Gender Representation and Sexism in International Language Coursebooks for Tertiary Education

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ABSTRACT

Socialization agents, such as family and education, are central to shaping gender norms through social interactions and role modeling. Language coursebooks function as powerful instruments for incorporating gender perspectives into education. To be effective, these materials must move beyond stereotypes and foster inclusive learning experiences. This study aims to uncover gender imbalances and implicit sexism in coursebooks. Using qualitative content analysis, two sets of tertiary-level language coursebooks from reputable publishers were examined. Analyzing occupational activities, adjectives, sports, crime, and household roles, findings revealed consistent underrepresentation and stereotypes of gender. These results highlight the need for a thorough review of educational materials to ensure equitable representation. To address this issue, a three-stage critical approach is proposed, engaging teachers in refining coursebooks for inclusivity, aligning lesson objectives with gender-sensitive perspectives, and critically evaluating instructional components. By actively adapting materials, educators can mitigate gender bias, fostering a more inclusive classroom environment that promotes gender equality and broader social change.

A coursebook integrates instructional content, learning activities, and practice exercises, and it is designed to foster skills development while incorporating a blend of different media formats (Fuchs & Henne, 2018). Given the substantial impact coursebooks have on shaping learning, this study examines the representation of genders in English language teaching coursebooks used at tertiary level education. It focuses on analyzing the depiction of both genders in relation to the attribution of occupations, societal roles, personality traits, and overall visibility. This examination is essential because education and society have a symbiotic relationship: education influences individuals to conform to societal norms, while societal biases, in turn, shape educational content (Cunningsworth, 1995; Foucault, 1980). Consequently, understanding these representations can help address potential biases and promote a balanced educational environment. Before proceeding to examine this relationship, it is important to distinguish the

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meaning of gender and sex by clarifying and separating these terms, as they refer to two related but different concepts. This clarification ensures a more precise understanding of how gender is a socially constructed concept and highlights the importance of identifying and challenging biases in gender portrayals in educational materials. To distinguish between the terms, biological or anatomical differences between men and women are generally classified as "sex," whereas social, cultural, and psychological differences between the sexes are referred to as "gender" (Giddens, 2005). Gender, therefore, is a complex and multidimensional construct rooted in biological sex, serving to distinguish the varied expectations, responsibilities, and roles assigned to individuals within society (Oliffe & Greaves, 2011). Craig (1992) argues that gender differences are learned rather than innate, with cultural influences being the driving force behind supposedly "natural" gender differences. In a similar vein, Wood and Fixmer-Oraiz (2018) emphasize the imperative role of education in constructing gender identity and upholding traditional gender norms. This perspective suggests that masculinity and femininity are products of patriarchal societies (Craig, 1992) that are transmitted and reinforced through various means, including language. As a complex construct, language not only reflects but also shapes societal norms, with speakers' linguistic choices, directly impacting recipients' cognitive perceptions (Menegatti & Rubini, 2017). For instance, the generic use of "he" (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002) evokes a male image, thereby perpetuating the idea of females as what De Beauvoir (1949) famously termed "the second sex." This perpetuation of sexist language and lack of female representation may contribute to women's underrepresentation and could potentially discourage their pursuit of male-dominated fields. Thus, language serves as a means of transmitting and perpetuating societal biases, shaping perspectives on gender roles and opportunities. This influence of language on societal perceptions extends to educational materials as well, where the content of coursebooks plays a crucial role in shaping learners' understanding of gender roles.

Given the widely accepted credibility of textbooks, their pervasive status as reliable sources of information becomes particularly significant, as their content is often unquestioningly accepted as accurate by learners (Skliar, 2007). For many teachers in various settings, the coursebook is the primary resource for teaching a course (Richards, 2022). Considering this essential function in foreign language education, it is important to analyze coursebooks from different angles, especially with regard to the gender-related values they explicitly and implicitly convey, including gender roles, stereotypes and possible promotion of sexism. Through the visuals, examples, reading texts, discussion questions and activities, students are exposed to conventional gender forms, which bear the potential to influence their mindsets in various ways (Kollmayer et al., 2018). Consequently, norms shape the attitudes and beliefs of both learners and teachers, potentially reinforcing the internalization of fossilized gender roles as well (Berenbaum et al., 2008). By presenting linguistic models with a bias toward male representation (e.g., "he" before "she," "brothers and sisters," "men and women," male names before female names) and by underrepresenting women, coursebooks may implicitly portray women as less important and perpetuate gender imbalances (Lee, 2014). Promoting the superiority of one gender over the other in terms of how much and in what ways they are represented can lead to a biased development of learners' perceptions of gender and their roles in society (Hall, 2014).

In many educational contexts, particularly in expanding circle countries such as Türkiye (Kachru, 1990), coursebooks serve as more than just instructional materials; they also provide authentic input and activities through which language is practiced. Grounded in both practical and theoretical foundations, the present study seeks to address two key objectives. The first is to highlight the cultural tendency to disregard gender inequality in diverse life aspects within the study's context, and the second is to establish criteria for addressing gender representation in material design and assessment. To that end, this study scrutinizes how English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks used at the tertiary level in Türkiye portray genders. It examines the allocation of occupations, roles in relationships, personality traits, and overall visibility to determine if any biased, unfair and discriminatory positions are attributed to male and female characters. Upon reviewing the coursebooks, it has been noted that the themes and central topics structuring the units can be classified into specific categories. Prior research in the field has explored four of these categories extensively. This study introduces crime attribution as a category, shedding light on the neglected link between criminal activity and gender portrayals. Two widely used foreign language coursebooks in Türkiye, Face2Face (Set A) by Cambridge University Press and Speakout (Set B) by Pearson Education, were examined through content analysis to assess their linguistic content for potential reinforcement of unfair or discriminatory gender portrayals.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Construction of Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Various disciplines provide different explanations for gender construction, including biology, psychology, anthropology, and others. These perspectives have led to the development of theories that are based on various developmental aspects, often with a focus on early childhood.

One of the initial theories of gender construction, Freudian theory, suggests unintentional and biologically driven gender development (Person & Ovesey, 1983), which is criticized for its male-centric focus and lack of empirical support. In contrast, social learning theory emphasizes the impact of social practices and observation on behavior modeling (Bandura, 1977), highlighting observable behavior through interventions. Bandura (1977) suggests that children learn gender roles through a variety of direct and indirect interactions in their environment.

Cognitive developmental theory, distinct from social learning, views gender construction as linked to cognitive maturity in children (Kohlberg, 1966). In contrast, Bem's (1983) gender schema theory suggests that cognitive categorization of gender concepts is shaped by environmental learning, aligning behaviors with societal norms. However, these theories have been criticized for not fully encompassing gender identity due to their omission of discourse, power, language, performance, and societal norms. Criticizing these earlier theories, Butler (1990) offers a poststructuralist perspective, arguing that gender is not a fixed identity but a recurring enactment of norms that shape its essence. Eckert and Ginet (2003) reinforce this perspective by asserting that power-laden norms and customs are internalized unconsciously, thereby perpetuating broader societal structures (Eckert & Ginet, 2003). Butler further contends

that gender is a "performance" manifested through actions, gestures, and speech, which together create the illusion of a stable identity. Her view emphasizes the role of power in enforcing these performances of gender. This perspective fundamentally challenges traditional gender roles while advocating for greater equality and inclusivity. Consequently, the concept of gender performativity, as articulated by Butler (1990), serves as the theoretical foundation for the present study. By examining gender representations in coursebooks, this study critically evaluates the balance and visibility of gender portrayals, as well as the reinforcement or subversion of traditional roles and norms. Through this analysis, the study seeks to uncover the underlying dynamics of gender construction within educational materials and to propose pathways for fostering more equitable and nuanced representations.

Construction of Gender Roles through Language Coursebooks

Coursebooks, extensively employed tools in language instruction (Henderson et al., 2012), serve as reference materials and practice aids. While English coursebooks are typically evaluated for language elements, their role in shaping learners' perceptions of self and others can be overlooked. Despite being specifically designed for language teaching, coursebooks inherently convey cultural messages while constituting complex cultural artifacts (Gray, 2000). They convey extensive modeling elements by portraying individuals in diverse contexts and illustrating communication styles. Consequently, learners encounter ideological contents, values, behaviors, and gender depictions through reading passages, images, example sentences, and discussion topics. Gender stereotypes assigned within these materials significantly form learners' opinions about societal gender roles (Lee, 2014). Evidently, the values propagated through texts and visuals in language coursebooks profoundly impact students' attitudes toward themselves and society. Since language acquisition is intrinsically intertwined with culture (Alptekin, 1993), coursebooks inherently reflect a society's values, traditions, and biases (Söylemez, 2010), substantially influencing learners' comprehension of societal dynamics. Notably, cognitive and communicative empowerment for female learners is hindered when coursebooks disproportionately depict female characters in limited roles and represent them unfairly (Sunderland, 1992). Examining coursebooks published by the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye from 1928 to 1995, Helvacıoğlu (1996) revealed that over the years, roles within households and occupations in the coursebooks have changed into sexist and stereotypical representations. Similarly, Arslan's (2000) thorough analysis highlighted the need for reform in local Turkish coursebooks to counter sexist and stereotypical gender portrayals. Bağ and Bayyurt's (2015) thorough study also revealed that Turkish EFL coursebooks exhibit significant gender bias, with women often underrepresented and depicted primarily in traditional domestic roles, while men are shown in a wider variety of active and professional contexts. The language used in these materials reinforces stereotypes, emphasizing as a defining trait for women and strength for men. This suggests that gender stereotypes and unequal representation persist, despite efforts to address these issues (Bağ & Bayyurt, 2015). Similarly, Söğüt (2018) noted that in Türkiye, high school English books used in Ministry of Education schools often associated negative adjectives and indoor jobs with females. Acar's (2021) study of the "Progress" coursebook also revealed a gender imbalance, with males depicted in professional roles and females in lower-paid positions. Despite some improvements, traditional gender stereotypes persist, potentially influencing learners' perceptions of gender roles. Thus,

students consistently encounter conventional or reactionary gender depictions throughout their schooling, possibly limiting their ability to address these biases.

Language models in coursebooks, combined with classroom practices often dominated by male-oriented language, may unintentionally reinforce certain language uses, such as initiating conversations. This could result in unequal practice opportunities for female students (Sunderland, 1992). This concern has prompted various studies examining gender representations in educational materials—both commercially produced (Arikan, 2004; Lee, 2009, 2014; Mishan, 2022; Söylemez, 2010; Şeker & Dinçer, 2014) and non-commercial (Aguilar, 2021; Ariyanto, 2018; Demir & Yavuz, 2017; Mohammad Ismael Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2022)— yielding consistent outcomes. Lee (2014) found increased visibility of women in contemporary coursebooks, yet stereotypical portrayals and male-first language persisted. Simply aiming for quantitative balance overlooks the broader need to depict women in diverse social roles (Lee, 2014). Similarly, Mishan (2022) highlighted that despite some progress, gender representation remains narrow and fails to accurately mirror the diverse spectrum present in modern society. Such underrepresentation can lead to low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and academic underachievement (Mohammad Ismael Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2022). Despite some progress, numerous studies urge a paradigm shift for material developers (Aguilar, 2021; Ariyanto, 2018; Mohammad Ismael Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2022; Selvi & Kocaman, 2021). Richards (2022) offers an intriguing perspective, suggesting that while women are depicted in more varied contexts and with higher status, men's dominant and powerful positions remain unchallenged in some cases, based on his investigation of textbooks published by Pearson, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge University Press. His study revealed that publishers show willingness to portray women non-traditionally, but resistance to progressive portrayals of men persists (Richards, 2022). Within this framework, the present study aims to comprehensively examine language coursebooks to analyze gender portrayals and identify potential endorsement of sexist notions. The objective is to enhance the comprehension of the issue based on the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier. The study seeks to influence a policy shift in educational material design and assessment offering practical recommendations. To accomplish these aims, the following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: How are genders portrayed in the coursebooks tertiary-level English language coursebooks published by Pearson and Cambridge University Press?

RQ2: Are women depicted unbiasedly in the social and cultural contexts of the ELT textbooks used in Türkiye's tertiary level language instruction?

RQ3: Is the distribution of occupations, adjectives, crime, sports and household responsibilities balanced in the coursebooks' textual materials?

RQ4: In terms of how men and women are portrayed in the contexts and co-texts of the coursebooks, are there any elements of gender stereotypes or discrimination?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Examining gender representation and visibility in ELT coursebooks, this study employs a qualitative approach, as it is best suited for analyzing documents, images, videos, and scripts in detail (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). A descriptive content analysis of coursebooks is the core of this study since they are the primary materials of language teaching and introducing the components of language, lexeme, use and usage of grammar points, within contexts in which ideologies and implicit messages about norms and values of the target culture may be presented. A review of the coursebooks indicated that the units are organized around specific themes and main topics. While prior research has extensively examined four of these categories (occupations, adjectives, household activities and sports) this study introduces a novel category: crime attribution. This new category draws attention to the overlooked intersection between attributions of criminal behavior and its potential impact on gender representations.

3.2. Data Collection

The present study scrutinized the written content of two commonly utilized English language coursebooks, Face2Face by Cambridge University Press (referred to as Set A) and Speakout by Pearson Education Limited (referred to as Set B). Both sets are widely employed in the context of tertiary education in Türkiye, authored by internationally acclaimed publishing houses. The chosen coursebook levels were A2 and B1, selected after considering content density. These levels were deemed effective due to their focus on fundamental language aspects rather than delving into complex cultural and intellectual subjects. Given the prerequisite English competence level (usually B1) for many Turkish tertiary students before entering their faculties, A2 and B1 coursebooks were the predominant choice as these levels reach a larger audience compared to B2 and higher-level materials.

All coursebooks consist of 10 to 12 theme-based units, covering various language aspects, the four core skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and three sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation). Their syllabi adopt a cyclical or spiral approach, mirroring the natural language learning process. Key language components are revisited in varying combinations and contexts, enhancing permanent learning (Munby, 1981).

Using qualitative content analysis, this study explored coursebooks' stance on gender and their approach to gender representation within written context. As defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis involves subjectively interpreting text data through systematic coding and thematic identification. The rationale for choosing this method stems from its ability to transcend mere counting, enabling researchers to systematically analyze and categorize textual information based on shared meanings (Weber, 1990). In this study, the written content of the selected coursebooks were examined under five categories: "attributions of occupations, adjectives, household activities and sports" are inspired by the categories that are examined in previous studies (Arslan, 2000; Demir, 2019; Diktaş, 2011; Helvacıoğlu, 1996; Sivaslıgil, 2006; Söylemez, 2010), and attribution of crime is added by the researcher.

3.3. Data Analysis

As described by Mayring (2010, as cited in Drisko & Maschi, 2016), qualitative content analysis involves techniques for analyzing various types of texts, going beyond the explicit content to extract covertly conveyed themes and underlying concepts. It provides a basis for analyzing written texts, linguistic patterns, dialogues, and other forms of communication (Marshall & Rossmann, 2016), and helps to reveal hidden meanings within a context-dependent framework (Selvi, 2019).

Both deductive and inductive coding strategies were employed to create codes that best represent the data. Deductive coding applies predefined codes based on existing research, while inductive coding identifies new patterns through Glaser and Strauss' (1967) open coding technique. As a key component of qualitative content analysis, open coding provides substantive information rather than conceptual insights (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). Each coursebook was analyzed line by line, carefully examining relevant categories and tracking their frequency of occurrence. A cyclical approach was employed, iteratively examining and revisiting the data to ensure that the categories aptly capture significant instances elucidating gender representations.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, the peer debriefing technique—a widely recognized practice in content analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992)—was employed. Engaging multiple researchers and ensuring intercoder reliability help minimize individual biases and strengthen analytical rigor. During data analysis, two institutional peers cross-validated the researchers' categorization using the studied coursebooks, reinforcing the interpretation of data, categories, and codes (Barber & Walczak, 2009; Janesick, 2007).

4. Findings

Following a meticulous analysis of the units, themes, and topics within the chosen coursebooks, the categories were refined into their definitive form. Occupational attributions, adjectives, household activities, and sports categories are grounded in previously established research (Arslan, 2000; Demir & Yavuz, 2019; Diktaş, 2011; Helvacıoğlu, 1996; Sivaslıgil, 2006; Söylemez, 2010), while the attribution of crime emerged as a new category.

4.1. Occupations Assigned to Males and Females

Sexist ideologies play a pivotal role in shaping definitions of womanhood, often positioning women in relation to men across various life domains. Women are expected to conform to behaviors deemed masculine, aligning their thoughts and emotions with male standards (Helvacıoğlu, 1996). Traditional norms dictate that men should avoid household and parenting responsibilities during job searches, while women face pressure to select careers that align with their roles as wives and mothers, thereby limiting their occupational options (Helvacıoğlu, 1996). Moreover, sexist attitudes that contribute to maternal gatekeeping, mothers' urge to control or restrict fathers' involvement in childcare, intensify this problem by maintaining a gender-based division of childcare responsibilities, which in turn influences

women's career decisions (Gaunt & Pinho, 2018). Parkin (1971) highlights that occupations play a crucial role in shaping social status and opportunities in industrial societies, extending beyond basic livelihood activities. Similarly, Zhou (2023) emphasizes how ambivalent sexist attitudes towards parenting and housework further demonstrate the profound influence of occupations on social status and opportunities. This dynamic is particularly evident in Turkey, where a recent survey from Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) reveals a significant gender disparity in the workforce: the employment rate of women is less than half that of men, and the gender wage gap persists in favor of men across all levels of education (2024).

Investigating whether specific genders dominate various occupations, as well as scrutinizing gender-associated roles, is paramount to understanding these disparities. The study also explores the types of roles portrayed for males and females, with Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 presenting an analysis of explicit occupational activities depicted for men and women. These tables include example sentences and character portrayals within coursebook reading passages, providing further insight into how gender roles are communicated and reinforced. The portrayals in coursebooks are particularly significant, as they shape students' perceptions of gender norms and expectations, influencing their understanding of what roles are deemed appropriate for each gender.

Table 1

Occupations Assigned to Males and Females in Set A (A2)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Chef	Works in a factory	Businessperson
Entrepreneur	Works in a museum shop	Works in an office
Advertiser	Restaurant manager	Celebrity lookalike
Lawyer	Cleaner	Actor / Actress
Football referee	Works in a bank	Works in fashion
Engineer	Receptionist	Teacher
Writer	Florist	
Traffic police	Salesperson	
Works in shipbuilding industry	Model	
Director in a charity	Paramedic	
Graffiti artist		
Inventor		
Interpreter		
Boss		
Radio DJ		

Table 2

Occupations Assigned to Males and Females in Set A (B1)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Sailing instructor	Yoga instructor	Restaurant owner
Works for a tour company	Teacher	Writer
Photographer	Child education counsellor	Works in an office
Blogger	Company director	Doctor
Website designer	Journalist	Actor / Actress
Tour guide	Work at a gallery	Musician
Hotel manager	Athlete	Hotel owner
Swimmer	Advertising	
Magician	Singer	
Sales manager		
Comics writer		
Mountain climber		
Footballer		
Art gallery manager		
Entrepreneur		
Sculpturer		
Works for a water sports company		
Producer		
Scientist		
Union leader		

Echoing earlier discussions, the depiction of male and female characters' occupations within coursebooks can unveil societal norms dictating perceived suitability for specific jobs or professions based on gender. Table 1, 2, 3, and 4 display the occupations associated with male and female characters in the two coursebook sets. In Set A, male characters are depicted in 35 distinct occupations, compared to 20 for female characters. In Set B, all 58 depicted jobs are held by males, while females are linked to 23. Male characters are portrayed in a diverse array of roles, encompassing graffiti artists, advertisers, radio DJs, astronauts, race drivers, and even rocket scientists. By contrast, female characters are predominantly portrayed as nurses, nannies, personal assistants, and housewives. A few exceptions include occupations like a bus driver, anthropologist, and politician for females. In Set A, one of the female characters, while envisioning her future, remarks, "My husband will go out to work, and I'll stay at home all day watching TV." Notably, such a portrayal is never applied to the male characters in the narrative.

Table 3

Occupations Assigned to Males and Females in Set B (A2)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Furniture company owner	Works in a supermarket	Writer
Mountain rescue worker	Personal trainer	TV presenter
Manager of an online business	Bookstore owner	Teacher
Inventor	Nanny	Entrepreneur
Painter	Nurse	Millionaire
Works at a café	Bus driver	Actor / Actress
Tour guide	Blogger	Singer
Travel writer	Accountant	
Doctor	Receptionist	
Machine operator	Personal assistant	
Architect	Housewife	
Plumber	Politician	
Sales assistant	Veterinary Surgeon	
Chef		
Bank manager		
Internet company owner		
Economist		
Firefighter		
Research biologist		
Soldier		
Bodyguard		
Repairman		
Journalist		
Concierge		
Race driver		
TV producer		
Boss		
Veterinarian		
Judge		
Jockey		
Motorcycle courier		
Waiter		
Footballer		
Rocket Scientist		

Table 1, 2, 3, and 4 offer a consistent representation across both coursebook sets. The roles allocated to men are characterized by inventors (Table 1, 3, 4), scientists (Table 2, 3, 4), entrepreneurs (Table 1, 2, 3), and company owners (Table 3, 4), with no portrayal of women in

comparable contexts except for a single instance of a female entrepreneur in Set B (Table 4). Occupations demanding mathematical intelligence or physical prowess and bravery, such as mountain rescue worker, firefighter, soldier, engineer, and professional sportsperson, are exclusively ascribed to male characters (Table 1, 2, 3, 4). In contrast, roles assigned to female characters, like nanny, caregiver, and nurse (Table 3 and 4), seemingly require nurturing and empathetic traits. The perpetuation of stereotypical personality attributions, associating females with empathy and attentiveness and males with autonomy, achievement-orientation, and rationality (Heilman, 2012), reinforces a flawed binary perspective.

Table 4

Occupations Assigned to Males and Females in Set B (B1)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Painter	Ice-cream tester	Teacher
Software company owner	Personal shopper	Actor / Actress
Businessman	Gymnast	Writer
Millionaire	Dancer	TV presenter
Astronaut	Model	Boss
Physicist	Personal assistant	Entrepreneur
Video creator	Accountant	Footballer
Postmen	Caregiver	Tour guide
Firefighter	Film Historian	President
Lifeguard	Anthropologist	Leader
Gym instructor		Civil rights activist
Basketball player		
Professor		
Publisher		
Artist		
Biologist		
Climber		
Tennis player		
Historian		
Scientist		
Inventor		
Explorer		
Window cleaner		
Musician		

Female characters predominantly occupy roles considered simple, like personal shoppers or assistants, and occasionally eccentric ones, such as ice-cream testers (Table 4). Professions requiring intelligence or skill are consistently associated with male characters. In Set B, males serve as default subjects in illustrating work-related examples and passages. In a reading passage about high-risk occupations, four individuals working as emergency doctors, paramedics, helicopter pilots, motorbike couriers, and jockeys were profiled, with all four being

depicted as male. Notable instances reinforce gender bias: when discussing average work hours, the emphasis is on men's averages, implying an exclusive concern with overtime for men. Additionally, an illustrative sentence defining "take over" reads "men taking over their father's job," implying a male-centric workforce and context.

The outcomes from both sets reveal glaring biases and sexist depictions concerning gender-specific occupations. With minimal exceptions, women are depicted less frequently in professional roles or confined to non-complex and comparatively less significant jobs than their male counterparts. Despite being beyond the young learner phase, these coursebooks play a substantial role in shaping learners' perceptions of identities and their future aspirations.

4.2. Attribution of Adjectives

Adjectives used in coursebooks to describe males and females signify cultural norms shaping behavior, speech, and cognition aligned with gender expectations. Like assigned occupations, chosen adjectives reflect societal perception. This study thoroughly examines selected adjectives and implicit descriptors portraying the physical, social, and emotional aspects of men and women. Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 display chosen adjectives describing explicit personality traits attributed to male and female characters in the coursebook sets.

Table 5
Attribution of Adjectives in Set A (A2)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Interested	Worried	Nice
Chatty	Happy	Moody
Boring	Excited	Easy-going
Noisy	Depressed	Confident
Helpful	Annoyed	Bright
Lazy x2	Stressed	
Sensible	Easy-going	
Patient	Upset	
Polite	Strange	
Impolite	Considerate	
	Selfish	
	Tidy	
	Organized	

Table 6

Attribution of Adjectives in Set A (B1)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Boring	Knowledgeable	Bored
Relaxed	Fantastic	
Mean	Reliable	
Careful	Sociable	
	Fashionable	
	Well-qualified	
	Worried	
	Annoyed	
	Shocked	

Table 7

Attribution of Adjectives in Set B (A2)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Frightened	Poor	Worried
Ugly	Thin	Angry
Polite	Nervous	
Adventurous	Annoyed	
Dangerous	Very nice	
	Generous	
	Competitive	
	Excited	

Table 8

Attribution of Adjectives in Set B (B1)

Male	Female	Male & Female
Adventurous	Furious	Bored
Genius	Intelligent	Successful
Cheerful	Energetic	Determined
Happy	World-class	Expert
Bright	Angry	Skillful
Aggressive	Independent	Talented
Depressed	Easy-going	Reliable
Frustrated	Moody	Hardworking
Irresponsible	Keen	
	Afraid	
	Happy	
	Immature	
	Talkative	
	Lovely	
	Sorry	

Coursebook adjectives portraying emotional (e.g., aggressive, depressed, determined, happy, excited, moody) and physical (e.g., ugly, thin) states in characters strongly reflect societal gender expectations in behavior, emotions, and appearance. Tables 5 and 6 reveal minimal gender differentiation in characterization, as attributes explicitly ascribed to males and females do not significantly align with stereotypes like associating competitiveness with men or chattiness with women. Tables 7 and 8 display equal positive/negative narratives for both genders, allowing anger expression. Moreover, qualities such as "strong, reliable, and hardworking" extend beyond males. Despite prevalent biased norms, these traits are not solely masculine; descriptors are equitably distributed across genders.

However, the presented moves lead the readers in a different direction. Both sets prominently promote gender stereotypes across discussion topics, example situations, and sentences. Instances imply women's driving incompetence, exceptional homemaking skills, and irrational shopping enthusiasm, while portraying men as causing issues due to reckless shopping. In Set B, among the eight individuals who answered the question about potential future fame, one woman explicitly states:

> If I could be famous for anything, well, let me see ... for being beautiful! That would be good. One of those beautiful actresses who wins at the Oscars. If I was famous, I would be rich, live in a big house, and have all those clothes. Oh yes, that would be nice.

Notably, none of the male respondents make comparable remarks. Instead, one male character envisions gaining fame through significant achievements, such as inventing a medicine or curing cancer. This contrast reinforces the perception of women as superficial and men as pragmatic.

In Set B, a reading passage discusses "genetic" distinctions between genders based on people's views. Women are characterized as organized in household activities, preoccupied with clothing and haircuts, talkative, and emotionally adept. In contrast, men are portrayed as unconcerned about superficial matters like physical comfort, self-care, and attire. They are depicted as reserved, emotionally distant, and less adept at managing emotions compared to women.

Set A provides another evident instance of gender bias. A character discusses her wealthy, unmarried aunt, who possesses the largest house the character has ever seen. Despite her affluence, the character describes the aunt's life as "quite sad and strange" solely due to her single and independent status. The implication is that a financially secure adult woman with a substantial residence is deemed to lead an unfortunate and strange life because she lacks a male partner to share it with.

In summary, Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 and contextual examples provided above have shown that although the explicit usage of adjectives do not indicate traces of gender-biased perceptions, the sub-texts of passages and dialogues present negative connotations and stereotyped attributions of characteristics are considerably prevalent.

4.3. Attribution of Crime

Gender stereotyping does not always favor men. Findings reveal that crime-related examples, passages, and contexts predominantly portray males as perpetrators, while females are often depicted as victims. Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 display the crime-related contexts involving male and female characters in the coursebook sets, indicating the frequency of their roles as agents or victims of crime.

Table 9
Attribution of Crime in Set A (A2)

Male	Female
Victim	Victim
Burglary (4)	Murder
Robbery (5)	
Vandalism	
Theft (3)	

Table 10
Attribution of Crime in Set A (B1)

Male	Female
Arrest	Victim
Smuggling	
Robbery	
Threatening	

Table 11
Attribution of Crime in Set B (A2)

Male	Female
Arrest	Arrest
Imposture	Shoplift
Shoplift	Vandalism
Theft (5)	Victim
Unidentified crime (3)	
Vandalism	
Breaking in	
Murder	

Table 12
Attribution of Crime in Set B (B1)

Male	Female
Assassination	Victim
Theft (3)	
Breaking in	
Robbery	

The role of gender in contexts of crime, as well as its presence in occupational and descriptive portrayals, highlights women's societal position. Despite a male-to-female arrest ratio of four to one in favor of males (Lindsey, 2020), women's lesser involvement in criminal activity might be attributed to societal constraints on their expression of violence, physicality, and spontaneity. Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 above exemplify this perspective's reflection in both coursebook sets. Tables 9 and 10 indicate male characters engaging in crimes like burglary, robbery, vandalism, smuggling, and threats, whereas females are consistently depicted as victims, barring one exception in which a female character was a murderer. Notably, men are depicted not just as criminals but also as suspects, with all individuals questioned or arrested by the police being male in the instances from Tables 9 and 10. However, Tables 11 and 12 present a slightly different gender distribution of crime scenarios. Nonetheless, women are depicted as shoplifters and vandals, while men are murderers, impostors, and assassins. The portrayal presents women as less physically dangerous or terrifying than men; they are portrayed as helpless individuals needing help and protection.

4.4. Attribution of Sports

Sexist tendencies extend to the attribution of sports activities. Early childhood socialization associates manhood and masculinity with activity, risk-taking, and toughness, while passivity and sedateness are linked to femininity (Hellinger, 1980). This differentiation reflects in the diverse expectations, preferences, and achievements of boys and girls in sports. The gender representation ratio in coursebooks' sports-related content offers key insights into societal expectations and the traits attributed to males and females. Table 13, 14, 15, and 16 present the frequency of male and female characters in sports-related contexts, encompassing daily activities, success narratives of historical sports figures, world records, and more.

Table 13
Attribution of Sports in Set A (A2)

Males	Females
In sports (8)	In sports (3)

Table 14
Attribution of Sports in Set A (B1)

Males	Females
In sports (7)	In sports (2)

Table 15

Attribution of Sports in Set B (A2)

Males	Females
In sports (14)	In sports (10)

Table 16

Attribution of Sports in Set B (B1)

Males	Females
In sports (9)	In sports (5)

Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16 show that males feature in sports contexts nearly twice as often (39 times) as females (20 times) across both coursebook sets. The contextual cues within these tables emphasize that men exhibit stronger interest and competence in sports compared to women. Bem (1983) suggests that children are socialized into gender roles from infancy, forming "schemas" by categorizing and internalizing specific traits and behaviors as either "feminine" or "masculine".

In both sets, males are more prominently involved in sports-related activities and are consequently more often associated with physical endeavors that demand activity and competitiveness. One illustrative example in Set B narrates the story of a male character who, despite having broken several bones, including an arm and a leg, refused to abandon his career as a jockey, even though it was extremely risky. This overrepresentation of males in sports-related scenarios perpetuates their connection with physically demanding and competitive activities.

Lindsey (2020) posits that children associate sports with masculinity, risk-taking and physical harm. Schneider (2020) notes that sports such as boxing, wrestling, and mixed martial arts are frequently classified as male-dominated due to their focus on physical combat and aggression. These activities have traditionally been regarded as platforms for men to showcase toughness and assert dominance (Schneider, 2020). Given their lack of association with attributes such as activity, competitiveness, and toughness, there is less expectation for women to participate in sports activities to the same extent as males. Consequently, both sets of coursebooks appear to inadequately represent males and females equally in contexts related to sports.

4.5. Household Activities and Responsibilities

> Each day the kitchen teaches her patience and passivity; here is alchemy; one must obey the fire, the water, wait for the sugar to melt, for the dough to rise, and also for the wash to dry, for the fruits to ripen on the shelf.
>
> —*Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex*

Recent data from a family structure survey in Türkiye conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) reveals that most household chores, excluding house painting, are predominantly carried out by female household members (2022). Recognizing the connection

between this contemporary Turkish reality and the imperative to comprehensively grasp educational influences becomes crucial within the scope of this study. Household roles and tasks related to family upkeep, including cooking, cleaning, shopping, and parenting, demonstrate prominent gender roles ingrained by educational curricula and policy makers. These roles are perpetuated through gendered toy designs, where boys engage with race cars, guns, and trains, while girls' play activities center on nurturing, cooking, cleaning, and hairstyling (Lindsey, 2020). Consequently, the representation of male and female characters' responsibilities and domestic activities in the coursebooks demands scrutiny. Tables 17, 18, 19, and 20 highlight the specific activities attributed to male and female characters, with accompanying frequency data indicating their portrayal as agents in these contexts.

Table 17

Attribution of Household Activities in Set A (A2)

Males	Females
Packing up bags	Cleaning (5)
Cooking	Looking after children
	Cooking (5)

Table 18

Attribution of Household Activities in Set A (B1)

Males	Females
Taking out trash	Shopping
Cooking	Tidying up
	Looking after children
	Cooking

Table 19

Attribution of Household Activities in Set B (A2)

Males	Females
Ironing	Cooking
Laundry	Looking after children
Looking after children	

Table 20

Attribution of Household Activities in Set B (B1)

Males	Females
Taking out trash	Shopping
Looking after children	Cleaning
	Tidying up
	Looking after children

Instances concerning household chores offer multifaceted insights. Domestic roles encompassing physically demanding tasks like cooking, cleaning, shopping, ironing, and childcare are predominantly perceived as "women's work" (Helvacıoğlu, 1996; Arslan, 2000), traditionally instilled to provide women with a sense of satisfaction from such household labor. The passage in Set A, in which a couple recently transitioning into parenthood discusses the impact of this change on their lives, presents several compelling details. The mother expresses her exhaustion from the relentless demands of motherhood, noting that she feels misunderstood by her husband and experiences feelings of loneliness and depression. In contrast, the father's perspective is notably more positive. He mentions the difficulties they face in socializing together due to his wife's constant fatigue and his own feelings of guilt when spending time with his friends, yet he expresses overall contentment with his situation.

Nevertheless, men tend to shoulder outdoor chores such as repairs, gardening, and occasionally shopping, as depicted in Tables 17 and 18. Despite employment and income, women continue to undertake a significantly larger share of housework, with men often positioned as 'helpers' rather than equal participants. The responsibilities ascribed to men, as indicated in Tables 17 and 18, tend to be time-limited or seasonal tasks such as car maintenance, snow shoveling, curtain hanging, or trash disposal. The data in Tables 17 and 18 from Set A seemingly reinforce traditional viewpoints, where males primarily handle tasks like taking out the trash, packing bags, and occasional cooking, while women are responsible for cleaning, childcare, and shopping. On the other hand, Tables 19 and 20 demonstrate a more balanced distribution of household responsibilities in Set B, with both genders participating in childcare and cooking.

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that female characters possess limited visibility and are predominantly portrayed in a narrow range of occupations associated with nurturance, barring a few exceptions. This suggests that females are perceived as unsuited or less desirable for engaging in diverse occupational activities compared to males. Given coursebooks' role in shaping learners' future aspirations and goal setting (Wilson, 1993), these gender stereotypes significantly influence whether learners are granted equal opportunities to envision their career prospects. By upholding binary concepts of masculinity and femininity, these biased representations not only limit the understanding of gender but also disregard the spectrum of identities and expressions. Grounded in gender performativity (Butler, 1990), this phenomenon can result in marginalization and unintentional distancing, causing individuals to feel excluded and estranged (Seburn, 2021).

Moreover, the coursebooks in question are not specifically designed to align with the dynamics of a particular culture or context. Rather, they are representative of a 'one size fits all' approach, commonly observed in the field of language education, wherein English coursebooks are developed without consideration for the specific nuances of a given country or society. Considering the average age of users (typically 17-20 for first-year students in English preparatory programs in Turkish universities) and their aspirations to realize their potential and set goals, learners are receptive to any source of inspiration that might influence their

career objectives. In this context, the examples presented within both sets are dishearteningly discriminatory and prejudiced, fueling frustration and disappointment. In brief, females are depicted in occupational activities at half the rate of males, and when they are portrayed, it is often within stereotypical roles. These findings underscore that both coursebook sets fail to achieve equitable gender representation concerning occupational visibility and distribution. This further accentuates the notion that specific fields of work are gender-defined. In essence, biased gender perspectives are perpetuated through the attribution of occupations and work-related examples in both Set A and Set B. In this context, both coursebook sets primarily reinforce and perpetuate gender disparities.

Regarding the allocation of adjectives, there appears to be a relatively equitable distribution between genders. However, implicit gender representations conveyed through contexts and co-texts manifest explicit biases. Stereotypical portrayals of gender abound: women's alleged inability to drive compared to men, their presumed disinterest in sports versus men's enthusiasm, the stereotype that women enjoy shopping while men do not, and the notion that women have a natural inclination for homemaking. Bandura (1977) emphasizes that children shape their gender identities by observing and imitating their parents' behaviors, particularly aligning with the roles of their same-sex parent during development. Thus, household chore division is not solely an adult matter but rather learned and internalized early in childhood. Upholding the notion of gender-specific household chores poses a significant threat to women's hard-won societal advancements that remain precarious.

Another inquiry arising from this study concerns the ascription of criminal activities. Heidensohn (1989) notes that crime exhibits significant gender bias, with learned tendencies influencing criminal behaviors. Men often learn autonomy and impulsivity, encouraged by societal norms. Bandura (1977) suggests that men are conditioned to adopt masculine traits, such as physical aggression, while distancing themselves from characteristics associated with femininity. Worell (2001) highlights the upbringing of boys with messages that encourage aggression for power and control, whereas girls are conditioned to be passive and submissive, discouraging them from verbal or physical self-defense. This societal distinction plays a role in the lower incidence of criminal activity among women. Moreover, women often face less severe legal consequences for their crimes compared to men (Lindsey, 2020), highlighting a gender-biased approach. This inclination to view women as victims and men as perpetrators reinforces a harmful double standard. In that vein, both coursebook sets primarily associate crime and violence with men, while females tend to be depicted as either victims or participants in non-violent and minor offenses, such as shoplifting. This may be linked to the perception of women as gentle and fragile, unlikely to inflict significant harm, whereas men are perceived as capable of being menacing and deceitful.

As indicated previously, the attribution of sports-related activities is another angle in which biased gender representations are encountered. In both sets, it is common for female characters in sports to be less visible than male characters, preserving the perception that women are gentle, subordinate, and passive, while men are portrayed as possessing characteristics such as competitiveness, aggression, and physical strength that are allegedly masculine. Lindsey (2020) proposes that children commonly link sports with traits like masculinity, risk-taking, and physical challenge. Connell (2002) posited that sports serve as a

means of empowerment for many adolescent boys and young men, precisely because these pursuits educate them in the strategic deployment of their own physical faculties to generate desired effects and in the acquisition of power through the fusion of force and skill. Consequently, it's not surprising that many sports are stereotypically regarded as 'male' domains (e.g., boxing, football, hockey, skiing), whereas activities deemed more 'suitable' for females encompass dancing, gymnastics, pilates, and similar pursuits. In the traditional, biased view of associating women and femininity with vulnerability and incompetence, sports that appear more aggressive and physically demanding are deemed suitable only for men. Due to this entrenched perception, the expectation for women's participation in sports, involving activity, competitiveness, and resilience, remains lower. Consequently, the coursebook sets fail to provide equitable gender representation within sports-related contexts.

Regarding household tasks, such as cooking, childcare, and cleaning, female characters are predominantly assigned these responsibilities, irrespective of whether they work outside the home. In Set A, despite women's employment, a significant portion of housework remains associated with females. In contrast, Set B exhibits a slightly more balanced portrayal of parental duties, indicating a modest improvement. However, the balance of gender roles in parenting and household chores often favors male characters. Women are depicted engaging in domestic activities like cleaning, cooking, and mothering, while men's involvement is often presented as occasional assistance. Despite the evolving societal roles of women, the outdated representation in coursebooks does not mirror this progress, restricting female characters to traditional roles.

6. Conclusion

The analysis revealed imbalanced gender depictions in various categories. Female characters are underrepresented in occupational activities, often confined to simple, stereotypical jobs, while male characters dominate interesting and socially beneficial professions. Women are portrayed as disinterested in sports, finding fulfilment in marriage, shopping, and family care, while men are depicted as active, independent, and occasionally aggressive. The propagation of such representations in media and society at large serves as a potent mechanism for reinforcing deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, thereby contributing to the persistence and perpetuation of prejudicial perspectives and biased viewpoints, a phenomenon of significant scholarly and societal concern. The implicit representations and the sub-texts subtly endorse restrictive portrayals, potentially causing resistance among students, hindering their linguistic and pedagogic growth. In essence, eliminating stereotypes and promoting unbiased, inclusive content is vital for equitable education, fostering an environment where all students can flourish and achieve their potential.

7. Implications

Several relevant studies, also presented in this study, indicate that gender roles are constructed and internalized by the agencies of socialization consisting of components like family and school, which serve as prominent environments where individuals learn to behave,

think, and develop characteristics. Institutions of family and school interoperate to properly feed and raise individuals so they can meet the 'needs' of society. Constituting the nucleus of schools, coursebooks are the core materials that present and preserve the values, roles and other components of culture that are expected to be adopted by the future members of society in order to sustain what is usual and to keep the wheels turning. This highlights the importance of coursebooks: the writers, policy makers and those in charge of choosing them to be put into practice. In this regard, whether gender equality is reflected in coursebooks and if any kind of sexism is evident should be prioritized in the criteria for coursebook evaluation. These concerns are not only for those who select and use the books, but also the writers and policy makers should be held accountable for the motives that coursebooks overtly or blatantly serve.

From a practical perspective, I propose a three-stage critical approach that actively involves teachers as micro-level stakeholders. At the outset, as coursebooks are embedded in the curriculum, they should be refined in terms of inclusive and equal approaches towards gender. Further, while preparing lessons, aims, outcomes and goals should be defined accordingly. Finally, all components of the coursebook, such as suggested activities and example sentences, should be evaluated critically to take the extra step and adapt the material by adding, modifying, or supplementing. Even though teachers are not in control of what goes into the coursebooks, as the end-users, they have the initiative to adapt instructional materials to make most use of them by complementing the needs of their learners (Tomlinson, 2011). The language classroom should not be seen as an apolitical site. However, rather a site for consciousness-raising and personal and social change: through teaching about gender equality and social justice in the classrooms, teachers and coursebooks may evoke insights and enrich students' educational experience, bringing about changes in the students' lives and the society at large (Yoshihara, 2013).

In order to provide equal opportunities for all individuals to develop, thrive, and become functioning members of society through education, it is essential to remove stereotypes from textbooks. One's self-worth and sense of belonging can be greatly enhanced when they see themselves represented (Seburn, 2021). Lack of representation, on the other hand, is detrimental. Greater efforts are needed to ensure that coursebook writers, editors, illustrators, publishing houses, or others who contribute to the production of coursebooks avoid biased and imbalanced gender representations. A critical approach should also be taken to the content and activities provided in instructional materials by those responsible for selecting and utilizing them; whether traditional roles are linked to characters and genders are presented in a restrictive or uneven manner.

8. Limitations / Delimitations of the Study

It would be erroneous to suggest that coursebooks are free from the influence of their authors' and publishers' attitudes toward gender. It is also important to highlight that these coursebooks have been developed for a heterogeneous audience residing in various nations with disparate cultural practices. From this perspective, the analysis of English language coursebooks reveals the sensitivity and stance of international publishing houses with regard to gender issues. The present investigation focuses on coursebook sets that are commonly employed in tertiary-level language education within the Turkish context. The study confines

its examination exclusively to the textual content of these coursebooks, encompassing passages, dialogues, and illustrative sentences. Visual and auditory components have been excluded from the purview of this research. Furthermore, this study exclusively scrutinizes the student's books of these coursebook sets, excluding ancillary materials such as teacher's guides and workbooks. It is noteworthy that in pursuit of an expanded research scope and the establishment of a more comprehensive analytical framework, the inclusion of a broader array of categories for inquiry or the diversification of the sets under investigation, as well as involving learners' perceptions would enhance the research outcomes and contribute significantly to the academic discourse in this field.

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