

## Do EFL learners care about gender representation in grammar textbooks?

Marcin Lewandowski  
Adam Mickiewicz University  
marcinl@amu.edu.pl

It appears that very few research themes in sociolinguistics have been as thoroughly explored as gender representation in teaching materials (notably in EFL textbooks). However, as Sunderland (2014) argues, within this broad area of investigation there are still several issues that need to be studied more comprehensively. One of them is gender portrayal in various genres or sub-genres of textbooks. Another question that has not yet been satisfactorily addressed is how foreign language learners themselves perceive the images of men and women in teaching resources. The present contribution seeks to fill these gaps.

The first part of the paper reports major findings from a study of gender representation in six UK-published EFL grammar books from a diachronic perspective. It aims to demonstrate whether and how the images of men and women have changed over the span of more than 20 years, in response to the guidelines for non-sexist (inclusive) language in English language educational materials. Based on the analysis of constructed examples and practice sentences that have been grouped into 11 semantic domains (e.g., appearance, character traits, employment or intellectual activity), it is shown that in the recently published books, women and men are depicted in a much less stereotyped manner.

The latter section of the presentation, which draws on the findings of a survey conducted among EFL undergraduate students, focuses specifically on attitudes to gender representation. Its primary objective is to check to what extent both male and female learners (the sex of the respondents is an important variable) are sensitive to the portrayal of women and men in English teaching materials. In the main part of the survey, the students have been asked to evaluate selected sentences from the aforementioned EFL grammar books with respect to gender representation. One of the underlying conclusions is that textbook authors need to be fully aware that the linguistic content of their course books will have implications on the way at least some of their users will think and communicate.

### Selected references

- Amalsaleh, Ehya & Javid, Fatemeh & Rahimi, Ali. 2010. The power of language and ELT textbooks. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 9. 2052-2056.
- Jones, Martha A. & Kitetu, Catherine & Sunderland, Jane. 1997. Discourse roles, gender and language textbook dialogues: Who learns what from John and Sally? *Gender and Education* 9(4). 469-490.
- Lewandowski, Marcin 2014. Gender stereotyping in EFL grammar textbooks. A diachronic approach. *Linguistik Online* 68 (6). 83-99.
- Macaulay, Monica & Brice, Colleen. 1997. Don't Touch My Projectile: Gender Bias and Stereotyping in Syntactic Examples. *Language* 73(4). 798-825.
- Pawelczyk, Joanna & Pakuła, Łukasz & Sunderland, Jane. 2014. Issues of power in relation to gender and sexuality in the EFL classroom - An overview. *Journal of Gender and Power* 1. 49-66.
- Sunderland, Jane. 2014. Gender representation in language textbooks: moving on. *Plenary talk given at the Young Linguists' Meeting in Poznań 2014*.