

TRENDS IN GENDER REPRESENTATION: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPORTED EFL TEXTBOOK SERIES IN MOROCCAN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Imported textbooks are often taken for granted as the best alternative to address the shortcomings found in Moroccan textbooks including gender stereotypes. This study analyses gender representation within the Sprint textbook series, a widely adopted imported textbook series in Moroccan private schools, to ascertain whether these materials reinforce or challenge prevailing gender biases. The significance of this research lies in filling a research gap as there is no single research paper that systematically questions the credibility of these imported textbooks, given that they were promoted as the panacea that would rectify the deficiencies in local textbooks. A quantitative content analysis revealed a statistically significant trend of higher female visibility across three sprint levels, with females often depicted in settings associated with openness and self-care activities and engaging more frequently in recreational activities compared to males. Contrary to expectations, the imported EFL textbooks portray females in progressive and emancipated roles, challenging traditional gender norms. The findings highlight the importance of considering gender dynamics in educational materials to promote more equitable and inclusive learning environments, thus contributing to societal progress towards gender equality.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Imported Textbooks, Gender Stereotypes, Content Analysis, EFL.

INTRODUCTION

Education holds significant importance in shaping the perspectives of children and young adults. Textbooks, for example, have a profound impact on the attitudes and values that students carry into adulthood. Therefore, instructional materials must promote positive values and avoid bias and stereotypes (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975, as cited in Britton & Lumpkin, 1977, p. 41). These materials not only convey information but also subtly shape learners' attitudes towards various aspects of life, such as race, religion, gender, occupations, life expectations, and opportunities (Ginn & Company, 1973, as cited in Britton & Lumpkin, 1977). It is essential, in this regard, to critically analyse these textbooks to understand the choices made and how they may serve the interests of certain groups while disadvantaging others (Mills, 1995, pp. 1-2). Recently, there has been a very remarkable trend among private schools and language centres to adopt EFL imported textbooks that have been marketed as the panacea that would address the deficiencies found in local textbooks regarding, for instance, gender stereotypes. This trend has put a halt to all the longstanding tradition of textbook analysis thinking that those shortcomings are over. Consequently, there is a notable absence of research papers

addressing the representation of gender in EFL imported textbooks in Morocco. This paper tries to revive this academic exercise of critically examining those textbooks to ascertain whether or not they maintain a balanced and fair representation of gender free from any biases and stereotypes.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Gender issues in EFL textbooks

EFL textbooks play a crucial role in language education, helping learners develop their language skills and cultural understanding. However, they are not immune to gender bias, which continues to impact learners' perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes (Otlowski, 2003). These textbooks often reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and perpetuate bias, unconsciously influencing learners' perceptions of gender roles and identities (Brusokaitė, 2013). Additionally, sexist language and stereotyping in EFL textbooks may inadvertently promote discrimination and reinforce harmful gender norms.

Initially, gender bias in various dimensions, such as language, imagery, and content, is a prominent issue, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks. This bias is manifested through language choices that reinforce stereotypical gender roles, often depicting men in high-status jobs and women in more traditional roles (Brusokaitė, 2013). Visual elements further entrench these stereotypes, impacting learners' perceptions (Mustedanagic, 2010, Tajeddin & Enayat, 2010). Research in English Language Teaching reveals the consistent presence of gender bias in EFL textbooks, including the underrepresentation and stereotypical portrayal of female characters. Such biases in language and imagery not only shape learners' views of gender roles but also affect their self-perception and career aspirations (Mustedanagic, 2010). Consequently, girls may be discouraged from pursuing STEM careers, while boys might avoid traditionally feminine professions, perpetuating gender inequality and hindering progress towards gender equity (Parham, 2013).

Additionally, sexist language in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks is a critical issue that reinforces gender stereotypes and contributes to gender inequality. The frequent use of male pronouns as the default erases women and non-binary individuals, reinforcing male superiority in societal perception (Mustedanagic, 2010). These textbooks often feature biased occupational terms like "policeman" and "fireman," undermining women's roles in such professions and implying these are male-dominated fields. This not only discourages diversity in career choices among learners but also embeds gender biases deeply within ideologies, influencing social interactions and institutions (Otlowski, 2003). Additionally, this sexist language shapes learners' self-perception and interactions, potentially limiting career aspirations and perpetuating discriminatory attitudes. Hence, it can particularly harm female learners' self-esteem and academic performance (Nagatomo, 2010).

1.2 Visual Communication in Textbooks

In educational settings, visual aids are frequently employed to enhance language learning, but their impact extends beyond mere instructional utility. They wield considerable influence in

shaping students' perceptions of socio-cultural constructs, including gender roles and stereotypes (Giaschi, 2000). These images, whether consciously or not, can encode underlying ideologies, subtly perpetuating gender biases that reinforce prevailing societal norms and attitudes (Dube, 2006).

Furthermore, the pervasive nature of media-driven visual content renders it a powerful force in socialization, capable of moulding attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours (Kang, 1997). Consequently, scholars such as Mathuvi et al. (2012) emphasize the imperative of critically assessing educational materials, especially textbooks, to ensure they espouse a balanced and inclusive worldview. By doing so, educators empower young learners to cultivate critical perspectives on gender dynamics and broader societal issues.

1.3 Findings of previous studies

Gender representation in ESL/EFL textbooks has been a focal point of scholarly inquiry due to its significant influence on students' educational experiences and socialization regarding gender roles. Various studies have scrutinized these textbooks across different countries, revealing pervasive gender biases and stereotypes. For instance, Porreca (1984) found widespread sexism in ESL textbooks, particularly in the portrayal of occupational roles.

Similarly, Gupta and Yin (1990) identified biased representations in Singaporean primary school textbooks, with male characters dominating and occupying a broader range of roles compared to females. Studies in countries like Pakistan and Turkey have also highlighted gender imbalances in ESL/EFL textbooks, where male characters are often depicted in superior roles while females are confined to traditional domestic roles (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Söğüt, 2018). However, there are instances of textbooks breaking away from these biases. Nagatomo's (2010) research on a Japanese university EFL textbook revealed a balanced portrayal of gender roles, challenging prevailing stereotypes.

Recent Moroccan studies on gender issues in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks have underscored the prevalence of gender bias and stereotypes, revealing a significant impact on student gender identity formation and societal norms (Slaoui & Belghiti, 2017; Mechouat, 2017; Benattabou, 2020). These studies highlight the need for comprehensive educational reforms in Morocco to dismantle gender stereotypes and promote equality.

Slaoui and Belghiti (2018) argue for fundamental changes across educational and family institutions, stressing the influence of gender stereotypes in shaping student identities. Mechouat (2017) finds a decline in the positive portrayal of women in these textbooks, contradicting goals of pedagogical innovation and promoting traditional gender ideologies. Benattabou (2020) uncovers a male-centred discourse in these textbooks, where women are often portrayed negatively, reinforcing traditional gender roles and inequality. As previously noted, the striking observation from these studies, particularly in the context of Morocco, is the absence of any comprehensive and critical examination of imported EFL textbooks to determine whether they reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and perpetuate bias as found in Moroccan EFL textbooks or present a fair representation of gender roles that challenge existing stereotypes.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Rationale

Research shows that female characters in Moroccan English textbooks are often misrepresented or underrepresented. This has led to the emergence of a noticeable trend of importing foreign textbooks as a solution to address gender bias in local textbooks. This tendency is so powerful that no single research paper subjected these imported textbooks to a critical analysis from a gender perspective or any other perspective. This study endeavours to evaluate the most widely popular EFL textbook series adopted in Moroccan private schools to determine if it adequately represents gender equality at the level of pictorial prompts or not. The findings could influence the decision to replace current Moroccan local textbooks with more gender-equitable alternatives and provide a framework for future English textbook adaptation in Morocco. This is crucial for creating a more equitable educational environment and aligning Morocco's resources with international standards and evolving social norms.

2.2 Research Questions

This study focuses on exploring the increasing trend toward using imported textbooks for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. It particularly investigates if the selected imported English textbook series Sprint exhibits an equitable and unbiased portrayal of gender in their illustrations. To achieve this, the research sets out specific questions to guide its inquiry:

1. To what degree is there a significant difference in the frequency of representation between male and female characters within the illustrations?
2. Is there a significant preference for specific settings being visually assigned to either male or female characters?
3. Is the observed portrayal of male and female characters in different activities statistically significant?

2.3 Research Approach

The research approach adopted to address the aforementioned inquiries involved a quantitative content analysis. Images featuring individuals of both genders were systematically gathered from the three textbooks and subsequently categorized based on their visibility within the text, the settings depicted, and the activities portrayed. These categorised images were tabulated and inputted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for analysis.

2.4 Materials

This study focuses on the first edition of the "Sprint" English EFL textbook series, published under the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and targets middle school students. This choice is strategic given the significant role these years play in shaping adolescents' worldviews, especially regarding gender roles and equality. This focus on middle school materials, rather than a broader range including primary and high school textbooks, allows for a more manageable yet comprehensive analysis of gender representation within a feasible research scope. To ensure an unbiased choice of textbooks, a systematic approach was

employed, involving formal communication with leading Moroccan publishing houses - Bookland Publishing, Calliope, and La Bibliothèque Nationale. The publishers responded promptly, providing valuable information on the most popular EFL series in Morocco and offering opportunities for direct engagement with their pedagogical teams. This interaction enriched the research by deepening the understanding of textbook design, publishing practices, and their influence on educational content and gender portrayal. Sprint EFL textbook series explores an array of themes, ranging from family dynamics and leisure activities to technology, environmental issues, shopping, clothing, and entertainment, all meticulously designed for adolescents aged 12 to 15. This thematic diversity presents a unique and invaluable opportunity to conduct a comprehensive analysis of how gender equality is portrayed in illustrations across a multitude of contexts and subjects, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the impact of educational materials on students' perceptions and societal attitudes.

2.5 Data collection and analysis

The study involved conducting a quantitative content analysis of the Sprint EFL textbook series designed for foreign language learners. This analysis was guided by established criteria drawn from seminal works by Oliver (1974) and Porreca (1984). The examination focused on three primary dimensions: the visibility of characters, the depicted settings, and the activities portrayed within the images. The objective was to systematically quantify the representation of male and female characters, document the various settings they were depicted in, and tally the range of activities they engaged in across the textbook series. Subsequently, all collected data will undergo the process of organization, tabulation, and analysis utilizing SPSS software, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the visual content's characteristics and potential implications for language learning materials.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Gender visibility across the Sprint series

The crosstabulation Table 1 examines the relationship between gender visibility and the selection of imported EFL textbooks in three sprints: Sprint 1, Sprint 2, and Sprint 3. The counts reveal the distribution of female, male, and both genders in the illustrations for each textbook series.

Table 1: Crosstabulation of Gender visibility counts in Sprint EFL textbooks series

		Visibility			Total
		Female	Male	Both genders	
Imported EFL textbook	Sprint 1	56	52	15	123
	Sprint 2	41	28	21	90
	Sprint 3	42	24	23	89
Total		139	104	59	302

Calculating the differences between male and female frequencies, Sprint 1 shows a surplus of 4 instances of female visibility compared to male visibility (56 females vs. 52 males). In Sprint 2, there is a difference of 13, with 41 females and 28 males. Sprint 3 displays a difference of

18, with 42 females and 24 males. Across all three sprints, the cumulative difference indicates a consistent trend of higher female visibility, with an overall surplus of 35 instances. While these differences suggest a pattern, conducting further statistical analysis, such as a chi-square test, would be necessary to determine if the observed variations in gender visibility are statistically significant or not

Table 2: Chi-Square test of Gender visibility across Sprint EFL Textbook Series

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9,833 ^a	4	,043
Likelihood Ratio	10,131	4	,038
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,381	1	,240
N of Valid Cases	302		

As shown in Table 2, the Pearson Chi-Square value is 9.833 with 4 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value is 0.043. This p-value is below the commonly used significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis, indicating that the observed variations in gender visibility are statistically significant and are not likely to occur by chance alone. In short, the Pearson Chi-Square test suggests that the differences in gender visibility are statistically significant across the three sprints, emphasizing a consistent trend that is unlikely to be attributed to random chance. For a better visualization of the current data, let us have a look at the following figure

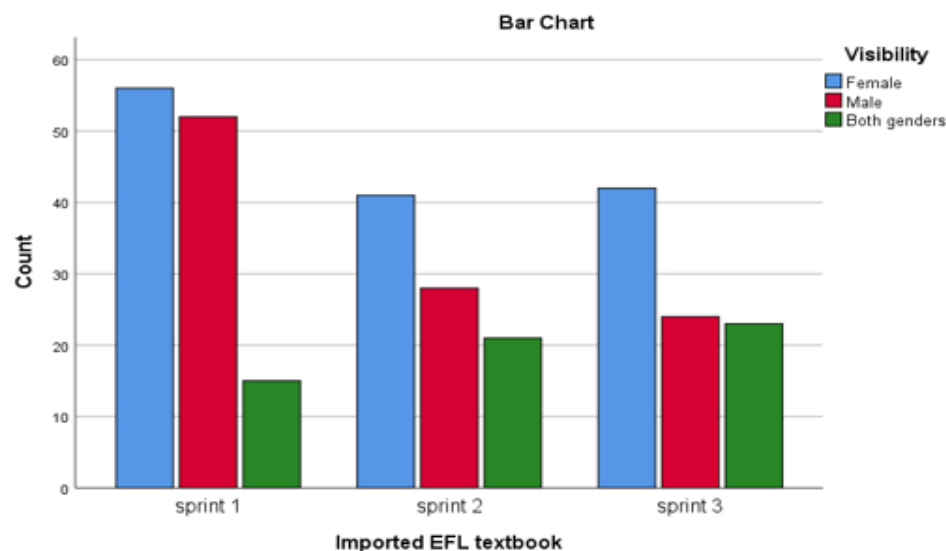


Figure 1: Bar chart of gender visibility across the Sprint EFL textbook series

3.2 Gender setting across the Sprint series

The crosstabulation table 3 reveals notable patterns in the distribution of Imported EFL textbooks based on Visibility (gender) and Settings across the three sprints.

Table 3: Gender visibility and settings crosstabulation across Sprint EFL Textbook series

Imported EFL textbook			Settings									Total
			School	Library	Park	House	Gym	Market	Museum	Work	Restaurant	
Sprint 1	Visibility	Female	1	1	12	14	10	7	2	0	9	56
		Male	10	1	7	6	7	4	4	9	4	52
		Both genders	0	0	6	1	2	0	0	0	6	15
	Total		11	2	25	21	19	11	6	9	19	123
Sprint 2	Visibility	Female	0	0	9	2	7	4	3	9	7	41
		Male	2	1	6	1	6	2	2	6	2	28
		Both genders	4	0	7	1	1	1	0	4	3	21
	Total		6	1	22	4	14	7	5	19	12	90
Sprint 3	Visibility	Female	4	2	8	1	5	4	3	9	6	42
		Male	1	2	0	6	2	5	3	5	0	24
		Both genders	3	0	3	1	6	0	2	2	6	23
	Total		8	4	11	8	13	9	8	16	12	89
Total	Visibility	Female	5	3	29	17	22	15	8	18	22	139
		Male	13	4	13	13	15	11	9	20	6	104
		Both genders	7	0	16	3	9	1	2	6	15	59
	Total		25	7	58	33	46	27	19	44	43	302

It seems clear that there is a noticeable trend where females outnumber males in settings associated with openness and self-caring activities, such as the Gym, Park, Market, and Restaurant. Specifically, in sprint 1, females have a higher count in the Park and Restaurant settings compared to males, contributing to 29% and 18% of the total counts in these settings, respectively. This pattern continues in sprints 2 and 3, where females consistently have higher counts in the Gym, Park, Market, and Restaurant settings. On the other hand, settings associated with potential monotony, such as House and Museum, exhibit higher male counts. Overall, when considering the total counts, females contribute 46% in the Gym, 27% in the Park, 19% in the Market, and 44% in the Restaurant settings, indicating a preference for environments associated with openness and self-care activities. In contrast, males have higher counts in settings like House and Museum, reflecting potential associations with monotony. However, further statistical tests need to be carried out to determine whether this pattern in variations is statistically significant or not.

Table 4: Chi-square test of gender/setting distribution across Sprint EFL textbook series

Imported EFL textbook		Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Sprint 1	Pearson Chi-Square	43,589 ^b	16	,000
	Likelihood Ratio	48,648	16	,000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	,329	1	,566
	N of Valid Cases	123		
Sprint 2	Pearson Chi-Square	16,293 ^c	16	,433

	Likelihood Ratio	19,274	16	,255
	Linear-by-Linear Association	4,522	1	,033
	N of Valid Cases	90		
Sprint 3	Pearson Chi-Square	32,759 ^d	16	,008
	Likelihood Ratio	39,496	16	,001
	Linear-by-Linear Association	,023	1	,878
	N of Valid Cases	89		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	35,534 ^a	16	,003
	Likelihood Ratio	40,144	16	,001
	Linear-by-Linear Association	,469	1	,493
	N of Valid Cases	302		

As shown in Table 4, the chi-square test results indicate that there is a significant association between imported EFL textbook distribution and gender visibility across the three sprints (sprint 1, sprint 2, and sprint 3). In sprint 1, the Pearson Chi-Square value is 43,589 with a p-value of .000, suggesting a highly significant association. Similarly, in sprint 3 and the total, significant associations are observed. However, in sprint 2, the Pearson Chi-Square value is 16,293 with a p-value of .433, indicating a lack of statistical significance. This result implies that the observed distribution in sprint 2 could be due to random chance, and there is no significant association between Imported EFL textbook distribution and Visibility during that specific sprint. The absence of significance in Sprint 2 suggests that the pattern observed in the distribution of textbooks between genders during that period may not be statistically meaningful or indicative of a consistent trend the same as it is observed in Sprint 1 and 3. The following figure further portrays the distribution of gender visibility based on their associated settings across the three sprint textbooks

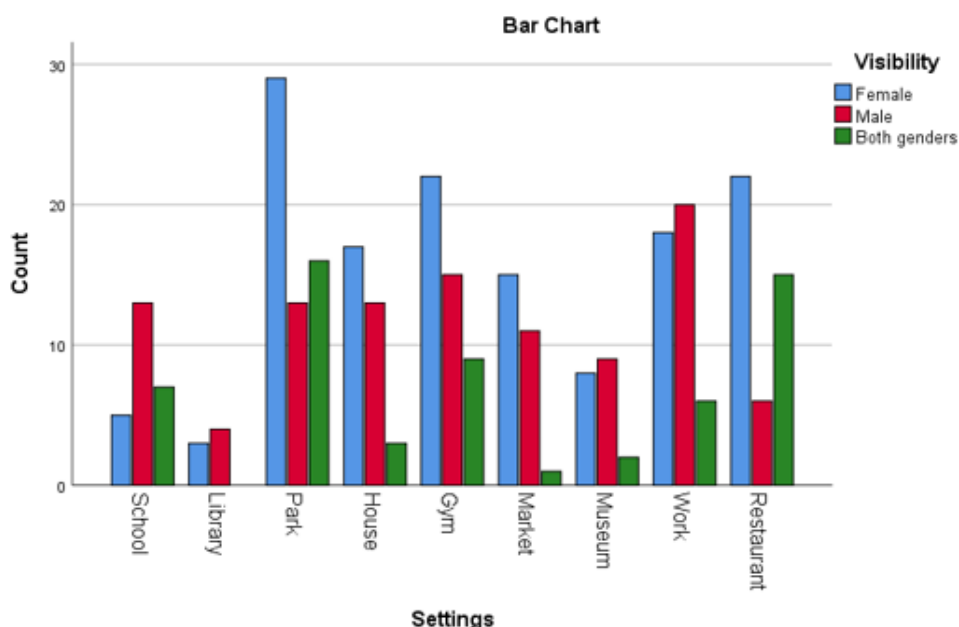


Figure 2: Bar chart of gender/setting distribution across Sprint EFL textbook series

3.3 Gender activities across the Sprint textbook series

The table provides a crosstabulation of activities and the visibility of imported English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks among female, male, and both genders. The activities include studying, playing, working, entertaining, exercising, sleeping, eating, chatting, shopping, and housework.

The data is organized into three sprints, each displaying the count of individuals engaging in the specified activities while using the imported EFL textbook, separated by gender categories. Overall, the table offers a comprehensive view of how different activities are associated with the visibility of the imported EFL textbook, providing insights into usage patterns among females, males, and both genders across three sprint periods.

Table 5: Gender and activities crosstabulation across Sprint EFL textbook series

Visibility			Activities										Total
			Studying	Playing	Working	Entertaining	Exercising	Sleeping	Eating	Chatting	Shopping	Housework	
Female	Imported EFL textbook	Sprint 1	5	7	6	11	8	3	1	7	5	3	56
		Sprint 2	4	6	5	9	6	1	3	2	4	1	41
		Sprint 3	4	5	4	8	4	0	5	4	5	3	42
	Total		13	18	15	28	18	4	9	13	14	7	139
Male	Imported EFL textbook	Sprint 1	7	5	4	9	7	1	4	6	4	5	52
		Sprint 2	5	1	5	8	2	0	2	0	2	3	28
		Sprint 3	6	3	3	2	2	0	1	4	3	0	24
	Total		18	9	12	19	11	1	7	10	9	8	104
Both genders	Imported EFL textbook	Sprint 1	1	2	0	3	2		3	4	0	0	15
		Sprint 2	3	3	4	4	1		3	2	1	0	21
		Sprint 3	1	3	1	3	6		3	4	0	2	23
	Total		5	8	5	10	9		9	10	1	2	59
Total	Imported EFL textbook	Sprint 1	13	14	10	23	17	4	8	17	9	8	123
		Sprint 2	12	10	14	21	9	1	8	4	7	4	90
		Sprint 3	11	11	8	13	12	0	9	12	8	5	89
	Total		36	35	32	57	38	5	25	33	24	17	302

The data above reveal that females consistently outnumber males in various recreational and self-care activities such as playing, entertaining, chatting, exercising, and shopping. For instance, in sprint 1, females engaged in playing (17%), entertaining (23%), chatting (17%), and shopping (9%) more than their male counterparts, who participated in these activities at 14%, 19%, 9%, and 8%, respectively. This pattern holds across all three sprints, contributing to an overall trend of females exhibiting a higher percentage of involvement in these leisure and self-care pursuits. The total numbers reinforce this observation, with females participating in these activities at 38% compared to males at 35%. Overall, the data highlights a gender disparity in favour of females in the specified activities. A Chi-square test was used to ascertain whether these figures were meaningful or not.

Table 6: Chi-square test gender/activities distribution across Sprint EFL textbook series

Visibility		Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Female	Pearson Chi-Square	9,848 ^b	18	,037
	Likelihood Ratio	11,444	18	,045
	Linear-by-Linear Association	,196	1	,138
	N of Valid Cases	139		
Male	Pearson Chi-Square	16,426 ^c	18	,023
	Likelihood Ratio	21,232	18	,038
	Linear-by-Linear Association	1,381	1	,740
	N of Valid Cases	104		
Both genders	Pearson Chi-Square	16,308 ^d	16	,432
	Likelihood Ratio	18,056	16	,321
	Linear-by-Linear Association	,117	1	,733
	N of Valid Cases	59		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	15,839 ^a	18	,004
	Likelihood Ratio	17,678	18	,037
	Linear-by-Linear Association	,051	1	,422
	N of Valid Cases	302		

The chi-square tests reveal significant associations between gender and activity visibility in the imported EFL textbook series. For females, the Pearson Chi-Square statistic is 9.848 ($p = 0.037$), indicating a significant association between gender and activities. Similarly, for males, the Pearson Chi-Square is 16.426 ($p = 0.023$), suggesting a significant relationship between gender and activity engagement. The analysis for both genders combined, however, shows a non-significant Pearson Chi-Square value of 16.308 ($p = 0.432$). These results imply that the observed gender differences in activity preferences among females and males individually contribute to the overall association. The total Pearson Chi-Square value is 15.839 ($p = 0.004$), indicating a significant overall association between gender and activities across all participants. In conclusion, the statistical analysis stresses the gender-based variations in activity engagement, emphasizing the need to consider gender differences when examining the visibility of activities associated with the imported EFL textbooks.

The following chart is a visual representation of the data obtained regarding the overall distribution of activities based on gender (female, males and both genders)

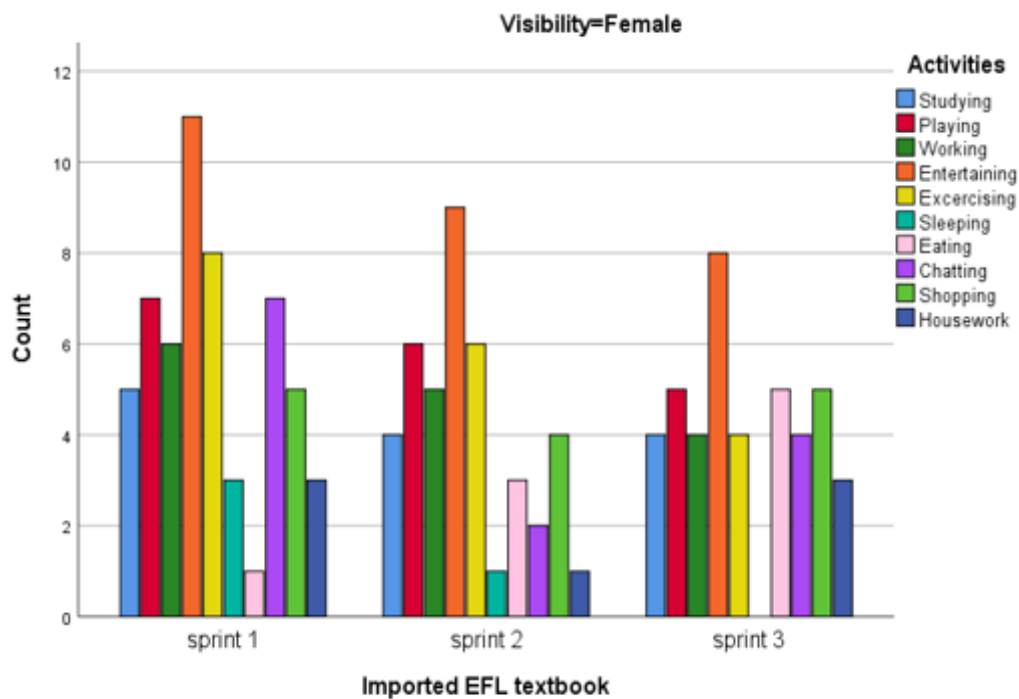


Figure 3: Bar chart of female/activities distribution across Sprint EFL textbook series

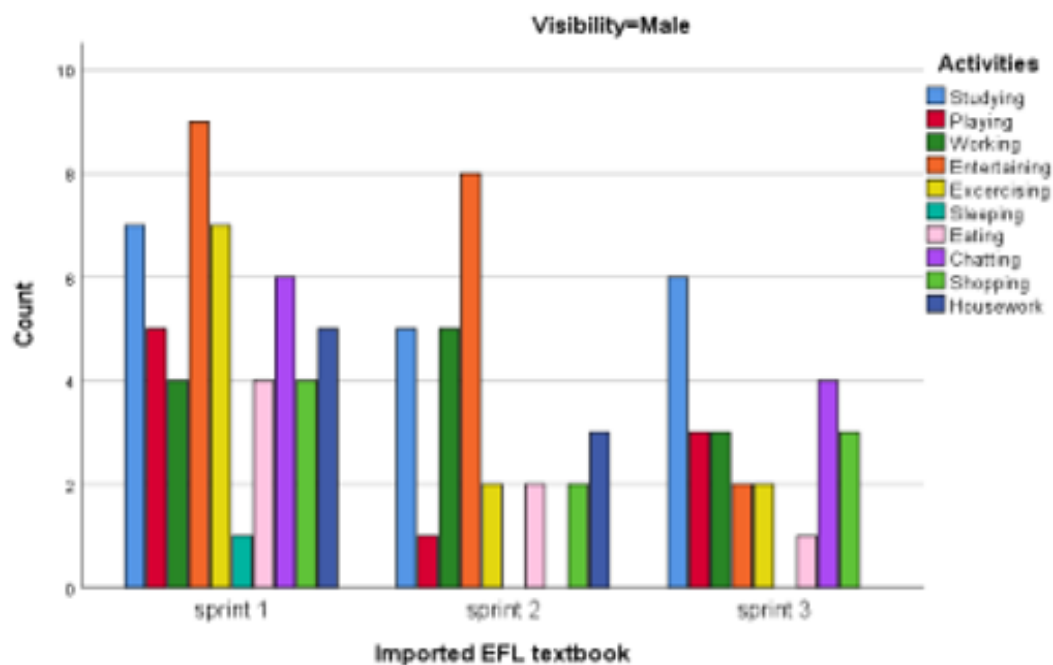


Figure 4: Bar chart of male/activities distribution across Sprint EFL textbook series

In conclusion, the analysis of gender visibility across the Sprint series of imported EFL textbooks reveals consistent patterns in gender representation within illustrations and associated settings and activities. Across all three sprints, females consistently exhibit higher visibility than males, with statistical significance observed through Pearson Chi-Square tests. The disparity extends to settings and activities, where females tend to dominate recreational and self-care contexts, while males show a preference for activities associated with potential monotony.

4. DISCUSSION

The crosstabulation tables and chi-square tests employed in this study were meant to answer three research questions. Firstly, regarding the frequency of representation, the data indicates a consistent trend of higher female visibility in the illustrations, with an overall surplus of 35 instances across the three Sprints. The chi-square tests confirm the statistically significant association between gender and visibility, emphasizing that the observed variations are not likely to occur by chance alone. Secondly, concerning the assignment of settings to male and female characters, females consistently outnumber males in settings associated with openness and self-care activities, such as the Gym, Park, Market, and Restaurant. However, statistical tests reveal that while significant associations exist in Sprints 1 and 3, there is an absence of statistical significance in sprint 2. Thirdly, in terms of activities, females consistently participate more in recreational and self-care activities like playing, entertaining, chatting, exercising, and shopping, leading to significant associations between gender and activity visibility. Overall, the study highlights gender-based variations in the representation of characters and their associated activities, underlining the importance of considering gender differences in educational materials.

The investigation into the impact of imported EFL textbooks on gender roles within Moroccan education initially aimed to address prevailing gender disparities favouring males in traditional English textbooks. However, contrary to initial expectations, the analysis of illustrations' visibility revealed a significant departure from this norm. The imported textbooks appeared to overtly favour females over males, marking a noticeable shift in representation. Particularly striking was the portrayal of females in outdoor settings, depicted as socially open and emancipated, while males were predominantly confined to indoor contexts associated with passivity, such as the home, study, and work environments. The effort to question conventional gender stereotypes was evident, particularly in unit 1 of Sprint 2, titled "Who's in charge." This unit actively seeks to challenge prevailing beliefs about gender roles among teenagers, advocating for the adoption of new perspectives. For instance, numerous examples within the unit suggest that boys should take on tasks traditionally considered feminine, and vice versa, as part of a broader initiative to reshape norms and reinforce alternative perspectives.

While it is commendable to recognize the imported EFL textbook series for challenging conventional gender norms, there are concerns regarding the deliberate promotion of females in roles that emphasize their dominance and centrality. Consequently, instead of maintaining a balanced representation of both genders in terms of visibility, settings, and activities, the

emerging trend seems to prioritize females over males. This raises questions about the equitable portrayal of gender roles and the potential impact on students' perceptions and understanding of gender dynamics.

The emerging trend could be interpreted as establishing new norms that prioritize gender representation without regard for balance or fairness. This shift mirrors the extremes found in local EFL textbooks, which favor males, but with a simple twist that imported EFL textbooks now lean towards favouring females. Chi-square tests serve as one piece of evidence supporting the sustainability and validity of this trend. Additionally, examining the authors of the Sprint EFL textbook series further confirms this pattern. Sprints 1 and 2 were authored by three females, while Sprint 3 had two female authors and one male author. The influence of the male author is discernible in Sprint 3, as female visibility slightly decreased compared to the other two sprints.

An intriguing discovery emerges regarding the evolution of gender-based visibility discrepancies as students advance through the sprint levels. Notably, the disparity in visibility between genders becomes more pronounced as students progress from lower to higher sprint levels. In the initial sprint level (Sprint 1), the variance in visibility between females and males is minimal. However, as students advance to the higher sprint level (Sprint 3), a substantial gap emerges, with females being notably more visible than males. This trend indicates a nuanced progression in the portrayal of gender roles within the imported EFL textbooks, suggesting that the representation of gender dynamics evolves across different educational levels. Such findings underscore the necessity for a deeper understanding of gender dynamics within educational materials, particularly concerning their impact on students' perceptions and experiences as they advance through their educational journey.

LIMITATIONS

While this study provides valuable insights into gender representation within the Sprint EFL textbook series in Moroccan private schools, there are several limitations to consider. Firstly, the analysis solely focuses on visual content, neglecting textual elements that may also contribute to gender bias. Additionally, the study's scope is limited to a specific imported textbook series and may not capture broader trends in gender representation across all EFL materials used in Moroccan private schools. Furthermore, the research lacks qualitative data or student perspectives, limiting the understanding of how learners interpret and internalize gender portrayals in educational materials. Lastly, the study does not explore the potential impact of gender representation on student attitudes, behaviors, and academic outcomes, leaving important questions about the effectiveness of gender-equitable educational materials unanswered.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aimed to examine the representation of gender roles in imported EFL textbooks used in Moroccan private schools, particularly focusing on the popular Sprint series. The analysis revealed a significant departure from traditional gender norms, with females being

prominently featured in outdoor settings and engaging in socially open and emancipated activities, while males were often confined to indoor contexts associated with passivity. Despite the commendable effort to challenge conventional gender stereotypes, concerns arise regarding the deliberate promotion of females over males, potentially leading to imbalanced gender representation. This trend reflects a broader shift in gender portrayal within educational materials, with imported textbooks now favoring females, akin to the biases found in local textbooks favouring males. Statistical analyses, including chi-square tests and authorship examination, support the sustainability and validity of this trend. Notably, the disparity in gender visibility intensifies as students progress through the sprint levels, indicating a nuanced evolution in gender portrayal across educational levels. These findings underscore the importance of critically evaluating gender representation in educational materials and highlight the need for a balanced and inclusive approach to ensure equitable learning environments for all students. Ultimately, addressing these issues is crucial for fostering gender equality and aligning educational resources with evolving societal norms and international standards.

Notes on contributors

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