Gender Representation in Elementary School EFL Textbooks

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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti - nastavnički smjer

i njemačkog jezika i književnosti - nastavnički smjer

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Spolna zastupljenost u udžbenicima engleskog jezika za osnovnu školu

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Mentor: prof. dr. sc. Višnja Pavičić Takač

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Summary

The present study deals with gender representation in English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks used in elementary schools in Croatia. It emphasizes the importance of gender representation in textbooks and stresses the need for more studies in this field. Textbooks are a key component of language learning and should motivate and encourage the learners, therefore it is important that both genders are equally represented. This paper draws a comparison between the textbook series *Way to go plus* written by Croatian authors and *Project* written by an English author. The results have shown that gender bias does exist in both textbooks series, but they differ in their approach of gender issues.

Keywords: gender representation, EFL textbooks, gender equality, learning materials, education.

Sažetak

Ovo istraživanje bavi se rodnom zastupljenosti u udžbenicima engleskog jezika koji se koriste u osnovnim školama u Hrvatskoj. Ono naglašava važnost rodne zastupljenosti u udžbenicima i ističe potrebu za većim brojem istraživanja u ovom području. Udžbenici su ključna komponenta učenja jezika i trebali bi motivirati i poticati učenike, stoga je važno da su oba roda podjednako zastupljena. U istraživanju se uspoređuju dvije serije udžbenika, *Way to go plus* hrvatskih autora i *Project* engleskog autora. Rezultati su pokazali da je neravnoteža zastupljenosti rodova prisutna u objema serijama udžbenika, ali razlike postoje u njihovom pristupu pitanjima rodne ravnopravnosti.

Ključne riječi: rodna zastupljenost, udžbenici engleskog jezika, ravnopravnost rodova, školski materijali, obrazovanje.

Table of contents

1. Introduction

Gender fairness in learning materials seeks to present both male and female characters as complementary members of society (Mustapha, 2013: 455). Textbooks play a crucial role in the process of socializing young learners because they can influence the way learners perceive our society. Young learners are easily influenced by their surroundings, thus it is important not to underestimate the impact textbooks have, after all, textbooks are used in a school environment which they view as authoritative (Mustapha, 2013: 455). Accordingly, a study in the field of gender representation in EFL textbooks used in Croatian elementary schools will provide an insight of what young learners are exposed to on a daily basis, and how this could possibly affect their learning and view of gender roles.

In this research I plan to focus on a narrow area of gender representation in EFL textbooks. For my study I have chosen to take a look at two different textbook series used in Croatian elementary schools. One of the textbook series was written by Croatian authors, the *Way to go plus* series, and the other by an English author, the *Project* series. It will be interesting to see whether there is any difference in gender representation between textbooks written by Croatian authors and those written by English authors. The dialogues, characters and illustrations of the two sets of EFL textbooks were examined and compared.

The results of previous research have shown that, in a number of different textbooks used around the world a male bias existed. Some authors (e.g. Graci, Grossman, et al., as cited in Rifkin, 1998: 218) claim that the non-inclusion of women and girls in teaching materials seriously impairs their ability to learn. According to Mustapha (2013) textbooks can influence the learner's way of thinking about society and gender through the process of language learning, therefore it is crucial to further investigate and analyze gender representation in textbooks.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Gender roles

Gender is not just the difference between having two X chromosomes or having one X and one Y chromosome, which is the basic physical difference between the female and male sex. More often than that it is what society thinks of as being feminine or masculine and their expectations of each person to fit into one of the two categories (Healy, 2009: 2). According to Butler (1990) gender roles are taught from an early age on through interaction with society. Social institutions like schools, family and the media create a learning environment for young learners which teaches them to differentiate between the behavior of boys and girls. They teach young kinds that boys should act strong and independent, while girls should be polite and caring (Holmes, 2009: 3).

From an early age on society tries to force a certain type of behavior on us, putting up rules of what is acceptable for each gender and what is not. As girls we are often told not to run in the school hallways, and as boys not to be overly emotional. By putting up these norms, a child's perspective of what it can and cannot do or become automatically gets limited. Findings like the ones mentioned above motivate researchers to dig deeper and engage in more detailed analysis of the learning environment young learners are exposed to, which includes the learning materials. If the reality of representing the two genders only in certain ways is reflected in the teaching materials, young learners will have a hard time staying motivated and interested in the subject that is taught to them. Therefore, the significance of learning materials and their role in the process of socializing young learners should not be underestimated or taken lightly. Research in the field of gender representation in EFL textbooks can help create a gender neutral learning environment for language learners.

2.2. Gender roles in textbooks

Studies in the field of gender representation in textbooks have highly increased over the years. One of the reasons studies in this area have doubled and are still growing is because government bodies in a number of countries have picked interest in this particular field. This seems as a great support for the United Nations declarations and its human rights programmes that are geared towards bringing about gender equality in and through education for both genders (Mustapha, 2013: 454). Gender equality stands for the same treatment, opportunities and representation of both sexes. It

does not approve of any type of stereotyping or discrimination against a particular sex group. These are the kinds of values that need to be transmitted to young learners in order for them not to limit themselves to what society has predetermined for them.

Another reason why studies in this field are continuing to increase is related to the feminist movement of the 1960s which started as a movement against the oppression of women by society and gender inequality. According to Cameron (1998, as cited in Mustapha, 2013: 455), research in this area was initiated by the feminist movement in the 1960s when their members realised what they could contribute in regards to linguistics. Both genders should be represented as equal members of society, depicting every and any domestic and social role. Therefore, research in the field of gender representation in textbooks is as important as any other. There are a number of studies that prove that gender representation in textbook is still an issue that has to be dealt with in order to create gender equality in learning materials.

As mentioned in the introduction, textbooks are often viewed by learners as authoritative. But learners view teachers as authoritative as well. Next to their parents, teachers play the second most important role in the upbringing and education of young learners. Therefore, the teachers job is to create a learning environment that will teach and convey fundamental values to the learners. Learning values should be an integrated part of all teaching aspects in elementary school education and not an isolated matter (Mustedanagic, 2010: 2).

The basis of every school subject are the learning materials that are presented. Teachers cannot always know how the content of the materials will affect the learners. So, discussing the issues that might arise in class is one way of dealing with a "bad" text. In her study Mustedanagic compares teaching language with building a house. In this analogy the text represents the material we intend to use for building our house. By using bad materials we risk that the house will eventually collapse. Similarly, by using "bad" texts in order to create a textbook one might cause more damage than good (Mustedanagic, 2010: 2).

As previously stated, textbooks are not only a simple tool used by teachers and students in language education. Every time a text is read the reader interprets it in their own way and meaning is immediately being conveyed (Mustedanagic, 2010: 1). Especially with young learners, there is always a great possibility that they will take in everything they read and apply it to the real world.

"A pedestrian definition of representations says that it is simply a rerepresentation of what is real." (Mustapha, 2012a: 250) If this were the case when it comes to gender representation in textbooks, a

lot of it would be represented in a different way. The roles of women have immensely changed throughout the years, yet textbooks seem to have a hard time keeping up with these changes and including them in current EFL textbooks. Certain forms of representation can lead to stereotyping (Mustapha, 2012a: 252). The term stereotype itself carries a rather negative connotation, namely having a certain idea of what is characteristic for a specific group of people and not seeing further from it. So, when a number of stereotypes repeatedly occurs in learning materials, it teaches young learners to do the same type of categorization themselves. They take what they have read in a text or seen in an image and apply it to the real world.

When talking about textbooks as crucial materials in language learning, the question arises whether they should represent the reality or the world that one aspires to live in one day. While there may not be a right or wrong answer to this question, there is always the possibility of handling a given text in a way that will raise awareness of a world that is free of gender bias. This cloud then lead to changing the general attitudes towards gender (Yu, 2013: 56).

Elementary schools are one of the first social institutions a child encounters and they play a crucial role in shaping young minds and creating attitudes towards gender. Nevertheless, according to Au (2004, as cited in Yu, 2013: 2) gender issues in textbooks have always been misperceived as trivial and unimportant because their focus is not on language learning and teaching. However, part of language learning is not only acquiring skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking, but also being introduced to social norms.

3. Previous studies

The position of women in society has considerably changed since the 1960's, thus their representation and portrayal in EFL textbooks should have changed as well. U'Ren (1971, as cited in Hamdan, 2010) carried out one of the earliest studies called *The Image of Women in Text-books*. Her analysis included thirteen textbooks used in California schools, from second to sixth grade. The results have shown that women were mostly portrayed in traditional roles such as cook and cleaner, meanwhile, men were depicted doing a number of different activities.

Gupta and Lee (1990, as cited in Hamdan, 2010) analyzed two series of EFL textbooks used in Singapore primary schools. They found that males were portrayed in a significantly wider range of roles than females. Women centered around the nurturing professions (teacher, nurse) and only one female appeared in the academic domain compared to ten men.

Shteiwi (2003, as cited in Hamdan, 2010) examined the representation of gender roles in ninety six primary school textbooks in Jordan. He found that public roles were largely dominated by men and that women were, presented in traditional female roles such as teaching. Almost no women were depicted in politics or in the professional sectors.

Ansary and Babaii (2003, as cited in Hamdan, 2010) examined two EFL textbooks used in Iranian secondary schools. The occupational roles assigned to females were the stereotypical ones of mother and home-keeper. Males were seen doing different occupations such as drivers, professors, engineers, scientists, etc.

Hamdan and Jalabneh (2009) point out some other studies that have shown male dominance, such as Kalia (1986), Ansary and Babaii (2003) and Sivasligil (2006). All of these studies have discovered that, when it comes to dialogues, men tend to initiate and guide the conversation.

Hamdan (2010) analyzed the representation of jobs in textbooks used in public schools in Jordan, grades one to nine. The results have shown that the female/male ratio of occupations among 15 textbooks was 1:5.87. The results of this study illustrate a tendency toward gender asymmetry in Jordanian EFL texts greater than the gender asymmetry in Jordanian society as a whole.

Dominguez (2003, as cited in Hamdan 2010) analyzed the *New Interchange Introduction* textbook used in Canadian multicultural schools. He states that the roles of men and women appeared to be interchangeable. The author included non-traditional occupations for both female and male

characters: for example, women were doctors, security guards, and judges, while men were receptionists, teachers, and cooks.

As the results of Dominguez's study have shown, some countries are more committed to ensure gender equality in their educational materials and leave out stereotypical character portrayals, while others still fail to do the same. Like Canada, Sweden has a national commitment to gender equity, but Swedish EFL textbooks are far from being free of gender bias (Hamdan, 2010). Holmqvist and Gjörup (2006, as cited in Hamdan, 2010) studied secondary school EFL textbooks used in Sweden. The results have shown that the majority of occupations mentioned were held by men. Women were described either without an occupation or in a stereotypical one.

Sano, et al. (2001) analyzed five series of English textbooks used in Japanese junior high schools. Their study has concluded that gender-imbalanced language has been substantially eliminated from EFL textbooks since 1990. There are no occurrences of gender-biased language such as 'chairman'. The research shows that men are portrayed in major roles while women fill subordinate roles, which was the case in a number of other studies. When it comes to the number of utterances, the genders were equally represented. Female speakers speak more often in some textbooks, whereas male speakers speak more often in other textbooks. The chapter topics also varied, they can be grouped into two groups: female-oriented and male-oriented. In each group, stories and examples feature female and male characters and issues of interest to both female and male students. Although there is no significant imbalance in terms of the number of chapter topics, more males are referred to and engaged in actions.

The roles of men and women have clearly changed through the decades and cannot be labeled as strictly male or female. While this huge change has been made in society and in everyday life, textbook writers have somehow not exactly managed to do the same. Lee and Collins (2006: 32) aimed to find out if gender representation in textbooks has changed with time. They selected twenty English language textbooks (ELT) used in Hong Kong secondary schools. One half of the textbooks was published in the 1980s and 1990s, they were no longer in use at the time the study was conducted. The other half covered the more recently published books that were in use at the time the study was carried out. They concluded that today, a number of textbook writers use various strategies to avoid biased or stereotypical treatment of the two sexes. Some of these strategies are the usage of gender-inclusive terms, alternative pronouns like *he or she* and the representation of women in a wider range of activities and careers beyond stereotypical images. Nevertheless, there is still much room for improvement because women are still commonly associated with housework

and the home, and men with paid work outside. Women are described as weak and more passive, and men as strong and more active. Women are less frequently mentioned than males in both the written and visual form.

Hamdan and Jalabneh (2009: 55) analyzed the conversational units in *Action Pack Series* used in public schools in Jordan. The results have shown that textbooks basically reflect reality, but this is due to the fact that women's stereotype is visible more than men's. To minimize or even remove gender biasness from EFL in *Action Pack Series*, the Ministry of Education is advised to set in advance gender criteria which should be followed by textbook authors. Teachers are asked to analyze students' course books to draw the attention of their students to the defects of these books, mainly, in the domain of male/female conversational topic dominance.

Mustapha (2012b: 72) studied seven textbooks for junior secondary school students and recognized gender biasness against both genders, but biasness toward women was by far more present. He stated that the findings have shown a male dominance and superiority, and female subordination and exclusiveness was suggested.

When comparing the number of times studies have shown underrepresentation or discrimination against women in EFL textbooks, the amount of times men were discriminated against almost seems insignificant. Nevertheless, discrimination against men should not be overlooked, especially when some of the results have shown that males were discriminated against in their representation as those with most of the negative traits (Mukundan and Nimehchisalem 2008, as cited in Mustapha, 2012a).

Mustedanagic (2010: 38) analyzed two textbooks that are used in Swedish secondary schools, *Team 8* (1984) and *Wings 8* (2000). She found that the language in *Wings 8* was more gender neutral, while in *Team 8* it was more gendered (e.g. the usage of words and affixes such as *–man* and *–or*). When it comes to the representation of famous men and women she found that the number of famous men mentioned is larger than the number of famous women. One possible explanation stated by Mustedanagic was that, historically speaking, there are more famous men than women. She then argues that there is a possibility of there being famous historical female figures, but they were simply not selected. As the results have shown *Wings 8* seems to be more gender friendly when it comes to the texts, but the illustrations are still pretty stereotypical. Mustedanagic (2010: 40) explains that using the prototype theory, saying that even though the roles of women in society have changed to a great extent over the years, a number of occupations is still dominated by men, although women are working at the same positions as well. Still the idea of some occupations being

held by men and some by women exists, this being call the gender "prototype". The most obvious "prototype" would be a male lorry driver and a female nurse. This certainly does not mean that women cannot be employed as lorry drivers or men as nurses, but that this is the general understanding introduced to us early on by society. Mustedanagic (2010: 41) concludes that it is not unexpected that textbooks written in the 1980s resemble stereotypical gender roles, but the issue is that these textbooks are still being used in a few schools today.

It has been stated quite a few times that gender bias textbooks can indeed have a huge impact on the students and their learning process. Crawford & English (1984, as cited in Yu, 2013: 12) have discovered that using masculine generic terms like *he* and *man* in teaching materials, helps male students remember information better, even if these terms were not used for male characters only. As would be expected, female students recalled information better when female generic terms were included like *he/she* and *people* because in this case the text spoke to them more. Yu' s (2013) study has shown that gender bias in textbooks still exists (e.g. males involved in physically and intellectually challenging and females in nurturing and caring roles) but, males were more visible in the domestic field and strategies to reduce gender bias were used (e.g. using paired pronouns instead of gender-specific pronoun, using gender-inclusive nouns instead of gender-specific ones). A couple of new strategies aiming to achieve gender balance were also found (e.g. the use of unisex names and pseudonyms).

Baranović, et al. (2010) are one of the very few researchers that have investigated gender representation in Croatian textbooks. Still, their research points out a number of studies that deal with similar issues, such as: the difference in students' perception of teaching subjects in compulsory education (Marušić, 2006), stereotypes about math and physics as a male domain (Arambašić, et al. 2005; Jugović, 2010), gender characteristics of choosing schools and professions (Baranović and Jugović, 2009; Jugović, 2010; Doolan, 2010) and an analysis of the representation of women in literature textbooks (Baranović 2000; Baranović, et al. 2008). Their results indicate that in Croatia, as in most other countries, a lot more attention has to be paid to the national curriculum in order to eliminate gender inequalities. The results also suggest that women are significantly under-represented in textbooks. More specifically, the data showed that men dominate in textbooks as the authors of the texts as well as the characters referred to in the texts and their attachments (Baranović, et al. 2010: 352).

4. Gender Representation in Elementary School EFL Textbooks

4.1. Aims and research questions

This study aims to investigate gender representation in EFL elementary school textbooks used from grade five to eight in Croatia. The research focuses on a smaller part of gender representation, but still hopes to shed some light on the topic at hand. The objective is to examine EFL textbooks used in Croatian elementary schools and raise awareness of gender issues. This research intends to answer the following questions: How and to which extent are the male and female gender represented in Croatian elementary school EFL textbooks? How are males and females represented in terms of visibility, firstness and discourse? What is the difference between gender representation in textbooks written by Croatian authors and those written by English authors?

4.2. Materials

For this research I have chosen to analyze two sets of textbooks, *Way to go plus*, written by Croatian authors (Višnja Anić, Olinka Breka, Maja Mardešić and Biserka Džeba) and *Project*, written by an English author (Tom Hutchinson). Despite being written by different authors, the *Way to go plus* textbooks have almost the same structure. All of the textbooks consist of several units, divided into lessons, containing different texts. The *Project* textbooks have the exact same number of units, lessons and pages. The units of each textbook series have a wide coverage of themes and topics like: family, friends, school, music, problems, shopping, movies, art, sports, technology, traveling, nature, the environment, etc. Croatia has an eight-year elementary school education system, so these textbooks cover ages ten to thirteen.

4.3. Categories and procedure of analysis

Each of the following categories was investigated to determine gender representation in the *Way to go plus* and *Project* textbook series. In each area of investigation the results are given by the number of counts. The results are expressed in percentages. I have mostly focused on quantifiable features for my analysis like visibility, firstness and discourse. The number of female and male characters in dialogues, images, turns and utterances was counted. Textbook themes, themes in dialogues, stereotypes and gender neutral constructions were also analyzed.

1. Visibility

"Visibility refers to the relative numbers of males and females appearing in textbooks..." (Stockdale, 2006: 1) In this category the appearances of men and women in the two sets of textbooks were counted in order to see to which extent each gender was represented.

a. Characters in dialogues

Characters appearing in dialogues were considered in terms of main characters - females and males who are named and given voice, and non-active characters - females and males mentioned or discussed in dialogues. The number of the two types of character was counted individually and later on added up to give an overall percentage of female and male characters in dialogues.

b. Characters in images

Females and males appearing in images were counted by the number of individual people images, two people images and group images. The number of each male and female image was added up and the total number was given. Images which could not be clearly identified as male or female were not considered.

c. Character mentions in texts

The number of female and male characters was counted no matter how many times the character appeared in texts of the unit. Characters with ambiguous names were not counted to avoid bringing the researcher's own assumptions to the analysis. The total number of male and female characters was given in percentages.

d. Textbook themes

Each unit of the textbooks was marked as either male-centered, female-centered or a combination of both genders. The number of units that was either male-centered, female-centered or a combination of both genders was counted and an overall percentage of textbook themes was given.

2. Firstness

This category refers to another area of textbook analysis that has been taken into consideration in this study. Firstness stands for the number of times males or females were presented first in mixed-gender dialogues, initiating the conversation or being the first to express their opinion.

a. Mixed-gender dialogues

The number of females and males starting and initiating the conversation in mixed-gender dialogues was counted and an overall percentage of females and males starting the dialogues was given.

b. Points of view opinions

The number of females and males stating their opinion first in a mixed-gender conversation was counted and an overall percentage of females and males stating their opinion first was given.

3. Discourse

In this category a number of things were examined, such as the amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues, the topics of conversation in dialogues and the domestic and social roles of the textbook characters. A closer look was also taken at gender-neutral language constructions, as well as the stereotypes that occurred in the textbooks.

a. Amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues

The amount of talk by each of the characters in mixed-gender dialogues was calculated by counting the number of words uttered and adding the totals to give an overall percentage of talk by females and males.

b. Topics of conversation in dialogues

Each dialogue in the textbooks was marked as either male-centered, female-centered or a combination of both genders. The number of conversational topics that were either male-centered,

female-centered or a combination of both genders was counted and an overall percentage of topics of conversation in dialogues was given.

c. *Domestic and social roles*

Whenever a domestic or social role came up, it was noted down and placed in a chart which was divided into three categories: male, female and gender not specific. Domestic roles included characters like mother, father, sister, brother, etc. and social roles characters such as teacher, student, actor, doctor, etc.

d. *Gender-neutral constructions*

Every gender-neutral construction that appeared in the textbooks was marked and written down. Whenever a gender-neutral construction could have been used but was not, it was marked and written down as non gender-neutral. The number of gender-neutral and non gender-neutral constructions was listed and compared.

e. *Stereotypes*

Whenever a male or female stereotype occurred in the texts, such as women being represented in traditional nurturing professions and men in academic or public roles, it was written down. Each time a non-stereotypical example, character or behavior appeared, like girls being car mechanics and boys being housekeepers, it was written down as well. The stereotypical and non-stereotypical examples, characters and behaviors were listed and compared.

5. Results

1. Visibility

a. *Characters in dialogues*

Table 1. Gender representation of characters in dialogues.

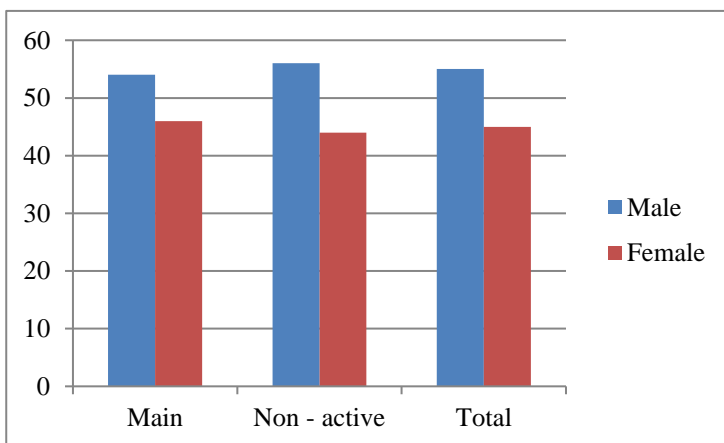| | *Way to go plus* | | | | | *Project* | | | | |
	Both genders	Male App	%	Female App	%	Both genders	Male App	%	Female App	%
Main characters	123	66	54	57	46	126	67	53	59	47
Non-active characters	43	24	56	19	44	34	18	53	16	47
Total	166	90	55	78	45	160	85	53	75	47

Note. App = appearances

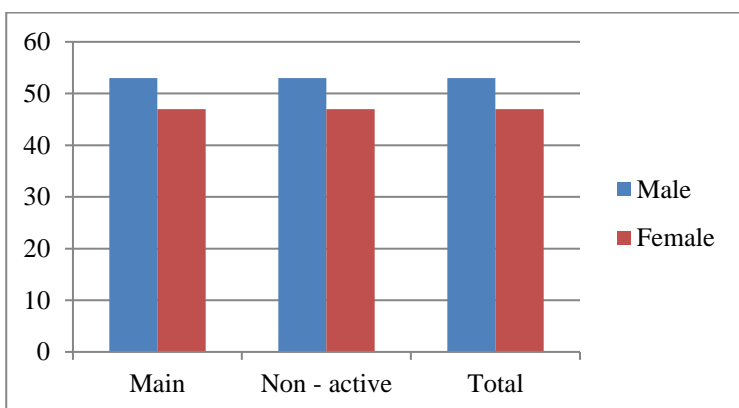Figure 1a Gender representation (characters in dialogues) in *Way to go plus*

Figure 1b Gender representation (characters in dialogues) in *Project*

When speaking about the gender representation of characters in dialogues, the *Way to go plus* series has managed to represent both gender almost equally. As evident from Table 1, the results show that there were 54% male and 46% female main characters; the results for the non-active characters were very similar, 56% male and 44% female. This makes the total of 55% male and 45% female characters in dialogues. The *Project* series shows almost the same results, as can be seen from Table 1. There were 53% male and 47% female main and non-active characters, which makes the exact same total. In both sets of textbooks the gender representation was relatively balanced, though it was slightly more balanced in the *Way to go plus* series.

b. *Characters in images*

Table 2. Gender representation of characters in images.

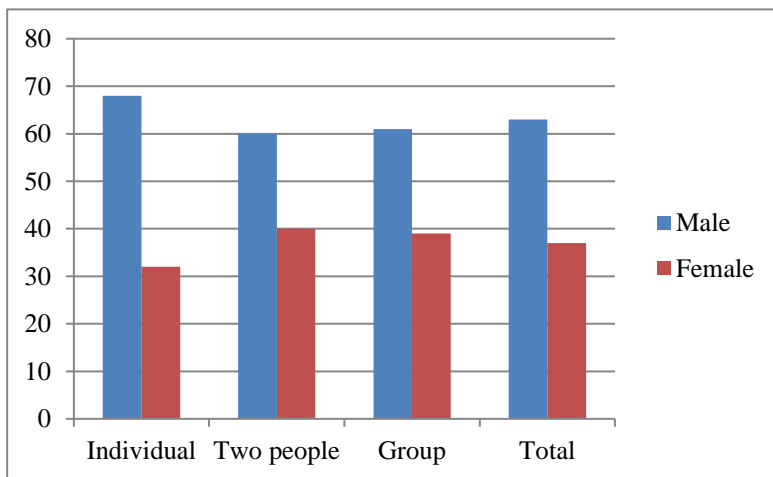| | *Way to go plus* | | | | | *Project* | | | | |
| | Both genders | Male | | Female | | Both genders | Male | | Female | |
		App	%	App	%		App	%	App	%
Individual images	470	319	68	151	32	340	227	67	113	33
Images of 2 people	212	127	60	85	40	362	215	59	147	41
Group images	809	497	61	312	39	595	331	56	263	44
Total	1491	943	63	548	37	1297	773	60	523	40

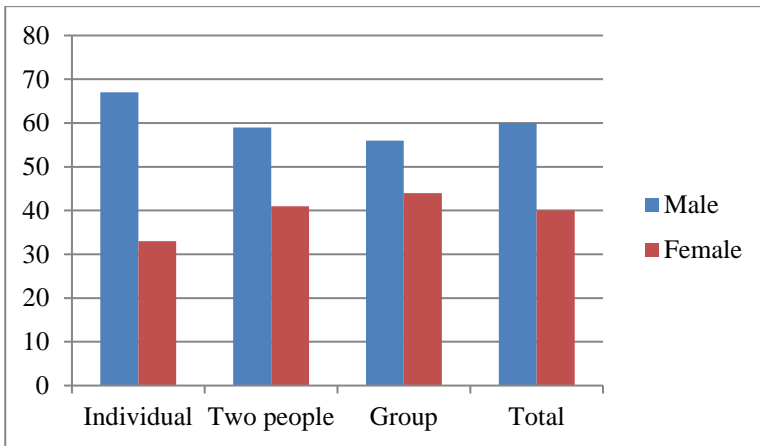Figure 2a Gender representation (characters in images) in *Way to go plus*

Figure 2b Gender representation (characters in images) in *Project*

When looking at the gender representation of characters in images, both textbook series have shown a tendency towards male bias. As shown in Table 2, *Way to go plus* illustrated 68% male and 32% female characters in individual images, 60% male and 40% female characters in images where two people were portrayed, 61% male and 39% female characters in group images. This makes a total of 63% male and 37% female characters in images, which shows that men were made considerably more visible in the illustrations, especially in the individual portrayal. The *Project* series shows again almost the same results, as can be seen from Table 2. There were 67% male and 33% female characters in individual images, 59% male and 41% female characters in images where two people were portrayed, 56% male and 44% female characters in group images. Giving a total of 60% male and 40% female characters in images. Both sets of textbooks have shown a clear tendency towards male bias, though it was slightly less evident in the *Project* series.

c. *Character mentions in texts*

Table 3. Gender representation of character mentions in texts.

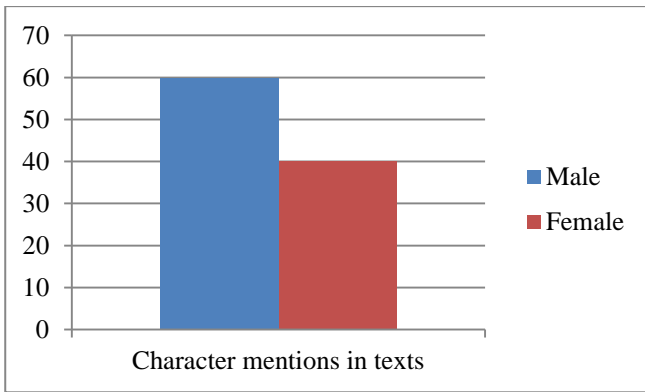|	*Way to go plus*		*Project*	
	App	%	App	%
Male	414	60	311	57
Female	281	40	232	43
Both genders	695	100	543	100

Figure 3a Gender representation (character mentions in texts) in *Way to go plus*
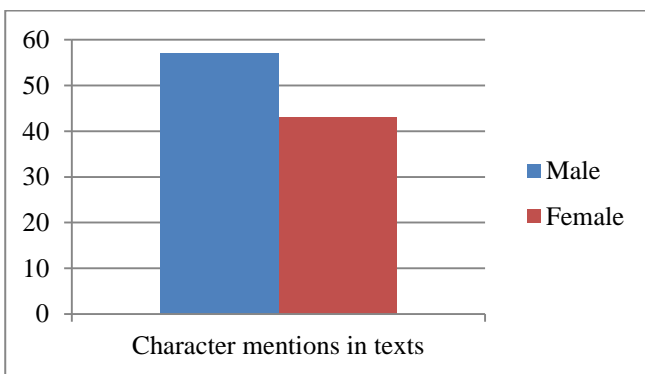

Figure 3b Gender representation (character mentions in texts) in *Project*

When it comes to the character mentions in texts, the results of the two textbook series were again very similar. *Way to go plus* had 60% male and 40% female character mentions, while *Project* had 57% male and 43% female, as illustrated in Table 3. Again, a male bias was clearly visible, a bit less in the *Project* series than in *Way to go plus*.

d. *Textbook themes*

Table 4. Gender representation in textbook themes.

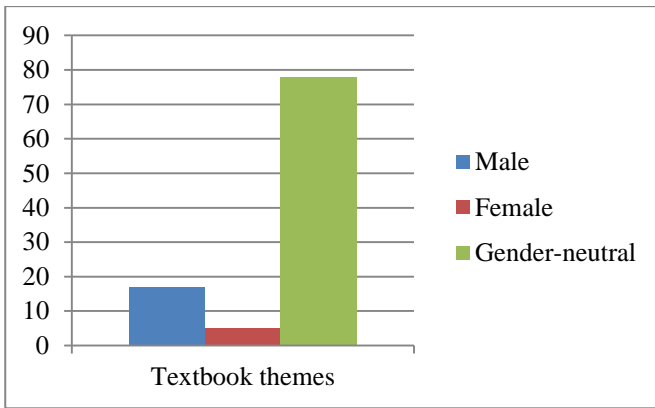| | *Way to go plus* | | *Project* | |
	Number	%	Number	%
Gender-neutral	14	78	25	89
Male	3	17	3	11
Female	1	5	0	0

Figure 4a Gender representation (textbook themes) in *Way to go plus*
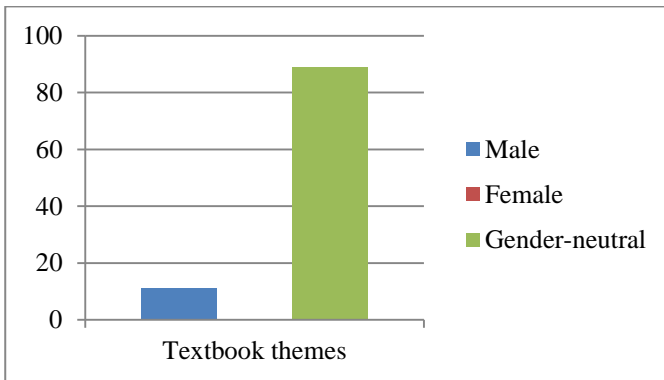

Figure 4b Gender representation (textbook themes) in *Project*

Deciding whether a textbook theme was male-centered, female-centered or gender-neutral was rather difficult, because there is always the possibility that we will base this decision on our own personal experience. As can be seen in Table 4, both textbooks show that the majority of themes was gender-neutral.

2. Firstness

a. Mixed-gender dialogues

Table 5. Gender representation in mixed-gender dialogues.

| | *Way to go plus* | | *Project* | |
	Number	%	Number	%
Male	15	62	24	56
Female	9	38	19	44
Total	24	100	43	100
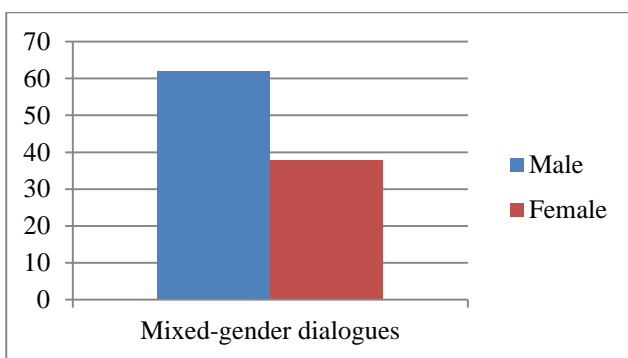
Figure 5a Gender representation (mixed-gender dialogues) in *Way to go plus*
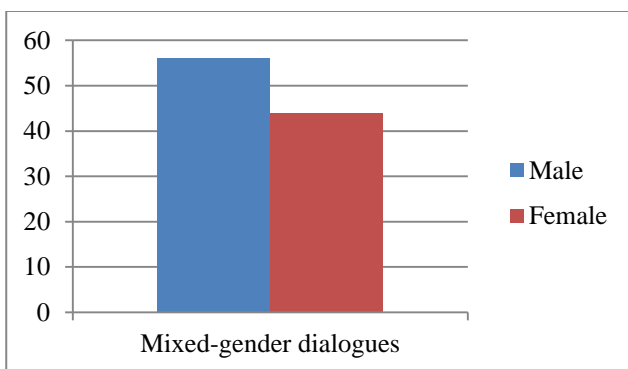
Figure 5b Gender representation (mixed-gender dialogues) in *Project*

The results of the analysis of mixed-gender dialogues have shown that, in both *Project* and *Way to go plus*, men are the ones initiating the conversation and starting the dialogue. In *Way to go plus* this imbalance is more evident, as Table 5 illustrates. The gender-mixed dialogues were 62% started by men and 38% by women. *Project* on the other hand shows a far more balanced distribution, 56% of the characters starting the mixed-gender dialogues were male and 44% female, as evident from Table 5.

b. Point of view opinions

Table 6. Gender representation in point of view opinions.

| | Way to go plus | | Project | |
	Number	%	Number	%
Male	5	71	3	33
Female	2	29	6	67
Total	7	100	9	100
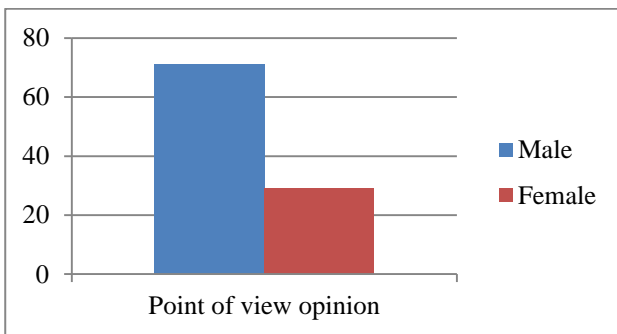
Figure 6a Gender representation (point of view opinions) in *Way to go plus*
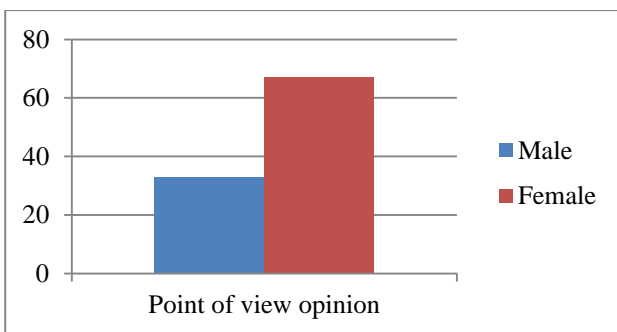
Figure 6b Gender representation (point of view opinions) in *Project*

The results of the analysis have shown a huge difference between the two textbooks when it comes to the point of view opinion. In *Way to go plus* 71% of the first opinion stated in a mixed-gender dialogue was by male characters and 29% by female characters, as can be seen in Table 6. The exact opposite was the case in the *Project* series, where 33% of the first opinion stated in a mixed-gender dialogue was by male characters and 67% by female characters, as can be seen in Table 6. Here we have two extreme cases of male and female gender bias, each represented in different textbooks.

3. Discourse

a. Amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues

Table 7. Gender representation in the amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues.

| | *Way to go plus* | | *Project* | |
	Words	%	Words	%
Male	1708	56	3326	54
Female	1334	44	2839	46
Total	3042	100	6165	100

Figure 7a Gender representation (amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues) in *Way to go plus*

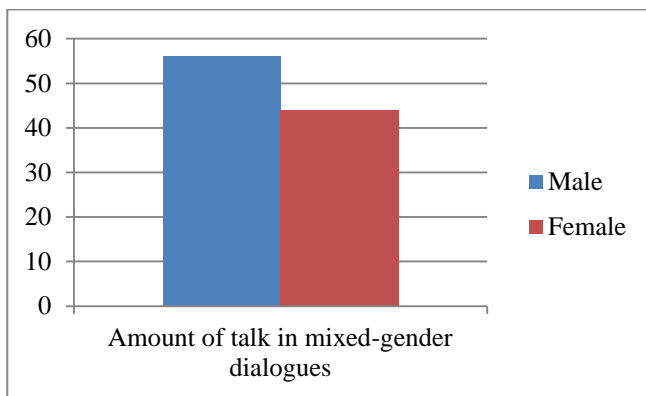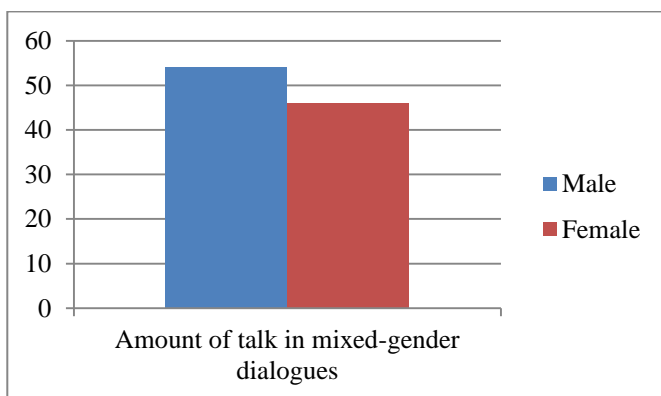
Figure 7b Gender representation (amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues) in *Project*

When speaking about the amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues, both textbooks have managed to balance the amount of talk between the two genders. As evident from Table 7, the results show that 56% of the amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues has been uttered by male characters and 44% by female characters in *Way to go plus*. The results for the *Project* series were very similar, 54% of the amount of talk in mixed-gender dialogues has been uttered by male characters and 46% by female characters, as can be seen in Table 7. In both sets of textbooks the amount of utterances was almost equally distributed, though it was slightly more balanced in the *Project* series.

b. Topics of conversations in dialogues

Table 8. Gender representation in topics of conversations in dialogues.

| | *Way to go plus* | | *Project* | |
	Number	%	Number	%
Gender-neutral	30	62	36	86
Male	10	21	5	12
Female	8	17	1	2
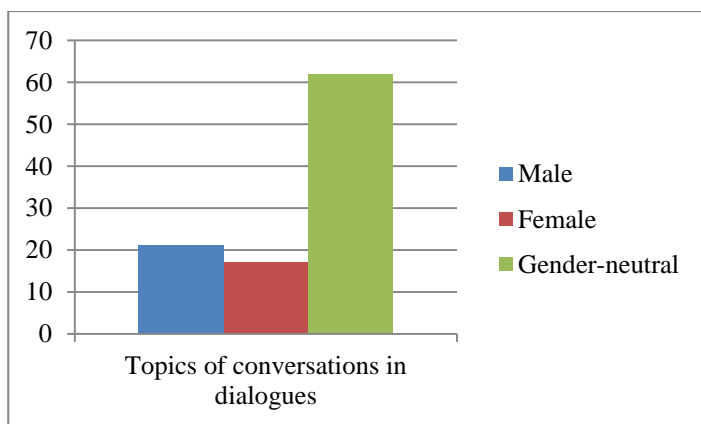
Figure 8a Gender representation (topics of conversation in dialogues) in *Way to go plus*
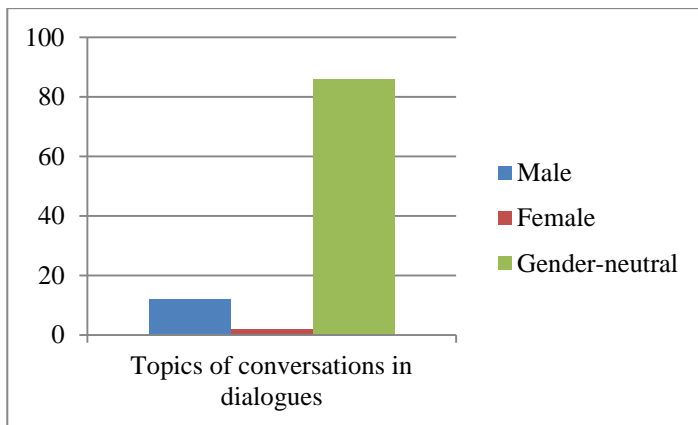
Figure 8b Gender representation (topics of conversation in dialogues) in *Project*

As previously mentioned, deciding whether a textbook theme or topic of conversation in dialogues was male-centered, female-centered or gender-neutral was rather challenging. It is evident from Table 8 that both textbooks show that the majority of topics in dialogues was gender-neutral.

c. *Domestic and social roles*

Table 9. Representation of gender in domestic and social roles.

Gender	*Way to go plus*	*Project*
Male	Father, grandfather, brother, uncle, researcher, doctor, dentist, TV reporter, taxi driver, mechanic, boyfriend, skier, programmer, writer, cook, postman/officer, baby-sitter, actor, prince, king, husband, neighbour, teacher, host, inspector, ZOO director, street vendor, medical student, sport champion.	Father, grandfather, brother, actor, policeman/officer, DJ, uncle, detective, rocket man, TV reporter, tailor, hero, shopkeeper, formula one driver, mountain climber, paramedic, firefighter, manager, husband, engineer, toy maker, officer, mechanic.

Female	Mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, doctor, dentist, student mechanic, TV reporter, secretary, nurse, singer, teacher, scuba diver, saleswoman.	Mother, grandmother, sister, teacher, waitress, aunt, detective, wife, heroine, manager, secretary, actress, receptionist, toy maker, photographer, film director, ticket clerk.
Unknown	Researcher, doctor, TV reporter, veterinarian, postman/officer, architect, singer, basketball player, policeman, painter, clown, musician, teacher, athlete, host, knight, orphan, counselor, social worker, psychologist, archaeologist.	DJ, interviewer, professor, TV reporter, painter, doctor, secretary, lorry driver, pilot, architect, veterinarian, engineer, flight attendant, nurse, chef, electrician, bricklayer, cleaner.

In *Way to go plus* men were mostly portrayed in traditional roles like father, brother, TV reporter, doctor, etc. There were only a few untraditional roles occupied by men such as baby-sitter and teacher. In the case of a male baby-sitter it should be pointed out that the scenario was that of the older brother staying at home and looking after his younger brother, as opposed to a real baby-sitter job which is known to be very popular amongst young women. The occupation of a male teacher was a unique case that only occurred one time, contrary to the five times a woman has been portrayed as a teacher, which again counts as a more traditional female occupation. The roles that were essentially occupied by women were traditional ones like mother, grandmother, sister, teacher, etc. Only a few roles were untraditional ones such as mechanic, doctor and scuba diver, all of them appearing only once. When it comes to the gender unknown roles there was a number of different positions like TV reporter, researcher, singer, host, etc. In *Project,* men were portrayed in traditional roles like father, brother, TV reporter, policeman/officer, etc. There were no untraditional roles occupied by men. The roles that were essentially occupied by women were traditional ones like mother, grandmother, waitress, receptionist etc. As opposed to men not being portrayed in any untraditional roles, women were represented in several occupations not typical for females, some of them were detective, manager, toy maker, film director etc. When it comes to the gender unknown roles there was a number of different positions like DJ, TV reporter, professor, doctor, etc.

d. Gender-neutral constructions

The gender-neutral constructions that have been noticed in the *Project* series were: police officer, heroes/heroines, waiter/waitress, firefighter and flight attendant. In the *Way to go plus* series there were hardly any examples of gender-neutral constructions, the only one found was the term post officer. There were, however, missed opportunities where gender-neutral constructions could have been used instead of the gendered ones. These examples will be elaborated in the fallowing discussion part of the paper.

e. Stereotypes

Table 10. Representation of gender and stereotypes in *Way to go plus*.

Way to go plus			
Male Stereotypes	Non-stereotypes	Female Stereotypes	Non-stereotypes
- having only male friends	- liking languages	- having a cat as a pet	- liking computer games
- having a dog as a pet	- working in the garden	- described as beautiful, pretty, lovely, shy	- rapping
- acting like typical boys	- being tidy	- being bad at math and good at languages	- not carrying for girl stuff
- liking action and violence	- going to the supermarket	- disliking computer games	- being a doctor
- being good at math	-being a baby-sitter	- cooking in the kitchen	- interested in UFOs
- interested in UFOs	- not eating meat	- drinking tea and being a lady	- being very active
- being untidy	- cooking	- liking the color pink and Barbies	- described as brave
- playing extreme sports	- housekeeping	- being tidy	- interested in history and time travel
- being a computer wizard		- skipping rope	- liking sights and buildings
- being a sports champion		- loving Latino dances	- delivering newspapers
- having typical male jobs (scientist, astronaut, doctor, etc.)		- cleaning	- mountain climbing
- washing the car and watching TV		- having the job of being a mum	- washing the car
- being portrayed as a villain		- having typical female jobs (nurse, secretary, teacher, etc.)	- interested in advertising, computers and car mechanics

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- described as handsome and clever
- disliking fairy tales
- given as examples for famous people
- hating school
- being into sports (bmx, football, etc.)
- wanting to watch an action movie

- liking fairy tales
- female robot cleaner
- collecting dolls
- having a female best friend
- going shopping
- doing less dangerous sports
- more polite than boys
- talking about boys
- being saved by men
- wanting to watch a comedy romance

Table 11. Representation of gender and stereotypes in *Project*.

		Project	
Male Stereotypes	Non-stereotypes	Female Stereotypes	Non-stereotypes
- owning typical boy stuff - given as examples for famous people - character named Smart Alec - portrayed as a detective solves a crime - playing sports - being bullies		- disliking math - character named Sweet Sue - being tired from house work - playing video games (virtual soap opera) - defending herself by throwing a shoe - disliking sports	- being portrayed as a villain - given as examples for famous people - liking sports

The tables above illustrate stereotypical and non-stereotypical behavior in both the *Way to go plus* and *Project* series. As evident from tables 10 and 11, more stereotypes have been found in the *Way to go plus* series than in the *Project* series. The same goes for the non-stereotypical behavior. In *Way to go plus*, table 10, male characters were mostly portrayed as "typical boys", involved in sports, liking action and danger, described as handsome and clever, etc. Female characters, on the other hand, were often portrayed as "typical girls", enjoying shopping, described as beautiful and

shy, doing the cooking and cleaning, etc. When talking about the non-stereotypical behavior of male and female characters found in *Way to go plus*, male characters were put in positions like baby-sitter, housekeeping, working in the garden, being a non-meat eater, etc. Although it should be mentioned that there were only a few instances where male characters were put in untraditional actions and roles. Female characters were found in a greater number of non-stereotypical descriptions like: not caring for girl stuff, delivering newspapers, interested in advertising, computers and car mechanics, doing extreme sports, etc. At the same time, comparing the stereotypical and non-stereotypical female behavior, it is obvious that the stereotypes still dominate. In the *Project* series, table 11, only a couple of male stereotypes were spotted such as: male characters named after their characteristic (Smart Alec), playing sports, being bullies, etc. No non-stereotypical portrayal of a male character was found. As for the female characters, they were mostly described as disliking math, female characters named after their characteristic (Sweet Sue), playing soap opera video games, etc. Some of the non-stereotypical actions and roles were the portrayal of a female villain and being involved in sports.

6. Discussion

The results of the analysis show that gender bias exists in elementary school EFL textbooks used in Croatia, in textbooks written by Croatian as well as by English authors. In both *Way to go plus* and *Project* a male bias was discovered, although not being as obvious in all of the categories analysed. When it comes to the visibility, both textbook series represented male and female characters in dialogues almost equally. The same cannot be said for the characters represented in images and the character mentions in texts, where a clear male bias was found. Since the textbooks that were analysed are meant to target young learners, it is of great importance to balance out the gender representation in images, because they are the first thing young learners see and notice. Of no less importance are the character mentions in texts, because seeing a variety of different male and female characters is the thing that keeps learners interested in the subject and motivates them for the further learning process. A good example of keeping the content of the textbooks as non gender bias as possible are the textbook themes, which were not easily classified as strictly male or female. Most of them were very hard to determine, so they ended up being marked as gender-neutral.

When talking about firstness, the general thinking that males are more active and females more passive turned out to be the case in mixed-gender dialogues. For the most part, males were the first ones to start the conversation in mixed-gender dialogues, especially in the *Way to go plus* series. The only time the analysis has shown extreme cases of both male and female gender bias, each time in a different textbooks series, was in the point of view opinions stated in mixed-gender dialogues. The surprising thing to be discovered here was not the fact that *Way to go plus* showed an extreme male bias, as that was the case in many of the previous studies, but that *Project* has shown the same extant of female bias, which was not often the case, if at all.

When we look at the category discourse and the amount of talk, it is evident that both textbook series have shown a fair amount of male and female utterances in mixed-gender dialogues. This indicates that the statements exchanged between the speakers had the same relevance, regardless of the gender of the characters. As far as the topics of conversation go, most topics discussed in mixed-gender dialogues were gender-neutral. By keeping the conversational topics as gender-neutral as possible, a more gender friendly learning environment is created. This reduces the possibility of learners creating a gender bias way of thinking at a very young age.

In both textbook series males and females were mostly portrayed in traditional domestic and social roles, as evident form table 9 presented in the results. In *Way to go plus* a few untraditional male

and female roles were spotted, while in *Project* there were no untraditional male roles, but there was a number of untraditional female roles. When it comes to the job of the baby-sitter, as previously mentioned in the results, the scenario was that of the bigger brother taking care of the younger one. This shows us the portrayal of a young male person in a typical role of a young female person, but because it is the case of two siblings it barely counts as a job.

Looking at the gender-neutral constructions in the two textbook series, the author of the *Project* series turned out to have put more of an effort to use such constructions than the *Way to go plus* authors. Amongst these constructions discovered in the *Project* series, previously stated in the results, it is interesting to note that the term waiter/waitress has been used to refer to a female character, so the term waitress could have been used on its own. The author nevertheless decided to use both terms, which projects a non gender bias approach of language use. The term heroes/heroines was used to refer to both males and females, the term firefighter was used for a male character instead of the gender bias term fireman, the term flight attendant was used for a character whose gender remained unknown. Both policeman and police officer were terms used in the textbook series, both times referring to a male person. Although the author could have stuck with the more gender friendly construction police officer throughout the whole textbook series, it shows that an effort was made to create more gender-neutral language. In *Way to go plus* both post officer and postman were used, both times referring to a person whose gender remained unknown. Terms like actor were found in the textbooks referring to a male character. Although it was accurate to use the term actor in the context given, it would have been more gender friendly if both actor/actress were given in order not to exclude one gender entirely. The term policeman has been found as well, referring to a character whose gender remained unknown. In this case it would have been necessary to have used the term police officer, because we do not know for sure whether the character was male or female. Such constructions and usage of terms leads us to think that the authors of the *Way to go plus* series paid little to no attention to provide their learners with learning materials that are free of gender bias.

When taking into consideration the number of famous people talked about in the textbooks, both textbook series focused mostly on male personalities. In *Way to go plus* there were no famous women mentioned at all, while in the *Project* there were a few, but not half as many as males. This could be due to the fact that, historically speaking, there were more famous men than women, or, there were famous women at that period of time, but they simply were not chosen to be mentioned.

In both textbook series there were some ambiguous statements, examples and questions given, that were left open for discussion when it comes to gender bias and inequality. In *Way to go plus* a statement was given that there were more Barbie dolls than Ken dolls, followed by the question whether Ken dolls were meant for girls or boys. Another statement provided was that a girl in distress, a prince and a wolf are the most popular fairy tale characters, followed by the question whether one would like to marry a king, indicating a happy ending for girls. There was also a list of definitions provided for certain nouns, e.g. wife - has a husband, at the same time there was the noun king which was not explained with its female counterpart (king - has a queen) but as the ruler of a country. All of these examples above make us think that the way girls and women are viewed by society is very one-dimensional. Girls playing with dolls recreating a family and a home, is the only thing women are supposed to care for and not aspire to do anything more in their lives. Women always being portrayed as the ones needing help and being rescued by a man, men always being seen as either the hero or the villain, not showing any kind of weakness, these are the most common traits and characteristics associated with each gender. Females being defined by their male counterparts, and men being the ones actually having and serving a certain purpose in society. All of these things listed above send exactly that massage that is not supposed to be sent to young learners. In *Project* there were not as many statements that seemed gender bias, the one that was discovered was that in Britain flowers are usually only given to women, indicating that men do not need such kind of affection. When addressing the gender of animals, it is interesting to note that in the *Way to go plus* series all animals were referred to using the gender-neutral pronoun *-it*, while in the *Project* series certain animals were referred to using the male and others using the female pronouns (e.g. rabbit *-she*, dog *-he*, hamster *-he*). Another difference noticed between the two sets of textbooks was that in *Way to go plus*, when talking about what the future will look like, an illustration of a female cleaning robot was given, while in *Project* the gender of the cleaning robot was neutral.

As already mentioned previously in this research, young learners are very easily influenced by their environment and the things they are exposed to, so authors of textbooks should carefully consider what materials they decide to include in their textbooks and how it will affect the students. At the same time teacher should be prepared and able to discuss such ambiguous subjects in class with their students, to see exactly how they feel about it and to make sure everyone is feeling included. On the plus side, there were some examples of statements and tasks found in the *Way to go plus* series that indicate a more conscious approach to gender and equality. One example would be the marking of physical activities with the color pink and creative ones with the color blue in. This is a

great example of breaking a very common stereotypical pattern related to the association of colors like pink with girls and blue with boys. Physical activities are as well more often associated with males and creative ones with females, which makes this such a great example of breaking stereotypical patterns on more than one level. Small changes in learning materials can indeed contribute to changing a childes perspective of the world and of themselves. The statements 'Do not judge a person by their gender, but by their work' and 'A household where males and females share the work, children are more open to different jobs' are other excellent examples of materials containing contents that create a good learning environment. An example of a task that should raise awareness of stereotyping and gender inequality and encourage a discussion amongst the learners would be the following:

TASK: true or false

Girls do more house work
Boys have more freedom
Girls are better people
Boys are better at sports
Boys are better at math and physics
Girls are better at languages
Girls are more polite
Boys get better jobs
Girls are not often managers
Boys have more free time
Boys do not help much at home
Girls think family is important
Girls spend more money
Girls are not as fast as boys
Girls study more
Girl's parents worry more
Boys do not have to do work around the house

This type of task tackles gender stereotypes and makes the student think about them in a more critical way. The textbook series *Project* also provided a study that showed the reading habits of boys and girls, here are some of the findings:

A study showed that:

Girls read more than boys
Boys watch more TV than girls
Girls read fiction
Boys like books that have a movie adaptation
Girls read magazines
Boys read comics

Including these types of studies in textbooks can also help raise awareness of common gender stereotypes and issues. Such findings can later on be discussed in the classroom and the learners can state their own opinions and views of the topic. Generally, textbooks should not contain gender-based messages, but awareness should be raised amongst students, teachers, and textbook authors on how to create a more gender friendly learning environment for young learners.

7. Conclusion

The present study shows that gender bias in elementary school EFL textbooks used in Croatia exists, both in textbooks written by Croatian as well as by English authors. As a number of previous studies have already shown, a male bias in categories such as visibility, firstness and discourse was discovered. Males were represented to a higher extant than females in most of the aspects analyzed, although it should be pointed out that there were only a couple of instances where the representation of males was significantly more evident. Both male and female characters were portrayed in mostly traditional domestic and social roles, with only a few exceptions found in each of the two textbook series analyzed. A couple of gender-neutral constructions were found in the *Project* series, the same was not the case in the *Way to go plus* series, where hardly any gender-neutral constructions could be found. Stereotypical character portrayal was evident in both textbook series, although more of them were present in the *Way to go plus* series than in the *Project* series. Overall, there are no significant differences between EFL textbook written by Croatian authors and those written by English authors. Both textbook series have shown a slight male gender bias, except for the category point of view opinions in the *Project* series which showed a clear female dominance. Even though the *Project* series has shown a somewhat more balanced gender representation and the author has made an effort to make the language more gender neutral, both textbook series have room for improvement. This study is yet another indicator of gender inequality being present in learning materials used in elementary schools. Although the results have shown only a slight gender imbalance, textbook authors should still take into consideration some ways and methods of creating more gender sensitive educational materials.

8. Practical and methodological implications

Both textbook series analyzed in this research have shown some great examples of tasks that tackle gender stereotypes and encourage young learners to develop a more critical way of thinking. From including some ambiguous statements to presenting results of studies carried out on male and female behavior, all of these are a great way to open up a discussion in class about common gender issues. In their 2001 research Sano, et al. suggested changing roles and blind reading as classroom activities that could be used to neutralize gender bias. By changing roles we enable kids to take on another person's perspective, e.g. if a dialogues is between a boy and a girl, let the male part be read by a girl and the female part by a boy. The act of blind reading lets the kids make their own assumptions of the textbook characters, leaving out the gender of the characters gives them the opportunity to break free from the previously established view of men and women. These are only a couple of examples and suggestions on how to improve the quality of learning materials used for teaching young learners. There are of course a number of areas that still need to be brought forward and discussed.

9. Further research

The present study covered only a small area of gender representation in textbooks, a lot of questions still remain unanswered and can serve as a basis for further research. When talking about the way teachers go about gender-biased materials or texts a number of previous studies have mentioned the talk around the text (Mustapha, 2013). Meaning that there are no bad materials or texts, it all depends on what the teacher does with it. This again raises questions of how exactly teachers deal with gender bias in textbooks in a classroom environment, not only what could be done but what indeed is done. It would be interesting as well as extremely helpful to investigate the teacher talk around the text, as it would provide actual examples of how to deal with gender bias materials in a classroom. Another aspect that should be taken into consideration is teacher training, i.e. how to prepare young teachers in their early teaching stages to properly deal with such issues. There are a number of other teaching materials apart from textbooks that can be analyzed like handbooks, workbooks, etc. The parents view of gender issues is also something that could be investigated in order to get some feedback, which could than help textbook authors in gathering and preparing new learning materials. When mentioning the textbook authors it would also be crucial to find out how the two genders are represented in textbooks written by a male, a female and a group of mixed-gender authors, to see whether there is any difference in the selection and compiling of the textbook materials. These are only some suggestions of areas that could be investigated in the field of gender representation. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, research in the area of gender representation is still growing and there is more to be expected in the future.

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11. Appendix

Table used for noting domestic roles found in *Way to go plus* and *Projct*:

Domestic roles	Way to go plus	Project
Mother	22	7
Father	18	6
Grandmother	13	3
Grandfather	2	1
Sister	14	1
Brother	12	3
Aunt	2	2
Uncle	4	2
Wife	2	1
Husband	3	1

Table used for noting social roles found in *Way to go plus* and *Projct* (divided into male and female):

Social roles	Way to go plus		Project	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Actor	2	/	1	/
Actress	/	/	/	1
Prince	1	/	/	/
King	4	/	/	/
Boyfriend	2	/	/	/
Wizard	2	/	/	/
Saleswoman	/	1	/	/
Waitress	/	/	/	1
Hero	/	/	1	/
Heroine	/	/	/	1

Table used for noting social roles found in *Way to go plus* and *Projct* (divided into male, female and unknown):

Social roles	Way to go plus			Project		
	Male	Female	Unknown	Male	Female	Unknown
Teacher	1	5	1	/	1	/
Doctor	7	1	1	/	/	1
Veterinarian	/	/	1	/	/	1
TV reporter	5	1	4	2	/	2
Architect	/	/	1	/	/	1
Nurse	/	3	/	/	/	1
Mechanic	1	1	/	1	/	/
Policeman/officer	/	/	1	2	/	/
Painter	/	/	1	/	/	1
Secretary	1	/	/	/	1	1
Researcher	1	/	6	/	/	/

Table used for noting social roles found only in *Way to go plus* (divided into male, female and unknown):

Social roles	Way to go plus		
	Male	Female	Unknown
Dentist	2	1	/
Taxi driver	1	/	/
Programmer	1	/	/
Writer	2	/	/
Cook	2	/	/
Postman/officer	1	/	1
Baby-sitter	1	/	/
Singer	/	1	2
Basketball player	/	/	1
Clown	/	/	1
Musician	/	/	1
Neighbour	2	/	/
Athlete	/	/	1
Host	1	/	2
Inspector	2	/	/
Student	/	1	/
Knight	3	/	/
Orphan	/	/	1
Skier	1	/	/

Social roles			
Scuba diver	/	1	/
Counsellor	/	/	1
Social worker	/	/	1
Psychologist	/	/	1
ZOO director	1	/	/
Street vendor	1	/	/
Medical student	1	/	/
Archaeologist	/	/	1
Sport champion	1	/	/

Table used for noting social roles found only in *Project* (divided into male, female and unknown):

Social roles	Project		
	Male	Female	Unknown
DJ	2	/	1
Detective	1	1	/
Interviewer	/	/	1
Professor	/	/	2
Rocket man	1	/	/
Tailor	1	/	/
Shopkeeper	1	/	/
Formula one driver	1	/	/
Mountain climber	1	/	/
Paramedic	1	/	/
Firefighter	1	/	/
Manager	1	1	/
Waiter/waitress	/	1	/
Receptionist	/	1	/
Lorry driver	/	/	1
Pilot	/	/	1
Flight attendant	/	/	1
Engineer	1	/	1
Chef	/	/	1
Electrician	/	/	1
Bricklayer	/	/	1
Cleaner	/	/	1
Toy maker	1	1	/
Photographer	/	1	/
Film director	/	1	/
Officer	1	/	/
Ticket clerk	/	1	/