

**Gender Representation in Ethiopian English as a Foreign  
Language Materials: Perceptions and Perceived Effects**



Authors:

Yewulsew Melak Mehari (MA in TEFL, Assistant Prof.), Debre Markos University, Ethiopia  
*yewulmelak@gmail.com*

Yigzaw Kerebih Belete (MA in TEFL, Assistant Prof.), Debre Markos University, Ethiopia

Mekonnen Esubalew Tariku (PhD in TEFL, Assistant Prof.), Debre Markos University, Ethiopia  
*mekesu655@yahoo.com*

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## **Abstract**

The study investigates gender representation in English language textbooks for grade 9 and 10. The subjects of the study were a total of 12 students in grade 9 and 10, and a total of six English language teachers from three government schools. The data collection tools were document analysis and semi-structured interview. For the document analysis, we did a frequency count of gender representation in the learning materials. Interview data were analysed thematically with the purpose of determining the range of ideas representing the experience and perspectives of participants. Results showed that a) teaching and learning materials do not reflect balanced gender representation; and b) respondents had low perceptions about visibility, gender-sensitive pronoun and proper noun usages, attributes and illustrations. However, they were aware of roles/activities and masculine noun usages. Regarding their views, the data showed that male teachers and students in the study were less sensitive but the girls in the study felt inferior due to the gender stereotypes. The female teachers' responses were mixed. The data analysis about the perceived effects of gender stereotype also revealed that the female students were affected negatively. We suggest that gender representation indicators be considered contextually. However, gender-based organizations, policy makers, educators, English as foreign language (EFL) material writers, publishers, teachers and students should use EFL materials as instruments for social changes with respect to gender representation.

**Key terms** – gender, gender representation, gender empowerment, gender stereotypes, visibility, gender-sensitive language, attributes, roles/activities and illustration

## 1. Introduction

The issue of gender equality was largely ignored almost all over the world before the 1970s due to patriarchal beliefs, widespread discriminatory attitudes, and counterproductive social values and norms (Zakka and Zanzali, 2015). Women's jobs were limited to household work such as bringing up children and caring for the family. On the other hand, men were responsible for outdoor activities including participating in political, economic and social issues. This disparity extended to schooling where more boys than girls had been enrolled at all school levels.

From the 1970s onward, a burgeoning women's movement, particularly in western countries has changed the attitudes, behaviours and traditional views about women. As a result, different declarations in different parts of the world have been announced to empower women. For example, International Declaration of Human Rights document (UN, 1948) states that education of girls should be taken as a fundamental human right (Article 26). Similarly, Article 29, which focuses on child rights, states that gender equality should be given emphasis in educational institutions. The Conventions of the Eliminations of Discrimination against Women (UN, 1979) also obliges signatory countries to get rid of any stereotype about men and women at any level and in all forms of education thereby suggesting revision of textbooks, school co-curricular activities and teaching methods (Article 10). More recently, a series of measures were suggested for eliminating gender disparity and promoting universal access to education including the Declaration of United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2015), the Beijing Platforms of Action (UN, 1995), and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (AU, 2004).

Ethiopia has ratified most of the above declarations of gender empowerment and equality and developed strategies to increase the admission, completion and transition rates of girls to parity with boys (Federal Ministry of Education, 2010). It also designed a national policy on women empowerment in 1993 and renewed it in 1995. Policy documents recognize that gender equality plays a significant role in the development of the country (MoE, 2014).

However, reports show that issues such as violence against women, low women parliamentary representation, low school enrolment of girls, and higher women illiteracy still exist (CIA, 2015; ILO, 2013; WHO, 2005; World Bank, 2009). Ethiopia was ranked 173<sup>rd</sup> out of 187 countries in the Education Development Index (UNDP, 2013) and 124<sup>th</sup> out of 145 countries in having gender gap (WEF, 2015). The report by WEF (2015) also adds that there were greater gender gaps between 2006 and 2015 in economy, education, health and politics among women and men.

On the other hand, education and specifically the resources used in classrooms, such as textbooks, play a significant role in addressing female empowerment gaps. Researchers and organizations suggest that textbooks are powerful tools in shaping students' beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and values on gender empowerment and equality (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009; MOET & UNESCO, 2010; Neuendorf, 2002; Sumalatha, 2004; MoE, 1994; Wu & Li, 2009). Tahan (2015) also notes that if they are properly designed, textbooks have an impact on socializing gender in schools thereby helping both boys and girls understand gender equality. Therefore, the researchers of this study were interested in examining

how gender representation was expressed in three EFL education materials (two textbooks and one reference) for grade 9 and 10.

Hence, the main objective of the study was to examine the gender balance in the secondary school EFL materials. It specifically aimed at:

- investigating gender representation in Ethiopian English as a foreign language materials,
- examining EFL teachers' and students' perceptions towards gender representation/bias, and
- examining the perceived effects of un/equal gender representation on females/males

## 2. Gender Representation in Teaching Materials

Aspects of gender representation in textbooks include visibility, language, attributes, roles/activities, and illustrations (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). Each of these is described in detail below. These were the variables used when examining the learning materials and during the interviews, disaggregated by gender. The results are reported in section 4.

**Visibility.** Visibility relates to frequency of mention in the textbook, both in words and in the images. When a sex (male/female) is mentioned more frequently over the other, it is believed that that sex is prominent and the other invisible or less visible character is less important (Brusokaitè, 2013; Porecca, 1984 cited in Stockdale, 2006). So checking the proportional distribution of each sex in texts can help to ensure gender representation of visibility (Florent et al., 1994 cited in Stockdale, 2006). RTI International (2015) also suggests for proportional frequency of female and male identities across all stories/texts in a textbook; otherwise, there can be one dominant character in a particular text/story. Previous studies showed that male characters in textbooks outnumbered female characters by a ratio of 3 or more to 1 (Stockdale, 2006).

**Language.** The second gender representation indicators are gender sensitive language areas (pronouns, proper nouns, and nouns). These can marginalize a gender if not used wisely. So awareness about the way these aspects affect gender representation negatively or positively is necessary. To begin with the first, masculine pronouns (he, his...) are normally used to refer to males. But when the referent sex is unknown, they can be used to refer to both sexes (males and females) by default. Nevertheless, this sort of pronoun use can affect females' way of thinking (Brusokaitè, 2013; Kutateladze, 2018). This is because such pronoun use renders greater importance to males and that can have negative impact on young people (RTI International, 2015).

The solutions that make such default masculine pronouns gender-sensitive are different. The first is to use plural forms of pronouns like they to refer to both sexes (Kutateladze, 2015). If this sounds awkward or conversational, it is better to alternate male pronouns with female pronouns as she/he to refer to nonspecific characters (Kutateladze, 2015).

Still, order/first mention matters since the one appearing first (often male) is interpreted as more important than the one in the second place (Brusokaitè, 2013; Stockdale, 2006). A character appearing in the lesson section has also a higher profile than the one appearing in the exercise section (Brugeilles

and Cromer, 2009). So it is necessary to alternate the order of gendered characters so as to tackle gender imbalance. Otherwise, the pronouns used interchangeably should be replaced by ‘one’ or other gender neutral nouns (Kutateladze, 2015). But when referring to specific characters, pronouns related to them should be used or replaced by genderless nouns like pupil, child, and person (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009).

The second language areas that can have similar gender discrimination effect are proper nouns. If one uses first name for women and surname for men, there is gender misrepresentation against women (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). This is because use of last name shows respect. When referring to different people with similar surnames, it is advisable to use full names (Hayek, nd).

Likewise, personal titles with surnames also increase respect to the person referred. So, personal titles and surnames need to be used watchfully. If title and surname is used for men, the same should also be done for women (Hayek, nd). Failure to do so has gender bias against women. And when there is a need to use personal titles with people having similar surnames, it is suggested to use as ‘Mrs. and Mr. Smith’ or ‘Mrs. Jane and Mr. John Smith’ (Brusokaitè, 2013; Hayek, nd; Kutateladze, 2015).

The other gender sensitive language aspects are nouns like man, mankind, layman, and landlord. When such words are used to identify males alone, they have no gender bias. The problem is when they refer to both males and females by default as in ‘Mankind is mortal.’ Such noun usage shows inferiority of females (Brusokaitè, 2013; Gyax and Gabriel, 2010; Holmqvist, P. and L. Gjörup. 2006; Kutateladze, 2015). So masculine nouns referring to both sexes in general need to be replaced by gender neutral nouns like people, individuals, humanity or humans, human being, person, lay person, novice, owner, etcetera (Kutateladze, 2015; Chan-Meetoo, 2018). The other gendered nouns and their substitutions from Hayek (nd) are:

forefathers	ancestors, forebears
Man-made	artificial, manufactured
brotherhood	solidarity, human fellowships, kinship
manpower	human resources
founding fathers	founders

Job titles ending in –man also need careful usage. When sportsman, postman, chairman, policeman, fireman, businessman, salesman, spokesman and so on are used to refer to a male officer/person, they do not reflect gender misrepresentation. The danger is when the referents are both sexes. In that case, the usage reflects the inferiority of females as discussed above (Brusokaitè, 2013). Hence, it is better to use athlete, chairperson/president, police officer, fire fighter/attendant, sales representative/shop assistant, spokesperson, business people/executives, etcetera instead since such substitutes can help to avoid gender stereotype (Kutateladze, 2015; RTI International, 2015; Chan-Meetoo, 2018). As an option, alternating nouns as chairman/women, policeman/women, fireman/women, sportsman/women and so on can be appropriate (RTI International, 2015).

In general, knowledge of the interpretations of gendered pronouns, proper nouns, and nouns is necessary. Textbooks are also expected to be guides. Otherwise, they will reinforce the reality outside

the classroom and result in gender underrepresentation. If so, the impact on the victim character will be bad. For this reason, textbook writers and practitioner teachers need to take gender sensitive language in to consideration.

**Attributes:** The third aspect of gender representation relates to attributes (traits, behaviors and interactions). Kutateladze (2015) notes that most societies give priority to males because males are thought to be physically stronger than females. Regarding traits, boys are displayed as studious, courageous, ambitious, hardworking, morally and physically strong, creative, independent and decisive (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009; Brusokaitè, 2013; Thompson, 2017). They are also behaviorally described as urban dwellers and their interaction is associated with community level interactions (Thompson, 2017).

On the contrary, studies revealed that girls are portrayed as having negative attributes. That is, they are characterized as unintelligent, deficient, apologetic, scared, sacrificial, ... courteous and indecisive (Brusokaitè, 2013; Thompson, 2017). Furthermore, they are portrayed as coquetry, frailty, and dependent (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). They are also seen as connoisseur of hairstyles and adornments (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). Behaviorally, they are displayed as rural dwellers (Thompson, 2017). Their interaction is also confined to home/family level groups (Thompson, 2017).

Marginalization in attributes can have adverse consequences on societal development (Kutateladze, 2015). Ethiopia has promising policies, guidelines and directives to empower women. However, as is the case in other countries, realizing the policies and guidelines require a lot of intentional effort.

**Gender roles/activities:** These are the fourth gender representation variables. They refer to the actions and social functions that each gender displays. However, the gender roles/activities constructed across societies seem to lack balance. Brusokaitè (2013) and RTI International (2015) confirm that males are more represented in challenging activities. They are also dominant in better paid occupations. That is, they are depicted as doing formal and informal occupational/productive/ paid activities (Thompson, 2017). They are portrayed serving as doctors, policemen, and community leaders (RTI International, 2015). In short, males are depicted as capable of doing hard chores as well as better paid outdoor, social and occupational activities.

On the contrary, females are portrayed in unpaid or low status informal/household activities. Brusokaitè (2013) and Thompson (2017) consolidate that women are represented in unpaid and unskilled domestic activities. RTI International (2015) also points out that females are represented in home-based/reproductive activities such as sewing, cooking, cleaning the home and taking care of the children. If employed, they are represented in low status positions like teacher and secretary (Thompson, 2017). They are rarely represented in well paid social and productive activities (RTI International, 2015).

However, the social construction of gender roles/activities can perpetuate female subordination to males. Thus, disrupting gender role/activity misrepresentation is necessary to allow proportional female and male engagement in indoor and outdoor roles/activities. That is, both sexes need to share household

tasks equally and jointly (RTI International, 2015). Regarding paid jobs, both sexes should be portrayed in proportional intellectual roles/activities as lawyers, leaders, athletes, and the like (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009; RTI International, 2015). Hence, EFL textbooks need to play a catalyst role to challenge gender role/activity misrepresentation. RTI International (2015) notes, “Although teaching and learning materials have the power to reinforce stereotypes found outside the school, they also have the power to transform them and give children greater options that are not considered by narrowly defined gender norms ...”

**Images or illustrations.** Gender representation can be analysed in images or illustrations. In this study, we used these five factors to determine the level of gender representation in the illustrations in the learning material.

- a) **Posture.** Interpretation of posture requires careful analysis because it can vary from culture to culture. For example, in New Zealand, illustrations showing females sitting with legs crossed or bending over a child is interpreted as ‘subservience and vulnerability positions’, whereas illustrations showing boys sitting with legs on the ground or on an object indicate ‘power and confidence’ (Lockheed, 2008 in RTI International, 2015). In the Ethiopian society, face forward, hands crossed on belly, hands on hips or in pockets and direct eye contact when talking to someone may show power and confidence or less respect to the listener/s. On the contrary, eyes up, head down and scratching head while talking to someone else may indicate confusion, diffidence or inferiority. So images in teaching materials were analyzed by taking such posture issues into consideration to check gender parity.
- b) **Background.** The context or ‘place’ of the image has implications for gender representation. For instance, illustrations at private, enclosed places have less status than those at public, open places (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). This is to mean that a sex/age group frequently displayed at private places has less dignity than the group illustrated at public places. In Ethiopia, private spaces have less dignity than public places, and this is how we reviewed the illustrations).
- c) **Frequency.** How often a character appears within a text is important. Whenever students look at male pictures frequently, they may perceive that the sex that is less frequently displayed is less relevant. To avoid such stereotype, the frequency of illustrations of different groups needs to be proportional in a textbook (RTI International, 2015).
- d) **Size.** The size of each gender within images is important to consider. When one gender appears smaller than another gender it also implies one has more value than the other. Therefore, to circumvent such gender underrepresentation, the sizes of the illustrations of different genders need to be made similar (Brusokaitè, 2013; RTI International, 2015).
- e) **Style.** What people are shown to be wearing has implications for gender misrepresentation. For example, at a wedding occasion, people wearing costly traditional clothes or suits and those in everyday clothes cannot be given equal respect. Those wearing expensive clothes, shoes, jewellery, etcetera may be welcomed warmly, while those wearing ordinary clothes may be given less respect. Likewise, if illustrations show males well dressed and females casually dressed, they have transgressed gender representation. For this reason, wearing styles in illustrations of teaching materials need to be similar (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). That is, in an illustration, different characters need to be illustrated in traditional wearing styles, in another in pyjamas, in the next in

suits, and so on. Such uniformity in an illustration can reduce gender stereotype resulting from wearing style difference in illustrations.

In general, illustrations in EFL teaching materials need to be gender sensitive with respect to posture, background places, frequency, size and style. Otherwise, their cultural and/or psychological impacts on learners will be negative as already discussed.

### **Importance of Perceptions**

Teachers are positioned as key agents for shaping the classroom practices and addressing the diversified needs of learners. Pajaras (1992) suggests that there is a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions and classroom practices. Teachers' perceptions can also affect the way they interact with their students (Gray and Leith, 2004), influence students' motivation and achievement (Martin, Yin and Mayal, 2006), and project social representation of gender onto boys and girls (Ivinson and Murphy, 2003). Teachers' perceptions affect how they feel about their preparation and the instructional decisions they make in meeting the diverse needs of their students (Enderlin-Lamp, 2002). Gender stereotyping in educational resources may also affect learners, especially females (Sunderland 1992 cited in Lewiandwski, 2015). The content of instructional materials significantly affects students' attitudes, dispositions and their understanding of norms, culture and the world around them (Mahnaz, 2015). Hence, Teachers and students' level of gender sensitivity and self-awareness are considered as key determinants in their ability to deliver gender responsive pedagogies and support gender equality in the classroom.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

In this study, the researchers used a qualitative study involving document analysis and semi-structured interviews with teachers and students. This was because the data on gender representation indicators, perceptions and perceived effects were collected via frequency count and verbal descriptions. So the research was a descriptive study to describe the existing situations of gender representation in EFL materials and related issues in the specific objectives.

### **3.2 Research Sites**

The study was conducted at Gozamin, Gojjam Ber and Belay Zeleke General Secondary and Higher Education Preparatory Schools in East Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. These schools were chosen for two reasons. First, the students in these schools were predominantly from uneducated families in rural areas where gender bias is suspected to be high. It was also suspected that female students in these areas are disadvantaged. Secondly, the schools are near to the researchers' workplace so as to manage time, get consent from the schools easily and gather relevant data.

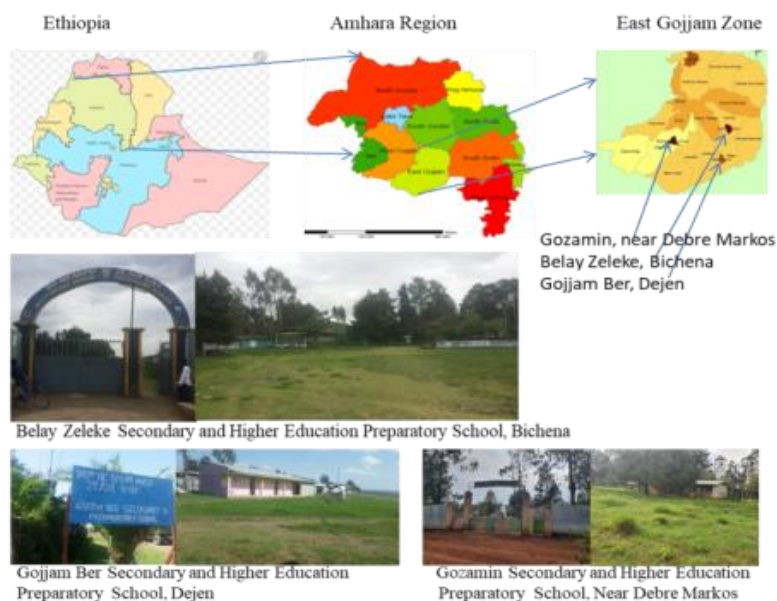


Figure 1: Maps and photos of the research sites

### 3.3 Study Participants

The study participants were 2 English language teachers (1 male and 1 female) for grades 9 and 10 and 4 grade 9 and 10 students (2 males and 2 females) from each school. Totally, the study participants were 18 (6 teachers and 12 students). They were selected based on availability and relevance of experience. That is, potential teachers and students were selected purposively based on directors' and teachers' suggestions.

### 3.4 Materials

Three EFL education materials consisting of two textbooks and one reference/supplementary material for grade 9 and 10 were analyzed. The textbooks (*English for Ethiopia: Students Textbooks Grade 9* and *English for Ethiopia: Students Textbooks Grade 10*), were prepared by Donna Bailey and evaluated by four Ethiopian English language educators (Asefa Kassa, Ejeta Negeri, Getahun Gebremedhin and Tesfaye Gebreyes). These were published by Pearson Education LTD (UK) in collaboration with Shama Books (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) in 2003 E.C. (2010/11 G.C.). The EFL reference material, titled *Extreme English for Grade 9 –10 (2012 E.C. or 2019/20 G.C.)*, was written by Takele Legesse, an Ethiopian, and the content is based on the national curriculum. It was published by Extreme Series, a local publisher. It is a book that is not considered a textbook but is used by students and teachers as additional English language learning material.

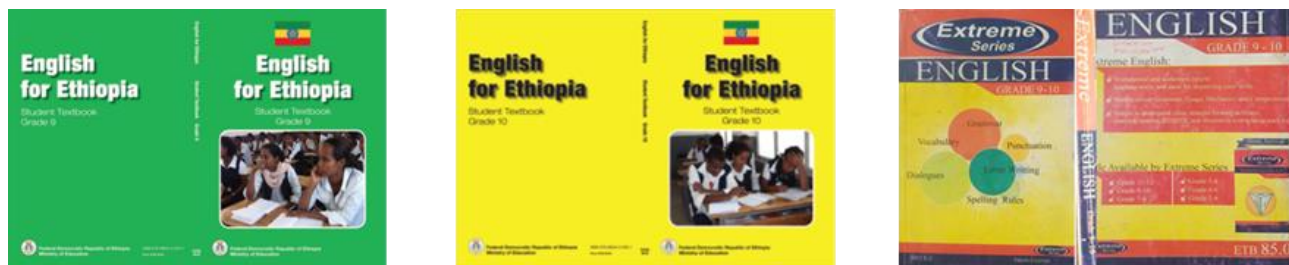


Figure 2: Cover pages of the EFL materials



The researchers used these learning materials as sources of data for three reasons. First, textbooks are keys to sustain practices against gender representation or to transform negative gender practices by shaping beliefs, attitudes and values (Wu and Liu, 2015). Second, these materials are used by many students as part of regular school teaching/learning process. That is, the textbooks are provided to the students as regular teaching/learning material by schools. And the reference material is available in school libraries to supplement the textbooks. It is also commonly purchased by parents privately. So the materials can shape many students rightly or wrongly depending on their quality. Third, all the gender representation indicators are available in the texts and illustrations in these learning materials.

### 3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via document analysis and semi-structured interview. The document analysis involved analyzing gender representation in the three EFL materials described above. It was used to collect qualitative data about gender equality by examining visibility, language usages, attributes and occupational roles/activities in illustrations and written texts. For example, to find out gender visibility, the researchers counted the number of mentions and displays of males and females in texts and illustrations to determine whether gender visibility in EFL materials favors males over females. Similarly, gender sensitive language usages (pronouns, proper nouns and nouns ending in –man) were evaluated against gender representation. In light of occupational roles/activities, the researchers identified the distribution of occupations held by men and women to see whether the majority of occupations are held by women or men, and whether women’s occupational roles are stereotypical.

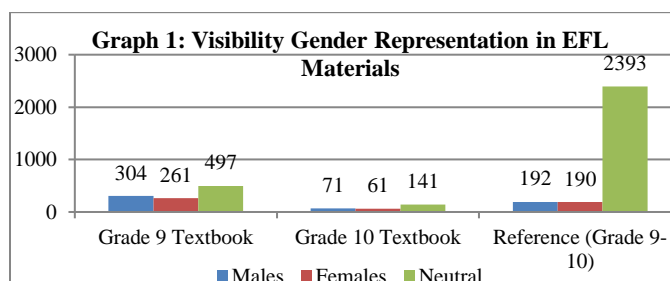
The semi-structured interview was used with the respondents described above. It was held in the researchers’ and respondents’ vernacular language, Amharic, so as to make questions and responses clear. It was used to: a) elicit data on respondents’ perceptions towards gender mis/representation in the materials. b) investigate the effects of gender representation or bias on the respondents, and c) collect data on classroom mediation practices to curve gender imbalances.

The data from document analysis were scored by tallying the characters using the document analysis checklist, so the analysis was done using frequency and percentage. The interview data were analysed verbatim thematically.

## 4. Results and Discussions

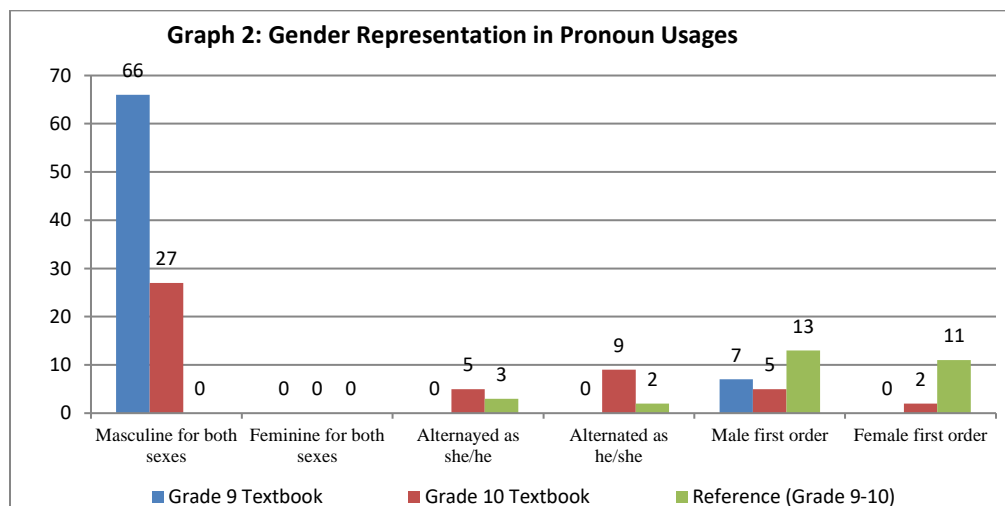
### 4.1 Gender Representation in the EFL Materials

#### 4.1.1 Gender Representation in Visibility



Visibility refers to how often a male or female is mentioned/appeared in written texts and illustrations. Regarding the textbook for grade 9, the analysis shows that males are mentioned more frequently than females in the ratio of 304:261. In the textbook for grade 10, still males' mention outnumbered the females' (71:61). In the reference material, the ratio of males' mention to that of females' was 192:190. The gender neutral visibility characters in the three materials were 497, 141 and 2393 respectively. This document analysis shows that the visibility in the textbooks for grade 9 and 10 tend to favor males; however, the three EFL materials contain neutral visibility characters dominantly.

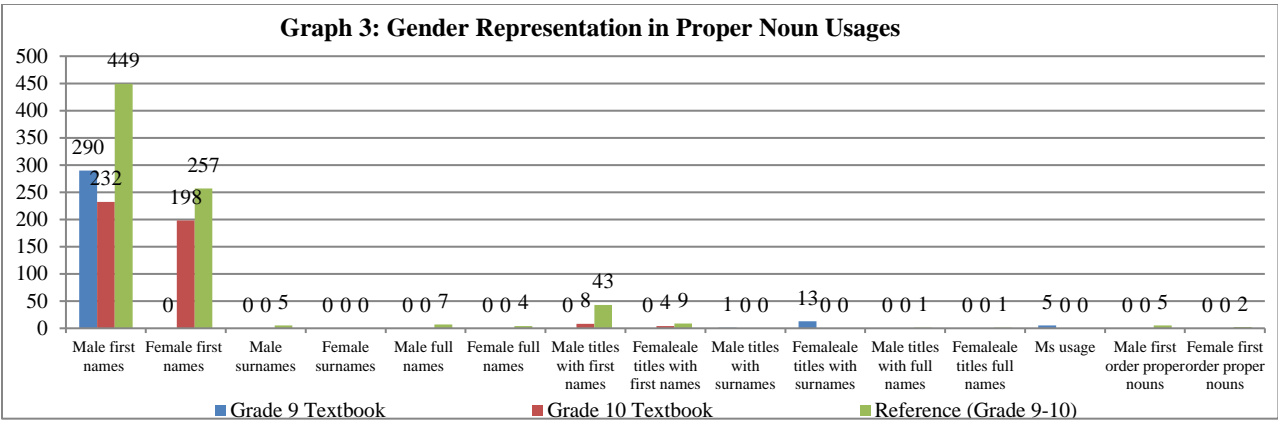
#### 4.1.2 Gender Representation in Language Usages



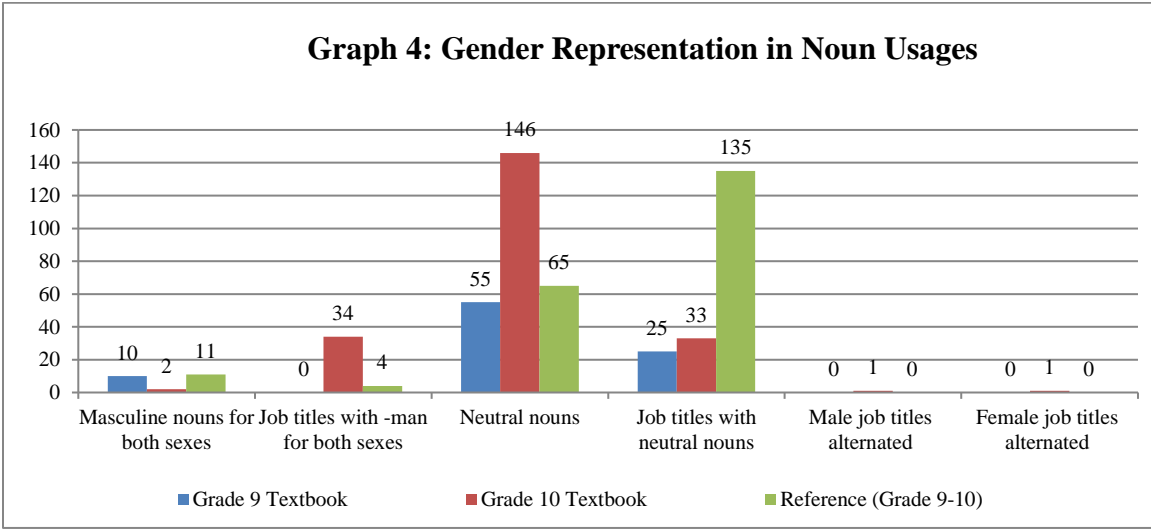
Language usage refers to the way pronouns, proper nouns and nouns are used in written texts with respect to gender representation. To begin with pronoun usages, the document analysis showed that 66 and 27 **masculine pronouns referring to both sexes** have been identified in the textbooks for grade 9 and 10 respectively. The reference material is free from this gender bias. On the contrary, the analysis showed that all the teaching materials did not contain **feminine pronouns referring to both sexes**. This may show that females are marginalized in masculine pronouns used for both sexes in the textbooks for grade 9 and 10.

The **pronouns alternated as she/he** or **he/she**, etc. were not found in the textbook for grade 9. But in the grade 10 textbook, 5 pronouns alternated as she/he and 9 pronouns alternated as he/she were identified. The pronouns alternated in the supplementary material are almost proportional (3 as she/he and 2 as he/she). The analysis is likely to indicate that males are more respected in pronouns alternated in grade 10.

Regarding male or female first order in pronouns, more male first order pronouns in the textbooks for grade 9 (7:0) and 10 (5:2) were found. Unlikely, such gender imbalance was not found in the supplementary material (13:11). So, the problem is with the textbooks that seem to empower males more than females.



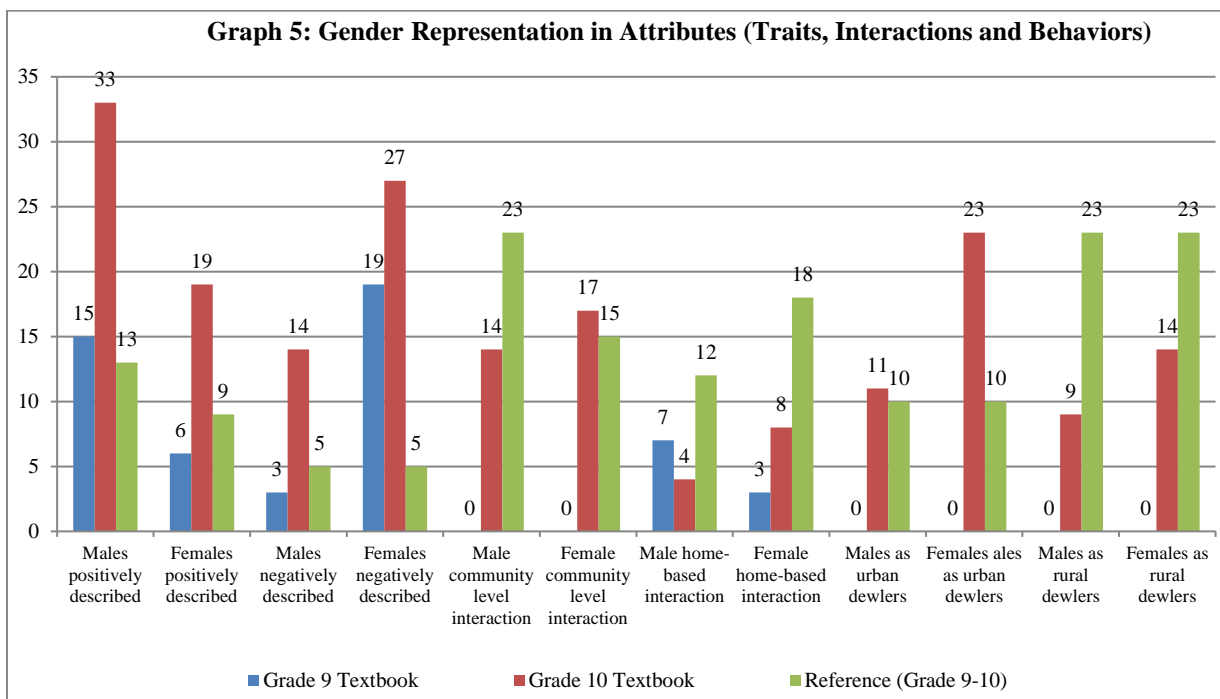
The textbook analysis on proper nouns also showed that **male first names** surpassed those for females in all the materials analyzed – 290:0, 232:198, and 449:257 in grade 9, grade 10 and the reference material respectively. Similarly, the **surnames for males** and females are unbalanced in the reference material (5:0), but there are no such proper nouns in the textbooks for grades 9 and 10. **Male full names** are also greater than those for females in the reference material (7:4) though such cases were not observed in the textbooks. **Male titles with first names** still exceed those for females in the textbook for grade 10 (8:4) and in the reference material (43:9) but such proper nouns were not used in the textbook for grade 9. On the reverse, **female titles with surnames** are greater than those for men in the material for grade 9 (13:1). The rest materials analyzed did not use titles with surnames. And **titles with full names** for both sexes were found equivalent in the reference material (1:1), while the textbooks did not contain such proper nouns. And the **male first order proper nouns** were greater than those for females in the reference material (5:2), but the rest materials were free from such bias. As can be seen from the analysis, except more female titles in grade 9, the greater number of male first names in the three materials, men surnames and full names in the reference material, men titles with first names in grade 10 and the reference materials and greater male first order in the reference material seem to show that males are more important than females.



**Masculine nouns** like man, mankind, etc. referring to both sexes were found in all the materials (10, 2 and 11 in grade 9, grade 10 and the reference materials respectively). Similarly, **job titles** ending in – man referring to both sexes were 34 and 4 in grade 10 textbook and the reference material respectively

but there are no such cases in grade 9. What is good is a large number of noun usages are neutral (55, 146 and 65 in grade 9, grade 10 and reference material respectively). This is also true with **job titles with neutral nouns** (25, 33 and 135 respectively). The **job titles alternated** is also proportional in grade 10 textbook (1:1) but there were no such case in the other materials. One male first order noun was also found in the textbook for grade 10 but there was nothing in the other materials. In short, masculine nouns in the three materials and masculine job titles in grade 10 and the reference materials refer to both sexes. These usages can undermine the females' engagement in different occasions.

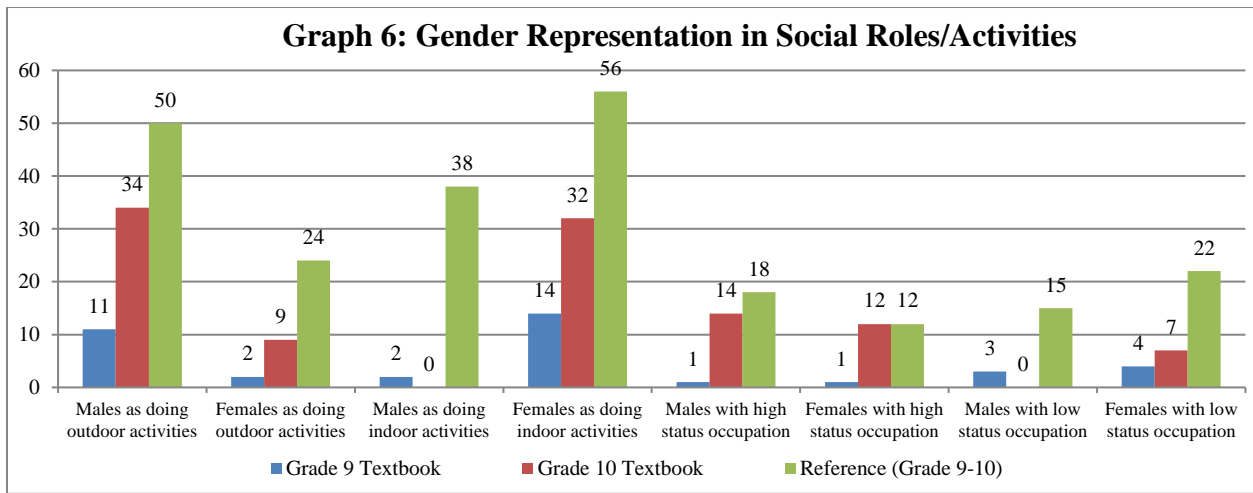
### 4.1.3 Gender Representation in Attributes



Attributes refers to traits, interactions and behaviors assigned to each gender in written texts. In the grade 9 textbook, grade 10 textbook and the reference material, more males are described with positive traits than females (15:6, 33:19, and 13:9 respectively). However, females' traits are described more negatively than males in the grade 9 (19:3) and grade 10 (27:14) textbooks. In the reference material, the case is similar (5:5). Secondly, no gender is described as having community level interaction, while females are found with more family level interaction than males (7:3) in the grade 9 textbook. In the grade 10 textbook, females are portrayed as having more community level interaction and more family level interaction than males (17:14 and 8:4 respectively). In the case of the reference material, males are described as having more community level interactions (23:15), while females are described with more family-based interactions (18:12). Regarding behaviour, neither gender is described as urban or rural dweller in the grade 9 textbook. In the textbook for grade 10, females are described as more urban (23:11) and rural (14:9) dwellers. In the reference material, females and males are described equally as urban (10:10) and rural 23:23 dwellers. From this analysis, it seems possible to say that, except women' higher community level interaction and urban dwelling behavior in grade 10 textbook, and the

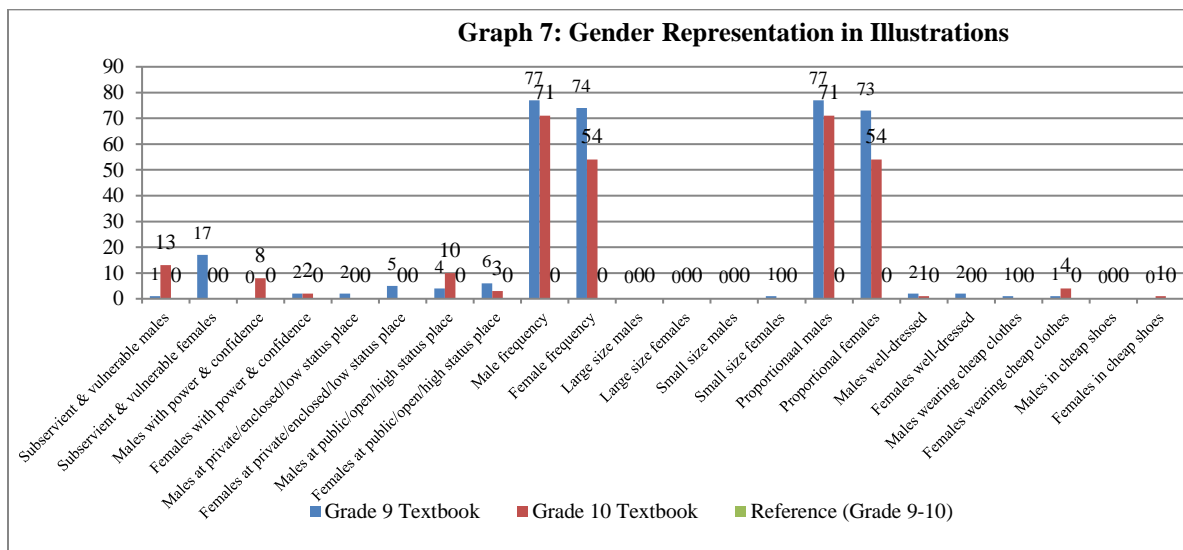
equivalent behaviors in the reference material, the rest gender representation variables depict males' superiority.

#### 4.1.4 Gender Representation in Roles/Activities



Roles/Activities refer to the actions and social functions described in the text for each gender. To begin with outdoor activities in the grade 9 textbook, grade 10 textbook and reference material, males were described as doing more outdoor activities than females (11:2, 34:9 and 50:24 respectively). On the contrary, females are described as engaged in more indoor activities than their counterparts in the grade 9 textbook (14:2), grade 10 textbook (32:0) and reference material (56:38). Regarding high/low status occupation in the EFL materials analysed, males outnumber females in high status occupations in the grade 10 textbook (14:12) and the reference material (18:12), while they are equivalent in the grade 9 textbook (1:1). However, more females are described with low status occupation in the materials (4:3, 7:0 and 22:15 respectively). From this analysis, except the equivalent high status occupation in the textbook for grade 9, males are shown to be more active compared to women.

#### 4.1.5 Gender Representation in Illustrations



In the illustrations five aspects were observed: posture, background/setting, frequency, size, and style.

- a) **Posture:** The posture analysis was made by observing the images in the EFL materials and interpreting whether they show subservient and vulnerable (like begging, eyes up, head down and scratching head) or power and confidence (like face forward, hands crossed on belly, hands on hips or in pocket and direct eye contact) depending on the Ethiopian culture. The analysis of the illustrations in the textbooks shows that few (7) females were depicted subservient to males. That is, 1 woman begging by waving a hand is displayed in grade 9 textbook. Similarly, a poor woman bending down, 1 girl harassed by a man with an automobile, 2 women bending down due to illness, many Bangladesh females rescued by their counterparts, and 1 woman talking with no direct eye contact to a traffic policeman are illustrated in the textbook for grade 10. There are no male images with such conditions.
- b) **Background:** Regarding the setting where females and males were seen in the illustrations, more females than males (5:2) were portrayed at low status places such as private/enclosed places in the grade 9 textbook. In grade 10 textbook, there are no low status image background places. Again, more females were displayed at high status public places like stadiums than males (6:4) in the grade 9 textbook. However, more males were shown in public places (10:3) in the grade 10 textbook.
- c) **Frequency:** This refers to the number of times male and female images appear in the EFL materials. So, the analysis shows that males appeared more often than females (77:74 in grade 9 and 71:54 in grade 10 textbooks).
- d) **Size:** Size is about whether a gender's images are larger, smaller or equivalent as compared to the counterpart images. Accordingly, the analysis shows that only one female image was noted at a smaller size in the grade 9 textbook.
- e) **Style:** Style is about whether the clothes/shoes/jewellery images are smart or scruffy in the local context. Regarding the styles in the grade 9 textbook, 2 females and 2 males were equally well dressed (2:2), 1 female and 1 male wore shabby clothes and 1 female wore ordinary shoes. In grade 10, 4 females wore substandard clothes. The rest wearing styles by male and female illustrations in both textbooks are difficult to judge, so we cannot say whether they show imbalance in status. The reference material had no image.

From this analysis, we can conclude that females are shown less often in the images used in the textbooks, and few are shown in subservient postures and in lower status image backgrounds.

## 4.2 Perceptions and Perceived Effects

The data on perceptions and perceived effects came from 18 interviewees in 3 schools (2 male students, 2 female students, 1 male teacher and 1 female teacher from each school). So there were a total of 9 males and 9 females in the interview.

### 4.2.1 Perceptions towards Gender Representation/Bias

The perception items were about gender representation in visibility, language usages, attributes, roles/activities and illustrations.

**Visibility:** During the interview, respondents were asked about what they thought about females/ males mentioned more often in words and illustrations in their textbooks than their counterparts. The 5 teachers (3 females and 2 males) and 4 students (2 males and 2 females) replied that they thought it was appropriate to increase the visibility of females. Their reason was to empower females by reducing the superiority of males over females; the society considers males as more powerful and respectful. However, 2 other female and 1 male students indicated that they did not give attention to the visibility of each gender as their focus was on the contents of the lessons in the textbooks. On the other hand, 1 male teacher, 1 female student and 1 male student argued that mentioning more males or females causes gender bias that affects student's future lives. Still, 1 female student and 2 male students stated differently that equal visibility in English textbooks is necessary; if not, females need to outnumber to encourage them that they can do what males do. This may indicate that 15 out of 18 respondents had low perception of gender representation in visibility.

**Language Usages:** In addition to visibility, respondents were asked about their perceptions towards gender-sensitive language usages (pronouns, proper nouns and nouns). Regarding pronouns, 1 female teacher stated that plural pronouns (you, they, and we) for both sexes and pronouns alternated for unknown sex are acceptable. She added that more feminine pronouns and female first order pronouns are appropriate to motivate females to do different activities and converse empowering males against females. The other 2 female teachers also responded that they preferred to use pronouns like you, we, they for both sexes. On the other hand, 1 male teacher preferred more male first order for unspecified sex and neutral pronouns (you, we or they) to avoid gender bias. Another male teacher said that he/she or she/he is the appropriate way of using pronouns; it is not good to represent both sexes using either feminine/masculine pronouns. The last male teacher said that using masculine pronouns for both sexes is appropriate as it is a usual trend to use masculine pronouns for both sexes. He added that using plural masculine pronouns for both sexes, pronouns altered (she/he)for unspecified sexes, one or other neutral words for both sexes and male first order pronouns (he and she) are appropriate uses of pronouns.

Students were also asked about pronoun usages regarding gender representation. The first female student stated that the right way of using pronouns in English textbooks is using more male first order pronouns (he/she or him/her). She added that both sexes should be equally represented in written texts. Other 2 female students also replied that more feminine pronouns and female first order pronouns than masculine ones should appear in the textbooks. One of these students justified that such pronoun usage compensates the previous underestimation of girls. If impossible, she says, both masculine and feminine pronouns should be represented equally. The 4<sup>th</sup> student still had another view that equal representation of feminine or masculine pronouns should appear in the textbooks. The 5<sup>th</sup> girl said textbook writers should use neutral pronouns for both sexes. The last student also said that using pronouns altered as she/he or he/she and using more feminine pronouns in the exercise sections are the appropriate ways of keeping gender equality in English textbooks. She also remarked that feminine pronouns need to appear more frequently.

When male students were interviewed on masculine/feminine pronoun usages, they perceived in different ways. One student stated that he did not give any attention to the pronouns in English textbooks. Rather, he focused on how to use each type of pronouns in speaking or writing. Even he did

not consider the pronouns that appear more frequently or come in the first order. Another student, on the other hand, stated that using masculine pronouns for both sexes is more appropriate as this pronoun usage helps to represent both males and females equally and shows gender equity. Another student confirmed that pronouns used for both sexes like they, we, you, and I are very important to show equal representations of males and females in English textbooks. Another student supported that girls/women should be represented with their feminine pronouns; if they are represented by masculine pronouns they feel that they are represented by males. Two other students also stated that both males and females should be represented by plural pronouns like they, we, and you that represent both sexes.

One can infer from the data that teachers' and students' perceptions about gender-sensitive pronoun usages seem baffled - partly correct and partly wrong.

Respondents were also asked about their perceptions towards proper noun usages. Accordingly, all the 3 female teachers said that using first names for both sexes is acceptable. The first male teacher also suggested using similar naming system (first names, surnames and titles with first/surnames) for males and females is appropriate rather than using different forms of proper nouns for males and females; if not, females should be given more attention to encourage them since they are culturally underestimated. Nevertheless, the other two male teachers replied that both sexes should be named in similar ways: first/surnames, first/surname with titles, etc. But one of these teachers commented that it is not appropriate to use surnames for Ethiopian culture. Three female students also replied that the appropriate way of using proper nouns is using surname with title for both sexes as others reflect unequal gender representation which, in turn, affects boys/girls lives. On the other hand, other two female students stated that using first names for both sexes is more appropriate to avoid gender bias against both sexes, but surnames are not appropriate in Ethiopian cultures. The last girl noted that the appropriate way of using proper nouns is using full names for those who have similar surnames. She added that calling both males and females with titles is appropriate. In general, she says that proper nouns which show superiority or inferiority of men or women should not be used in English textbooks. Moreover, she stated that male and female first order should be balanced. Male students also stated that using first names, surnames, titles, etcetera symmetrically for both sexes is appropriate to avoid gender bias. The analysis may imply that teachers and students had low perception of proper noun usages that maintain gender balance as they forwarded perplexed response.

Regarding gender-sensitive noun usages, the female teachers and a male teacher said that masculine job titles (chairman, policeman and the like) should not be used for both sexes as they represent only men. Instead, they claimed that alternated job titles (chairman/woman, policeman/woman) and neutral nouns (president, chairperson, worker, police and so on) are the right ways of using nouns used for unspecified sex. The male teacher added that neutral job titles (chairperson/president/manager, police officer, fire fighter/attendant, sales representative/shop assistant, spokesperson and business people/executives) should be used for both sexes, According to him, masculine nouns (man and layman)for both sexes are not appropriate as these nouns refer only to men. The second male teacher and a male student also added that nouns like human, people and person should be used as they refer to both sexes. This student, another female student and the third male teacher also stated that using



nouns like mankind and businessman referring to both sexes are not appropriate. Besides, the student said that nouns used for both sexes like police officer instead of policeman and chairperson instead of chairman should be used. Other male students also stated that it is better to use nouns like police officer instead of policeman, worker, instead of workman, president and people instead of nouns like mankind, layman, sportsman and policeman to refer to both sexes. Similarly, the female students stated that nouns like president, worker and police officer representing both sexes equally should be used. These responses seem to show that respondents knew masculine nouns referring to both sexes misrepresent females.

**Attributes:** Regarding attributes (traits), respondents were probed on the group of the society (males or females) displayed as studious, courageous, ambitious, hardworking, morally and physically strong, creative, independent, decisive, etcetera and the vice versa in their area. Almost all the respondents replied that male traits are displayed positively and females negatively due to the uneducated society. The interview responses on perceptions towards traits are likely to show that females are considered less important than males.

Under attributes, respondents were also asked about the different social groups' home/family and community level interactions. As female teacher respondents said, men were more engaged in community level interactions than women who are more active in family level interactions than men in the society because of the local tradition. Male teachers and female students also exemplified that men actively participate in leading social activities like ikub and idir (formal and semi-formal financial and insurance unions), while females are concerned with leading home-based interactions. A female student further explained that a woman who is able to lead her family can also lead any organization as leading the family is the base for leading the country; however, women do not get community level responsibilities because of cultural influence as an Amharic proverb runs, 'ሴት ወደ ማጀት ወንድ ወደ አደባባይ', a female for indoor activities and a male for outdoor activities. The rest students had also similar responses. This may indicate that females' interaction is dominantly home-based which sets them back from the desired female empowerment.

Respondents were also asked about the behavior attributes of the group of the society (females or males). All the female teachers and two male teachers indicated that living in urban area is more suggested for men than women as men are supposed to withstand the problems they encounter and are believed to be hard workers. They also added that women are considered unfit for urban life as they are believed to be less resistant to challenges, less risk takers and incapable of doing difficult activities. On the contrary, one male teacher replied that women are encouraged to live in the town as women can fit town life. Female students also said that men are considered as urban dwellers. One of them reasoned out that girls get early marriage, so they start living in countryside and serve their parents and parents-in-law. Her second reason was that the society presumes females would be exposed to unwanted pregnancy if they live in towns/cities. Thirdly, she believed that females cannot survive urban life as they cannot work harder and generate income. Male students' responses were also similar to females'. This may indicate that better life in urban areas is recommended for males rather than for females.

**Roles/Activities:** Respondent teachers and students were asked whether they agree that females can do outdoor activities like looking after domestic animals, ploughing, threshing, and winnowing. All the teachers accepted that females can do outdoor activities that need physical strength and that they are able to do different activities that men can do. Moreover, they said that there should not be division of labor based on gender/culture; men should do both outdoor and indoor activities as females do. However, they noted that men are generally encouraged to do outdoor activities and high status jobs like doctor, manager and pilot, whereas women are encouraged to do household activities like cooking, caring children and low status jobs like secretary and teaching. When they were asked why, they replied that this was because of the tradition. All the students had also similar idea that females should do outdoor activities since they can do what men can do. They also added the textbooks should not show differences of men and women in occupational roles. Even they believed that men should do low status activities. The analysis is likely to show that the respondents had good perceptions about role/activities, but the society looks to go against their perceptions.

**Illustrations:** Respondents were also invited to look at the illustrations in the textbooks and indicate their perceptions towards them with respect to gender representation. 3 Female and 3 male teachers as well as 6 male students said that most pictures equally represent both sexes of different ages. They said that men and women are shown participating in symmetrical activities like athletics. However, the 3 female teachers and 1 male student said that girls do household activities like cooking and baking when boys play football, and act as a manager. One female student also said that she was happy to see pictures representing both girl and boy athletes. Particularly, she was very happy when she saw pictures representing role model females. Another female student added that she became angry when she saw female pictures cooking or baking while men pictures act as managers or doctors. Four other female students also remarked that pictures should equally represent both sexes. Thus, the respondents seem to be aware of pictures that show gender misrepresentation in roles/activities. Their perceptions from the perspectives of posture, frequency, size, wearing styles and picture backgrounds seem low/poor.

#### **4.2.2 Perceived Effects of Gender Misrepresentation**

Teachers and students were asked about the effects of more **visible** females than males in EFL textbooks or vice versa on females/males. Accordingly, 3 female teachers and 6 girls said that more female visibility can encourage females since they take it as affirmative action. However, they said they would be discouraged when males are more visible. One of the girls commented that there should not be more male visibility since it forces females to be passive in social and economic activities, whereas more female visibility can drive them do a lot for their society. Two male teachers and 1 male student also said that less visibility of females would limit females' participation in social, political, economic and educational affairs. One of these teachers and 2 other male students added that more visibility of females does not affect males as they culturally consider themselves brave, intelligent and so on. The third male teacher and 2 other students also said that more female or male visibility can cause gender bias which affects student's future lives though the problem is more severe on girls. This may show that females can easily be discouraged or encouraged depending on their visibility as compared to males who seem to be insensitive to such conditions as the culture has built their confidence.

Respondents were also asked about the effects of language usages on gender. The first question here was about gender biased **pronoun usages** like use of feminine/masculine pronouns for both sexes, more female/male first order pronouns and more feminine/masculine pronouns appearing in written texts. In response, 3 female teachers said that more female pronouns in written texts, more female first order pronouns and so on motivate them to do different activities and shift people's earlier tradition which undermines females. Six female students also accepted that more masculine pronouns could cause psychological, moral and social problems like inferiority, dependency and hopelessness on females. One of these students added, 'As a female student, I will be angry, feel inferior and consider men as our governors.' On the other hand, 3 male teachers and 6 male students said that using more masculine/feminine pronouns affects boys' and girls' lives as they might feel inferiority/superiority complex. Thus, it can be said that the impact of more masculine pronoun usages on females seems to be more severe.

As part of gender-sensitive language, the respondents were also asked about the effects of **proper noun usages** (surnames for men but first names for women, title with surname for men but only surname for women, more male first order proper nouns, first names for men but surnames for women, title with surname for women but only surname for men and more female first order proper nouns). Almost all the respondents said that females could be discouraged due to proper noun usages devaluing females. They added that males might not be affected by male disrespecting proper noun usages. However, 1 male teacher noted that both sexes can be affected by unequal usages. Hence, it can be said that disrespecting proper noun usages can have negative effect on females rather than on males.

Thirdly, interviewees were asked about the effects of **nouns** (man, mankind, ...) and job titles (sportsman, postman, ...) referring to both sexes as well as more male/female first order nouns (chairman/woman or chairwoman/man) on males/females. All the teachers (3 males and 3 females) reported that noun usages empowering males might deter females from aspiring for something better. All the students (6 males and 6 females) had also similar responses. This may indicate that masculine nouns and job titles referring to both sexes as well as more male first order noun usages may limit females from exerting their at most effort for the betterment of their future lives but males do not seem to experience such effects as they are culturally empowered.

Interviewees were also asked about the effects of positive and negative **attribute** descriptions – trait (studious, courageous, unintelligent, deficient) interaction (community or home level interaction), and behaviour (urban or rural dwellers) – on gender. All the respondents said that they did not like negative attribute descriptions against each sex. They also specifically pointed out that negative descriptions against females would make women/girls unsuccessful and hopeless in social, economic and political aspects. One may conclude from this that negative descriptions attached to females will have more adverse effects on females.

Concerning **roles/activities**, interviewees were asked about the effects of positive (doing outdoor activities needing physical strength, having highly paid jobs, etc.) and negative (doing indoor activities,

having unpaid or less paid jobs, etc.) role/activity descriptions on males/females. All the respondents replied that it is unfair to portray only males as doing outdoor activities and having well-paid jobs, while women are limited to indoor activities and low status jobs. The female teachers said that bias in positive description of males and negative description of females can cause psychological, moral and mental problems on females, whereas the effects of the reverse description was not that much visible on males. Male teachers' responses also consolidate that women would believe they are created to support males. Male and female students also said that such descriptions could cause social crises, psychological and moral problems and increases gender gap among the society. Hence, the responses are likely to show that unbalanced assignments of roles/activities to males and females can discourage those described negatively.

Lastly, respondents were asked about the effects of the ways **illustrations** are displayed in the textbooks on their future lives. Hence, all the teachers (3 females and 3 males) speculated that activity difference between male and female picture like a girl cooking and a boy playing football affects women's participation in different activities and their future lives as they believe that they cannot do activities like playing football, ploughing etc. that males can do. Male teachers and all the student respondents added that such illustrations may dismay girls' classroom participation and their future lives. These responses probably indicate that activity difference in pictures can limit females' participation in social, economic and political activities. Other picture considerations (frequency, size, background, wearing styles) were not mentioned as gender empowerment factors.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions were drawn. First, the EFL materials seem mere reflections of the male dominated social tradition. This might **negate females' empowerment**. Besides, females' underestimation and their sensitivity to most gender representation factors may **expose females to** school dropouts, unpaid or less paid occupations, dependency and limited participation in different occasions. Thirdly, females might have posed **psychological barriers** like inferiority complex due to the way the EFL materials address gender variables and the practices in and out of classrooms. Lastly, Teachers' low perceptions may imply that there are **pedagogical gaps** regarding gender representation.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded. First, the findings of the study may be used as inputs for subsequent material preparations. In this regard, EFL material preparation **policy briefs** concerning visibility, gender-sensitive language usages, attributes, roles/activities and illustrations need to be prepared to minimize mere reflections of male dominated social practices. Secondly, **sharing the findings** of the study with educators, researchers, gender organizations, policy makers, and other concerned bodies via website, publication, seminars, workshops, symposiums and/or conferences may help to combat gender misrepresentation resulting

from visibility, language usages, attributes, roles/activities and illustrations. Besides, awareness raising **pedagogical trainings** on how to mediate gender stereotypes from visibility, language usages, attributes, roles/activities and illustrations should be given to teacher respondents. Furthermore, the study indicated that female participants seemed to be sensitive to most gender representation variables. In that case, they need **psychological support** to avoid/minimize inferiority complex. Above all, the study was conducted qualitatively on few participants. Thereby, the results are not generalizable. Hence, **another large scale investigation** into perception and perceived effects using various instruments for triangulation will give comprehensive picture.

## Authors



**Yewulsew Melak Mehari (MA in TEFL, Assistant Prof.),** Debre Markos University, Ethiopia. Yewulsew Mehari is an Assistant Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Department of Foreign Language and Literature in Social Science and Humanities College, Debre Markos University. Yewulsew is actively involved in many different activities at the university including working as a lecturer, researcher director, and as a trainer in the higher diploma program for academic staff; and she has supervised students at masters' level to graduation. She is also involved in research projects and has one published journal article.

Yewulsew has experience as an English teacher in primary, secondary, and preparatory schools; along with engaging in teacher training as lecturer at the Teachers Training College, she also served as the vice president of the Teachers Association for two years. She was the Director of Gender HIV and Disability Affairs Directorate for nearly four years. Yewulsew is currently a Phd student in Debre Markos University, Ethiopia.



**Yigzaw Kerebih Belete (MA in TEFL, Assistant Prof.),** Debre Markos University, Ethiopia. Yigzaw is an assistant professor in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Department of English Language and Literature, Debre Markos University, Ethiopia. He has 24 years of English language teaching experience in secondary schools, teacher education colleges and university. Yigzaw has conducted more than 15 research projects, with seven of these published both in national and international journals. In addition, he has been involved in preparing teaching materials, training manuals and modules, and giving trainings in relation to English

language teaching and learning. He has also worked extensively in the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) as a trainer of teaching methods, assessment techniques, and reflective teaching for university instructors. His many years of teaching experience, preparing materials, and giving trainings has given him insight into English language literacy in general and English language learning in particular. Most importantly, his education background, with a Bachelor of Education in English (B.Ed in English) and Master of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (M.Ed in TEFL) has increased his critical thinking and reflection in relation to students' learning needs and feelings in the teaching materials. These things inspired him to participate in this research project –exploring empowering girls through EFL textbooks.



**Mekonnen Esubalew Tariku (PhD in TEFL, Assistant Prof.).** Mekonnen Esubalew holds a Bachelor of Education in English from Kotebe College of Teacher Education, and Master of Arts, and a Phd. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from Addis Ababa University. He is now an Assistant Professor in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Department of English Language and Literature at Debre Markos University, Ethiopia. He teaches skills, methodology, research, and material design and

development courses to undergraduate and postgraduate students; he advises MA and PhD TEFL students; and he participates in community service and university/national level curriculum development activities. He also serves as the Research, Community Service, University-Industry Linkage, as well as the Postgraduate Coordinator for the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at Debre Markos, University. He has completed five unpublished research projects. He has organized, attended and presented at seminars, workshops, symposiums and conferences. He also reviews papers for local and foreign journal publications.

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