English textbooks, Vision 2 & 3, and TouchStone 2 & 3 in terms of the frequency of male and female characters. Examining the frequency of male and female characters in Vision 2 & 3 and TouchStone 2 & 3 indicated that in the former series, a total of 432 gender cases were used (See Table1). 245 cases were related to male characters and 187 cases were associated with female characters. In percentage terms, 56.8 percent of the whole was devoted to the male gender, whereas 43.2 percent of the characters were used for the female gender. Concerning TouchStone 2 & 3, as Table 2 shows, a total of 626 cases were utilized for both genders out of which 340 cases belonged to the male gender and 286 cases were for the female gender. In terms of percentage, 54.3 percent of the characters were related to the male gender and 45.7 percent were pertinent to the female gender. As may be inferred, in contrast to the frequency of male and female characters in Vision 2 & 3 showing favor in the male gender, in TouchStone 2 & 3, the presentation of male and female characters showed, to some extent, a balance between the two genders.

Table1. Frequency of Male and Female Characters in Vision 2 & 3

Character Frequency	Male	Female	Total
Vision2	102	85	120
Vision3	143	102	432
Total	245 (56.8 %)	187 (43.2 %)	44 (100.0 %)

Table 2. Frequency of Male and Female Characters in TouchStone 2 & 3

Character Frequency	Male	Female	Total
TouchStone 2	158	134	292
TouchStone 3	182	152	334
Total	340 (54.3 %)	286 (45.7 %)	626 (100.0 %)

As Table 2 reports, it can be concluded that by allocating a more marginalized and peripheral role to the female gender, the authors of Vision 2 & 3 were given priority to the male gender. On the contrary, the authors of TouchStone 2 & 3 made an effort to provide equality between male and female genders. That is, Vision 2 & 3 were considered more gender-bias in favor of the male gender compared to TouchStone 2 & 3.

The second research question explored whether there was any distinction between the Iranian English textbooks Vision 2 & 3 and TouchStone 2 & 3 in terms of the frequency of photographic presentation of male and female characters. Table 3 reports photographic presentation of male and female genders in Vision 2 & 3.

Table 3. Photographical Presentation of Male and Female Genders in Vision 2 & 3

Pictorial Frequency	Male	Female	Total
Vision 2	87	42	129
Vision 3	68	35	103
Total	155 (66.81 %)	77 (33.19 %)	232 (100.00 %)

As shown in Table 3, Vision 2 entailed 129 gender-related pictures, and Vision 3 consisted of 103 gender-related pictures. To reveal the calculated numbers in more detail, out of 129 pictures

in Vision 2, 87 pictures were for the male gender and 42 photos were for the female gender. In terms of percentage, 67.4 percent of gender-related pictures depicted the male gender, while only 32.6 percent of the photos belonged to the female gender. Regarding photographic presentation in Vision 3, out of 103 gender-related pictures, 68 cases were for the male gender making up for 66.1 percent of all the counted pictures. In contrast, the female gender has been displayed in 35 photos which in terms of percentage it comprised just 33.9 percent of all the pictures. Finally, just 4 pictures depicted both male and female genders together calculating 7.8 percent of the total pictures. To answer the second research question concerning TouchStone 2 & 3, the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Photographical Presentation of Male and Female Genders in TouchStone 2 & 3

Pictorial Frequency	Male	Female	Total
<i>TouchStone 2</i>	110	98	208
<i>TouchStone 3</i>	115	85	210
Total	225 (53.56 %)	183 (46.44 %)	418 (100.00 %)

As can be seen in Table 4, TouchStone 2 consisted of 208 and TouchStone 3 included 210 gender-related pictures. Regarding TouchStone 2, 110 pictures belonged to the male gender, and 98 cases pertained to female gender. In terms of percentage, 52.8 percent of the pictures were given to male gender and 47.2 percent of the pictures were devoted to female gender. In TouchStone 3, out of 210 pictures, 115 pictures pertained to the male gender standing for 54.8 percent of all the counted gender-related pictures. However, 85 cases belonged to the female gender calculating 40.5 percent of the total number of the pictures. As can be inferred from the data, there existed a favor toward the male gender in Vision 2 & 3. That is, the textbooks have used more pictures of the male gender compared to the female gender. However, regarding TouchStone 2 & 3, the findings indicated that existed more or less equality between male and female genders regarding the pictorial presentation.

The final research question explored if there was any distinction between the Iranian English textbook Vision 2 & 3 and TouchStone 2 & 3 in terms of male and female ownership. One of the best ways to investigate the supremacy of one gender over the opposite gender was to examine the right of ownership in textbooks. The reason for this was that getting something in possession by

gender could lead to the view that the gender was a higher position than the other one. Accordingly, this might result in a sense of inequality and unfairness between the male and female gender. The findings of this research question are reported in Table 5, 6, and 7.

Table 5. Frequency of Ownership between Male and Female in Vision 2

Ownership	Vision 2		
	Male	Female	Total
	52 (57.7 %)	38 (47.3 %)	90 (100.00 %)

As can be seen in Table 5, in Vision 2, 90 cases of ownership have been given to both genders. A total of 52 cases of ownership have been devoted to the male gender constituting 57.7 percent of all the cases. About the female gender, 39 cases have been dedicated to the female gender making up 47.3 percent of all the cases. In sum, it can be concluded that there was not a big difference between the two genders regarding the ownership factor.

Table 6. Frequency of Ownership between Male and Female in Vision 3

Ownership	Vision 3		
	Male	Female	Total
	63 (56.7 %)	48 (43.3 %)	111 (100.00 %)

As can be observed in Table 6, in Vision 3, in general, out of 111 cases of ownership, it was calculated that the male gender had taken 63 cases making up 56.7 percent of the total percentage. However, the female gender has taken 48 cases of ownership which is 43 percent of the total amount. It is crystal clear that in this textbook female ownership enjoyed less priority than the other gender.

Table 7. Frequency of Ownership between Male and Female Genders in TouchStone 2 & 3

Ownership	TouchStone 2		TouchStone 3		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	58	50	69	56	127	106
Total	108 (46.35)		125 (54.65)		233 (100.00 %)	

As reported in Table 7, in TouchStone 2, a total of 108 cases of ownership for both genders were obtained out of which 58 cases of ownership belonged to the male gender and 50 cases of ownership pertained to the female gender. In terms of percentage, the male gender held 53.7 percent and the female gender held 46.3 percent of all the cases. Concerning TouchStone 3, the data showed that out of 125 cases, 69 cases (55.2 %) belonged to the female gender and 56 (44.8 %) cases were pertinent to the female gender. Thus, it was concluded that in the Iranian English textbooks there was a bias in favor of the male gender concerning ownership factor. On the contrary, in TouchStone 2 & 3, there existed clear supremacy for the female gender in comparison with the male gender regarding ownership factor. These differences could be attributed to profound differences in the theoretical underpinnings based on which these curriculums were developed. To discuss this issue in more detail, the results of qualitative analyses are also presented and discussed below.

Table 8. A Comparative Analysis of TouchStone Series and Vision Book Series

Discourse	Description	Quality	
		TouchStone	Vision
Lexical Prescriptiveness	Refusing syntactically/semantically loaded lexical items in favor of a sex	Moderate	Fair
Agency Representation	Refusing literal or metaphorical textual or pictorial discourse in favor of gendered roles, actions, deeds	Moderate	Poor
Content Predilection	Refusing contents with positive/negative portrayal of a sex	Moderate	Moderate
Under-representation	Refusing Intentional Framing for belittling a sex	Moderate	Moderate
Development Methodology	Insertion of adequate gendered demographic/biographic data to avoid Androgenic/feminist bias	Moderate	Poor
Epistemology	Rootedness in relevant socio-cultural atmosphere	Moderate	Poor

As presented in Table 8, though Vision series represented a weak adherence to refusing lexical prescriptiveness compared to TouchStone series, both discourses showed normal behavior in using semantic and syntactic lexical items in favor of a particular gender. The second issue following the same condition was the agency representation. Despite the fact that the Iranian context is a cultural-religious rich context in which the agency of women is underscored by both the religious doctrine and socio-cultural norms, due consideration has not been given to the issue of the sexual egalitarian stance of Islam by the Iranian curriculum developers, including Vision series. However, the western counterpart of the series has received a higher level of consideration for an

egalitarian between males' and females' roles, actions, and deeds, though it is not still standard in this respect. Besides, the findings revealed that none of the discourses intentionally selected content which prefers one sex over other or bring about an intentional negative/positive portrayal of a particular sex. Given the fact that biased manuscripts adopt different androgenic or feminist approaches and strategies to frame their readers' minds toward belittling a particular gender, the present study's findings revealed that both Vision series and TouchStone series followed a normal path in this regard and none of them underrepresented a particular gender.

However, the primary source of the difference between the two series might reside in the methodology they adopted and the epistemology based on which their intellectual frameworks were built. The results of the content analysis of the series indicated that data collected for course book development in the Iranian context for the Vision series was androgenic in nature due to a historical and wrongly adopted standard of not entering female contexts. As a result, the data, content, and stories about females are scant in some areas. Some critical analysts associate this issue with strict rules of the Islam while Islam has adopted an egalitarian view about different genders for presence in community, politics, economy and other areas. Wrong interpretation of the Islamic rules in theory and practice has brought about this dilemma. Additionally, the second source of difference might come from the different epistemologies of the two series. Of course, the instructional medium of TouchStone series and Vision series had inherently different epistemologies. However, the findings showed that unlike TouchStone series which showed total adherence to their westernized multi-cultural epistemology, Vision series, despite their Iranian-Islamic underpinning, lacked adherence to either Islamic or Iranian worldview. They were, therefore, seriously affected by western Marxism, Liberalism, and calibrated Islamic views to be matched with a foreign dominant flow for English education. That is why the English education in the country has failed to proceed with any language nativization program. However, many Asian and Islamic countries have undergone profound educational reforms in the framework of language nativization and English glocalization (global yet local). In sum, different stereotyped gender representations with the prevalence of an androgenic view in Vision series might have its roots in methodological and epistemological failures rather than Islamic fundamentalism and strict adherence to Islamic ideology because Islam has adopted an egalitarian stance about genders in society and other areas.

5. Discussion

As noted above, the present study purported to investigate if there was any distinction between Iranian English textbooks, Vision 2 & 3, and TouchStone 2 & 3 in terms of frequency of male and female characters, photographic presentation of male and female genders, and male and female's ownership. The findings evidenced that in Vision 2 & 3, a more marginalized role has been given to the female gender. However, in TouchStone 2 & 3, there was equality between the two genders. Furthermore, the results documented that in Vision 2 & 3, more pictures have been allocated to the male gender compared to the opposite gender. In contrast, the pictorial presentation was somehow fair for the two genders in TouchStone 2 & 3. Besides, the findings disclosed that there was a bias in favor of the male gender regarding the ownership factor. On the contrary, there was clear supremacy in favor of the female gender in TouchStone 2 & 3. The study's findings are in line with those of Ansary and Babaii (2003), reporting that Iranian English textbooks (Right Pass to English) suffered from biased attitudes in favor of the male gender. However, the study's results are not in accordance with those of Nazari (2010), indicating that Interchange series suffered from a gender bias and the Iranian ELT textbooks are free from gender bias. Furthermore, the study's results lend support to those of Esmaily (2010), revealing that Iranian high school English textbooks are contaminated with sexism and gender bias in favor of the male gender. In addition, the study's findings are compatible with the findings of Yazdani & Elhami (2012), reporting that the Iranian ELT textbooks (Right Pass to English) are highly contaminated in terms of biased attitudes toward the female gender while in Top Notch 2A and 2B there were remarkable improvements in this regard. Finally, the study's results are in accordance with those of Esmaili & Amerian (2014), showing that the Iranian English textbooks presented a 'sexist attitude' in favor of the male gender.

Historically speaking, with the emergence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, a couple of changes and reformations took place in all aspects of life and society, including the role of male and female genders. In actuality, these changes and reformations could trace back to the religious and cultural backgrounds that were ordered by the people of a period of time. Taken together, these cultural and religious backgrounds and beliefs are so interconnected and unified that the reasons for many thoughts, words, and actions can be clearly recognized. In keeping with these cultural and religious changes, the male and female gender took up different roles and positions in society.

Even though, today, both genders, to some extent, enjoy a wide range of role and positions in all aspects of society, these facts are not in harmony with what is presented and portrayed in the Iranian English high school textbooks. Take an example, looking at the percentages related to the frequency of male and female characters dedicated to both genders in Vision 2 & 3, it can be recognized that there exists a considerable mismatch between the books' content and the realities we encounter in the Iranian society. Another piece of evidence that lends support to these findings is the inconsistency between male and female genders' photographic presentations. Undoubtedly, at the time being, the female gender could have got more rights to get new jobs and to do outdoor activities. But, unfortunately, skimming the Iranian ELT textbooks shows the results which are against these realities. However, as already noted, this status has been softened in TouchStone 2 & 3. In general, the study's results can unveil a systematic pattern of gender bias with respect to the roles devoted to the male and female gender in the Iranian English high school textbooks. This gender bias toward the female gender may be attributed to cultural roots wherein the Iranian setting the supremacy has been given to the male gender. As outlined above, exploring the roles given to the male and female genders in TouchStone 2 & 3, we could conclude that though the contents suffered from a slight gender bias toward the female gender, the author tried to give a more noticeable position to the female gender. In these textbooks, the gap between the two genders in terms of the three factors examined was ameliorated as much as possible. Over the last decades, women stood up against an all man dominant society where the prominent position has been devoted to men. They want to make their voice be heard and to achieve a much more equal and fair share in civil rights, most specially the right of voting (Barriteau, 2006; Mlambo et al., 2019). After that, beliefs and opinions such as feminism and equality between men and women right have turned up trying to devote equal rights to women. It seems that although there exists gender bias in some parts of these books, the authors have endeavored to follow this trend of equality in designing and developing the content of TouchStone 2 & 3. For example, the frequency of ownership in these books is in accordance with this reality of the western world. The study's results indicated that there was an acceptable consistency between the content of books and the setting in which the authors have been born and raised.

6. Conclusion

As pointed out above, the current study set out to critically compare the Iranian English high school books, namely Vision 2 & 3 with TouchStone 2 & 3 to disclose how male and female genders are represented. The findings revealed that both ELT textbook series suffered from gender

bias. What is important to note is that this gender bias was more tangible in the Iranian English high school books. The systematic bias toward the female gender might be attributed to cultural ideologies which are dominant in the Iranian context. These biased attitudes might follow an ideology of inequality between male and female genders' civil rights. The existence of sexism in the series is neither accidental nor sporadic but pursues a systematic and pre-determined direction based on the ideology and perspective behind these textbooks (Esmaili & Amerian, 2014). Based on the study's findings, some pedagogical implications are proposed for different stakeholders. In light of the findings, this implication can be offered that as textbooks are widespread and effective learning instruments and can play a vital role in improving or blocking social development in a society, ELT textbook designers should take the issue of gender representation seriously. They should produce materials in which the social affairs such as the roles dedicated to both genders are presented fairly. In this way, EFL learners can construct a better view of the roles they are expected to perform in their society. Another implication is that in teacher training courses, EFL teachers should be provided with a gender perspective to address gender inequality issues in educational materials. In such a way, it can be ensured that EFL teacher gets equipped with the required knowledge to use and manipulate materials suffering from gender inequality. Additionally, EFL teachers should be aware of the importance of textbooks and their contents. As such, they should be sensitive in choosing the educational materials used in classes. The last implication is for illustrators. In light of the findings, they are supposed to assure a fair gender representation in future ELT textbooks. Notwithstanding its contributions, the present study faced some limitations which can be a starting point for future research. First, as the current study just examined two Iranian English secondary high school books, future studies can investigate the Iranian English guidance school books (Prospect series) as well to get a more comprehensive picture of the issue. Second, as the current study examined just two books of TouchStone 2 & 3 series, more studies are needed to examine gender representation in other international EFL textbooks, such as Interchange series, Four Corners series, Top Notch series, and American Files, and then compare them with Iranian English high school books. Third, since the current study investigated just three factors (e.g., frequency of male and female characters, photographic presentation of male and female genders, and frequency of ownership between male and female), future studies can address other factors such as order of appearance of two genders in conversations and reading parts. Finally, as the present study was descriptive in essence, future research can explore the effects of gender representation on student learning. For example, future studies can explore how gender representation in textbooks affects EFL learners' motivation and willingness to communicate.

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