



## Gender Representation in Nepalese Secondary Level English Textbooks: A Multimodal Analysis

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### Abstract

English has been playing a central role in Nepalese school education for centuries, serving both as a subject and a medium of instruction. As mandatory at-hand materials in teaching and learning processes, textbooks play a vital role in achieving curriculum objectives and influence students' cognitive development and gender awareness. In Nepal, where gender stereotypical norms persist, it is crucial to maintain gender balance in educational materials for fostering equity. Although equitable quality education for all is the agenda for sustainable development goals and feminist scholars' advocacy for gender-neutral language and imagery, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2019 does not explicitly address gender balance in ELT curricula, policy implementation or in textbooks. This study analyzes gender biases and stereotypical representations in the Grade-10 compulsory English textbook used in Nepalese schools. Using a multimodal technique, the study analyses authorships, layout, visual images, reading texts, and exercises to uncover gender representation. The findings disclose persistent underrepresentation and biased gender role representations of female characters, and a lack of gender-inclusive activities in the textbook. The study highlights the need for revising the newly implemented secondary level compulsory English textbooks to promote gender-sensitive and gender inclusive learning environments, collaborating among key stakeholders.

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### Introduction

Textbooks are fundamental tools in the teaching-learning process, serving as primary resources for teachers and students. They provide structured content, activities, exercises, and tasks aligned with

curriculum objectives, thereby facilitating systematic knowledge acquisition and skill development. As Sheldon (1987) explains, textbooks are “published materials specially designed to help language learners improve their linguistic and communicative abilities” (p. 23). Hutchinson and Torres (1993) add

that textbooks offer a pre-packaged set of teaching materials tailored to learners' levels, interests, and needs, providing a framework for effective guidance. Beyond academic support, textbooks also shape learners' social understanding by transmitting norms, values, and attitudes, positioning them as critical instruments for both education and social change.

Despite their importance, textbooks are not without challenges, particularly in the representation of gender. Gender representation in ELT textbook refers to how males and females are portrayed through texts, visual images, icons, signs, layout and authorships, shaping learners' perceptions of gender roles and identities. Textbooks often reflect societal norms and values, either by reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes or by promoting gender equality.

Studies have consistently revealed issues of gender bias, inequality, and stereotypes in educational resources. UNESCO (2007), for example, reported that textbooks in many countries depict women and girls in highly stereotyped roles, reinforcing traditional norms that limit their aspirations. Such portrayals can demotivate female learners and diminish their engagement with educational content. Feminist theorists argue that textbooks often perpetuate patriarchal ideologies by emphasizing male dominance and marginalizing female contributions, both in content and context (Lazar, 2007). These biases are significant as they influence students' perceptions of gender roles and their place in society.

In Nepal, where teachers often teach textbooks rather than curricula, textbooks remain indispensable in classrooms as they are the most reliable operational source to meet the objectives of the ELT curriculum

in question. But they are rarely scrutinized for their alignment with cultural, social, and gender equity principles (Paneru, 2019). Preliminary observations of the selected Grade 10 compulsory English textbook suggest a marked disparity in gender representation. Male characters are often depicted in powerful and ambitious roles; while female characters are relegated to stereotypical positions such as homemakers, caregivers, or professionals in traditionally "feminine" occupations like teaching or nursing. Such portrayals reinforce traditional hierarchies, presenting males as superior and females as subordinate. This implicit messaging can demotivate female learners and sustain systemic gender inequalities in education and beyond.

Although some studies have examined textbooks in Nepal, few have critically analyzed them from a gender perspective. For instance, Bohora (2022) explored cultural representations in a Grade 10 English textbook, and Kattel (2021) focused on its physical and academic features. However, no research has systematically analyzed the new Grade 10 English textbook through a feminist lens to explore how it portrays males and females in terms of status, roles, occupations, and activities. This gap is significant given the role textbooks play in shaping societal attitudes and learners' aspirations.

This study seeks to address this gap by critically analyzing the representation of gender in the Grade 10 compulsory English textbook of Nepal. By focusing on aspects such as status, roles, occupations, language use, exercises, and literary texts, the research aims to highlight implicit biases and provide recommendations for more inclusive and equitable textbook content. Through this analysis, the study aspires to contribute to

the development of educational materials that challenge stereotypes and promote gender equity in Nepalese education.

### **Literature Review**

Examining how gender inequalities and patriarchal social orders are discursively constructed, maintained and challenged is the main focus of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Lazar (2007) argues that feminist CDA critiques the discourses that sustain imbalanced power relations privileging men while systematically disempowering women. Such academic engagement aims to raise critical awareness about gender discrimination by exposing the mechanisms of domination embedded in social discourses. The understanding of gender as an ideological structure that divides society into hierarchical classes of men and women and perpetuating relations of dominance and subordination is the focus of feminist CDA. The gender incongruity manifests explicitly in exclusionary social practices, physical violence and sexual harassment (Lazar, 2007). The main goal of feminist CDA is to reveal the intricate interaction between power and gender and to analyze how these dynamics are reproduced and resisted through textual and semiotic representations including visual images, gestures, and social practices. Feminist CDA also explores how societal norms construct gendered identities by deconstructing such representations both through binary distinctions (men vs. women) and the reinforcement of masculinity. The feminist CDA framework not only serves as a voice for the unvoiced, but also aims at dismantling gender-based inequalities and advocate for equitable power distribution in societal structures.

Kress and Leeuwen's (2001) concept of multimodality emphasizes that communication

involves multiple modes such as linguistic, aural, visual, gestural, and spatial, working together to convey meaning. They argue that meaning making process includes interaction of diverse semiotic resources instead of being limited to language alone. Their framework highlights how different modes contribute to shaping meaning based on cultural and social contexts. This framework is applicable to analyze the multiple of modes of textbook contents from gender or cultural perspectives (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001).

Textbooks play a significant role in education as the main medium of transmitting knowledge, shape attitudes of students towards societal norms and individual roles and responsibilities. More than instructional tools, textbooks are cultural artifacts that reflect and circulate societal values and gender role expectations. In many cultural contexts, gender differences are perceived as natural, commencing with the classification of individuals as male or female at birth, which sets the platform for differentiated roles, rights, and expectations throughout life (UNESCO, 2007). Besides providing learners with linguistic, cognitive, and communicative competencies (Sheldon, 1987) textbooks, as a complement of the curriculum, often reflect societal constructs, either by reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes or challenging them to promote equity. Scholarship shows that traditional textbooks often project gendered depictions of the world, assigning boys and girls to distinct and stereotypical roles (Dean, 2007). Girls are often portrayed in subordinate roles. Kabeer (2005) asserts that traditional gender roles are a significant barrier in women empowerment, traditional religious narratives often perpetuate gender hierarchies (Ghosh, 2014), it might be one of the reasons for women's mobility is restricted, and their independence is often curtailed by male-dominated family dynamics (Pandey, 2006).

It can significantly influence in shaping their self-perceptions, aspirations, and expectations, resulting demotivation and limiting their achievements (Zafar & Malick, 2006). Such representations highlight the roles of curriculum designers to ensure that textbooks promote inclusivity and foster gender-sensitive attitudes among learners.

Gender equality is a foundation of quality education. Education systems that address gender bias in instructional strategies, curricula, and learning materials create cumulative gender-balanced environments that motivate all genders to succeed. It does not only provide equal opportunities for boys and girls to access education but also ensures that the curriculum is free from stereotypes and promotes equitable treatment. Studies show that gender-sensitive textbooks are instrumental in nurturing inclusive attitudes and dismantling entrenched societal inequalities (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). Feminist theorists argue that societal institutions such as schools, families and media proliferate the social construction of gender, perpetuate norms that shape individuals into gendered identities (Holmes, 2008). Textbooks, as a core practical tool of a school curriculum include their content, imagery, and narratives, reflecting broader patriarchal ideologies. Therefore, as feminists critical CDA critique, textbooks play a significant role to reproduce and contest gender biased discourses through educational texts (Lazar, 2007). This analysis underscores the complex interplay of gender and power, revealing how textbooks can serve as both instruments of socialization and steering of social transformation. As Brugeilles and Cromer (2009) argue, textbooks should not only educate but also act as tools for societal transformation, fostering dialogue and action towards a more inclusive future. By reimagining textbooks as mediators of

equality rather than perpetrators of bias, education systems can play a significant role in reshaping social attitudes and achieving sustainable development.

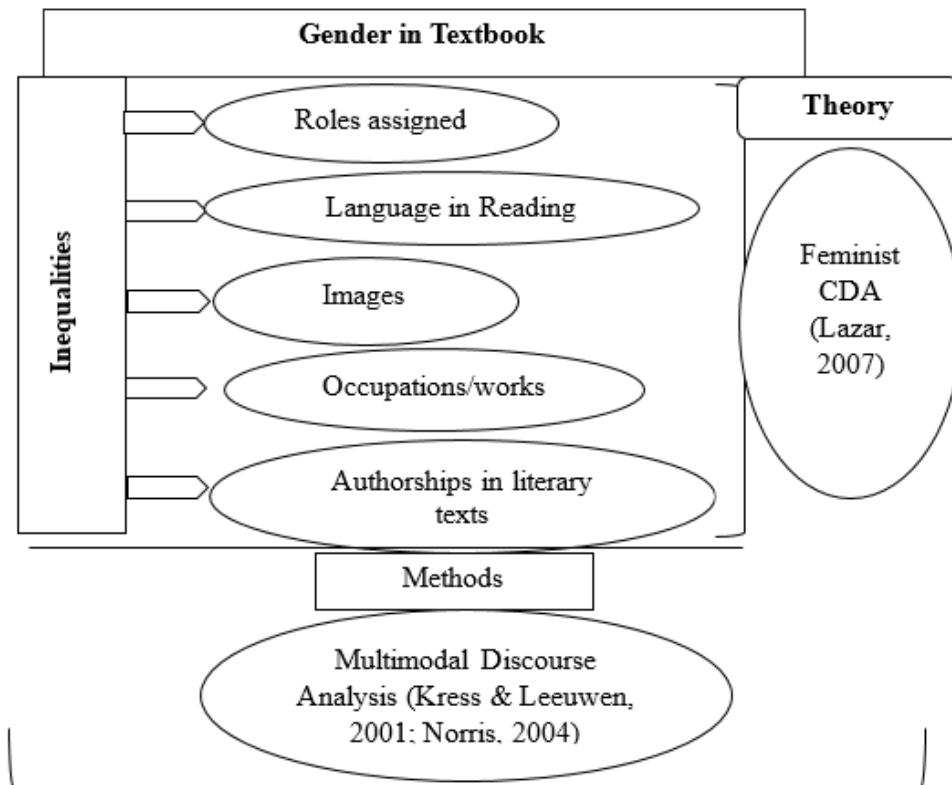
A number of studies carried out on textbook and gender across various contexts expose persistent gender biases that reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and perpetuate gender inequalities and inequities. They have identified a dominant representation of females as subservient and silent compared to male counterparts with prejudices in the textbooks. Males are given higher occupational roles such as scientists, medical doctors, and government officials, while women are depicted in limited and subordinate positions like company employees, fashion models, nurturing children and lower prestigious roles (Bachore & Semela, 2022; Khadka, 2019; Nur & Farzana, 2024). Studies consistently show that males are portrayed in upgraded position while women are depicted in the weak, secondary and downgraded position, marginalizing female's presence in textual and visual representations (Bachore & Semela, 2022; Nur & Farzana, 2024; Selvi & Kocaman, 2020; Upadhyaya & Sah, 2019). They tend to reinforce a dichotomous view of gender, promoting heterosexual norms and essentialized gender roles that restrict individuals' potential for diverse identities and experiences (Selvi & Kocaman, 2020). The imbalanced presence of female authorship (Bohara, 2022) and explicit gender bias in textbook might potentially fosters false knowledge regarding gender; on the one hand, humiliating the females; on the other hand, overburdening the males (Paneru, 2019). These biases have potential implications for students' gender perceptions and identity development (Lee, 2014).

Such multiple studies conducted across diverse contexts reveal that despite efforts to modernize educational materials, the ‘male-first’ phenomenon and the underrepresentation of women in both textual and visual elements remain prevalent, contributing to the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Almost all of the studies highlight the need for continuous studies from different perspectives on textbooks implemented in diverse educational contexts to foster equality

in quality education. Therefore, it is justifiable to analyze gender in the Grade 10 compulsory English textbook using multimodal approach, focusing on authorships, roles, activities, occupations and position assigned to the males and females to develop gender balanced textbooks in future.

### Conceptual Framework

The study was conducted within the following conceptual framework.



The framework shows that the study concentrated on gender representation in the Grade 10 compulsory English textbook, aiming especially to exploring the gender inequality in roles assigned, language in reading texts, portrayal of images, occupation or work assigned and authorship in literary texts included in the textbook. The analysis

was done using feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2007) as a theoretical lens and multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001; Norris, 2004) as methods. Lazar’s (2007) concept of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) emphasizes to analyzing and interrogating the ways language and discourse perpetuate gender

inequalities and power incongruities. FCDA is originated in feminist theory and critical discourse analysis which aims at revealing how discourse constructs, maintains, and legitimizes gendered power relations in various social contexts. It explicitly focuses on political and emancipatory agenda, seeking to advance social transformation by exposing subtle, latent and manifested forms of gender prejudice and discrimination in texts, media, and everyday interactions. Whereas multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001; Norris, 2004) provided methodological guidance to delve into critical analysis of gender disparities in multiples forms of contents in the selected textbook.

### **Research Methods**

Kress & Leeuwen's (2001) and Norris' (2004) multimodal discourse analysis was the research design of the study. Kress & Leeuwen (2001) state that multimodality refers to the combination of multiple modes of communication that are key resources in the meaning-making process. Beyond vocal or written modes, communication includes images, gestures, sound quality, postures, movement, background and foreground, spatial arrangements, and more. The use of modes is shaped by social and cultural contexts, and it interplays between modes and their socio-cultural significance. The choice and integration of modes in effective communication are determined by the contexts. Each mode of communication is complementary to the others, creating a richer meaning; no mode is inherently superior. The choice of mode depends on the purpose of communication and the context (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001).

Norris (2004) conceptualizes multimodality as a methodological approach that examines

how people use multiple modes such as speech, gesture, gaze, posture, objects, and spatial arrangements to create meaning in communicative contexts. Norris' (2004) approach is a layered analytical approach that examines different levels of meaning, from micro-level interactions (e.g., gaze shifts or hand movements) to macro-level discourse (e.g., overall themes and purposes). It focuses on how different modes work together in specific contexts. Modes are interdependent: each contributing to the discourse in unique ways. Multimodal discourse analysis considers the role of the body (e.g., gestures, posture) and physical objects (e.g., tools, technologies) are central to understanding how meaning is constructed in situated interactions. Context shapes how modes are used and interpreted.

For this study we used both frameworks to examine how gender representations are constructed and communicated through multiple modes. Both perspectives guide us in different but complementary ways, enabling to uncover systemic patterns and situational details in the textbook. Kress & Leeuwen's (2001) social semiotics approach provides us insights to analyze how language constructs gender roles, such as use of stereotypical gendered verbs, to examine visual representations and their cultural and social influences: how the textbook reflects or perpetuates societal gender norms and values, whether it challenges stereotypes or reinforces them. It also examines how different modes, like language, images, activities, interact to create an overarching narrative about gender. Norris's (2004) perspective gives us insight to identify how male and female figures are featured: males featured prominently in foregrounded modes, while female figures are relegated to the background. It gives insights to analyze the level of actions assigned to men and women such as higher level and



lower-level actions. The higher-level actions are used to analyze the overall themes, for example, who is shown as a leader or decision-maker, whereas the lower-level details like gaze direction in pictures or the tone of the accompanying text.

Grade 10 compulsory English textbook, first published and prescribed in 2017 by CDC, Sanothimi, Bhaktapur and written by Bishow Raj Joshi, Parbati Dhungana and Chandra Kanta Pandit, was selected as the sample material for the study. This textbook was selected as it was mandatorily used in Nepalese schools during the study. Purposive sampling procedure was used to ensure the inclusion of all the texts, visual images, literary pieces that revealed gender disparities. The entire textbook was studied, analyzing all reading texts, a proportion of images, or a representative set of exercises. Various elements of the textbook covering textual and visual content served as the primary sources of analysis. These data sources were authorship, visual images, reading texts, exercises and activities, language and discourse, and hidden curriculum.

A gender representation content analysis checklist was developed and used as the data collection tool. The checklist consisted various components, namely authorship, visual representation, reading texts, exercises and activities, language and discourse, hidden curriculum analysis. Each component was broken down into specific relevant criteria.

At the outset of data collection, objectives were set to analyze gender representation across different components. **Authorship to analyze** representation of male and female authors/editors, **visual representation to find out** gender balance in images and illustrations; textual content to analyze gender

mentions, roles, and language use; **exercises and activities to identify** gender inclusivity and stereotypes; and **discourse and language to examine implicit** biases in wording and communication patterns and conducted a manual content review, going through each section of the textbook systematically using the checklist. Visual data were recorded by taking photos of exercises and images. The data were collected and analyzed, ensuring unbiased data collection with gender sensitivity. Manual content analysis was done documenting number of male and female appearances in texts and images, roles assigned to each gender and language patterns reinforcing or challenging stereotypes. While doing so, textbook was read line-by-line and occurrences of male/female references were marked and counted. Each occurrence was categorized based on professional roles and adjectives or pronouns, etc. Visual content analysis was done by counting male versus female representations, identifying gendered roles, for example, leadership, domestic, technical, and analyzing clothing, activities, and positioning in images. Each image was assessed and classified based on gender portrayal and symbols of empowerment versus dependency were identified.

### **Analysis**

The Grade 10 compulsory English textbook had been critically analyzed and interpreted from the feminist perspective as suggested by Lazar (2007) using multimodal discourse analysis suggested by (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001; Norris, 2004) as a method.

**Gender in authorship.** The selected textbook was written by three authors: two are male and one is female. Four poems that have been included in the textbook, are composed by male. It also reveals male dominance within the content itself. Along with this, none of the literary text is written by female writers.

There are six poems but none of the poem is written by female. It shows that literary work done by the males are entertained and literary work done by female is less importance and excluded from the texts. All the poems also talk about male character and nature rather than female as the content. For example, in a poem in page 94 'The Road not Taken', writer (who is male) chooses difficult path instead of easy path, showing himself as a risk-taker, powerful and strong.

**Gender in exercises.** The exercises in the textbook frequently portray females in subordinate or less empowered roles, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. A conversation exercise requires students to create dialogue based on the situation: such as 'd. Go to a movie: yes' as shown below.

d. go to the movie: yes



(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page,9 (d))

In this exercise, two teenage girls are depicted discussing going to a movie. The focus implies that girls are primarily engaged in leisure activities like movie outings. This representation subtly suggests that girls are more inclined toward entertainment than other pursuits, perpetuating stereotypes about their priorities.

Similarly, in exercise given in page number 139 (2),

2. Compare the following sentences, and observe the agreement between the subjects and the verbs.

a. He <i>helps</i> needy people.	a. You <i>help</i> poor people.
b. She <i>likes</i> watching serials.	b. We <i>like</i> watching cricket.

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page no: 139(2))

the male subject is depicted as humane and socially responsible such as 'He helps needy people', while the female subject is portrayed as indulging in passive entertainment such as 'She likes watching serials', showing as irresponsible to the society, caring themselves rather than serving others and society. Likewise, in 'You help poor people' and 'We like watching cricket', the subjects 'you' and 'we' are not clear in terms their representations. Such statements might consolidate learners' viewpoints about girls and boys, reinforcing the idea that males contribute to society, whereas females are self-centered or idle.

Likewise, the following exercise related to grammar, given in page. 172 (c) also shows gender inequality:

### Grammar

#### A. Engage yourself

1. Read the following conversations, and observe how the speakers agree and disagree with the propositions.

- a. John: Hey what do you think about this movie?  
 Mary: I think this movie is really good.  
 John: I don't think so. This movie is so boring that I sleep while watching it. The plot is flat and there is not any suspense in the story. I like watching film but this time I disagree with you.
- b. Barbara: Hey, look at my new ring, isn't it cool?  
 Bill: Yeah, I absolutely agree with you, your ring is so cool. It perfectly matches with your finger. It must be a very expensive ring.

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook, page, 172)

The conversation between John and Mary is about the movie where John is shown critical observer than Mary in the sense that John has reviewed the movie critically instead of accepting it easily. Similarly, in the next conversation, Barbara, initiates the conversation but girls like to watch movie instead of doing other works and hobbies. Thus, there are gender discrimination and women are represented as secondary and do



not like do other things. Similar concepts have been expressed in the reading paragraph given in page (148) exercise B. 'Time for grammar', focusing on teaching tense. Let's read the following:

**B. Time for grammar**

1. Read the following paragraph, and observe how past tense is used. Then underline the verbs which are in the past simple and the past continuous form.

Mangali woke up at 6 a.m. in the morning yesterday. When she looked at the clock she said, "I am going to be late for my coaching class." It wasn't her first time to be late for the class. She thought her teacher would get angry with her for the same reason: coming late to the class. Anyway, she became fresh and had a cup of tea and hurried to school. When she reached school, she saw no one. While she was moving around the school yard, she thought to look at the notice board to see if there was any notice. When she looked at the notice board, she saw that there was a notice about a school holiday. She cursed herself when she remembered that her teacher had read out the notice in the class the day before. Feeling ashamed, she returned her home.

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page,148)

In this paragraph, it is shown that Mangali is always late in the coaching class. The sentence 'It wasn't her first time to be late for the class.' and '...her teacher would get angry with her for the same reason: coming late to the class.' have shown Mangali as a careless and not serious girl about her study and future. She is exposed as a stupid girl who does not listen carefully; even if she listens, she immediately ignores. Besides, she doesn't read notices and get right information in time. The later portion of the text reveals that she is psychologically not in school and study as when she hurriedly reached the school, it was school holiday. Here, Mangali is depicted as a poor and thoughtless student. Such texts consolidate illusion, have bad effects on girls and their trustworthiness. The text repeatedly presented Mangali carelessness. It is presented as if they only went to school, came back home, instead of getting right information and studying seriously. She is lazy and passive as she rarely involves in extra activities.

Lazy, passive, careless, shy and nervous are the common attributives often used for

girls throughout the exercises in the given textbook. The following exercise presents girls with their stereotypical characteristics 'shy' and 'nervous'. Instead of challenging stereotypical characteristics 'shy' and 'nervous', Sabita herself accepts that she was shy and nervous on her own before she received scaffolding and supports from the teachers and friends in the schools. It implies that girls, like Sabita, normally be confident only with scaffolding and support by others:

Recall the first day of your school. Tell your friends at least five changes you have experienced.

Example:

Sabita: In the beginning days of my school I used to be shy and nervous. But now I am frank and friendly to everyone. ....

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page number: 186(A))

In the following exercise page, 15, the exercise (II, a) entitled 'Time for speaking' that focuses in findings meaning in the context such as

- ii. Observe the underlined words below, and find out their meanings in the context.

- a. Because of Jack's fear, Sangina was reluctant to tell the truth. So she told a lie.

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page,15(II, a))

Although the exercise is to find out the meaning of underlined words in context, the context is unfair in terms of gender perspective. It can be interpreted that Jack is powerful, he is scary guy who threatens to Sangina, as a result she committed crime by telling lie. Here, Sangina is depicted as a weak actor who does not have enough courage to challenge a boy and tell the truth. Thus, Jack is shown as powerful and strong where Sangina is frighten and liar who is also a coward as she can't able to tell truth. Similarly, in page 188, exercise 2 entitled 'Time for listening', students are expected to listen and remember and make sentences and

share them in group. The pictures show that the man is by the car and the girl is by bicycle bought the car and the girl sold it.

In this way, majority of exercises have prominence of male compared to female. In page 8 (B) 'Time for Speaking', there exposed four conversations, three involve males as interlocutors. In page 13 (b) 'Reading', there is debate competition in which three participants are shown in one team (a girl and two boys) and same ratio of another contestant team and also the judges. In page 31 'Engage Yourself,' a man is teaching and advising people to work in community service where, along with him, majority of them are male. Similarly, in page 71, in the text 'news article' males are presented as leaders. Similarly, in page no. 83, in the picture of a strike against human trafficking, and revolution for democracy where males are portrayed more than female. Thus, most of the exercises are dominantly represented by male characters than female and male characters are often given priority throughout the textbook.

**Gender in reading texts.** In the selected textbooks, women are presented inferior and junior who have to ask permission, lack of confidences to go outside alone, careless, more religious and sensitive in subtle matters. It seems that the selected textbook strengthens such traditional concepts, guiding learners towards wrong conception and increases gender bias and inequality in the classroom and community. We can find almost no text that encourages or empowers girls. Let's read the following text:

Parents

"Dad! I'm going to meet my e-mail friend."  
 "When?" I asked.  
 "Now."  
 "I'm coming with you."  
 "No, I'm going alone."  
 "Look, Anuja..."  
 "You are obsessed dad. Nothing is going to happen to me."  
 Anuja , my daughter is only 13. She spends most of her time on computer chatting with her friends and sending e-mails. She has many e-friends. A

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page, 97)

Although the text 'a scary secret of two sisters' is included in the textbook to give moral education to students, two sisters are portrayed as disobedient and weak on the one side and passionate to luxurious life style. It gives lesson; but at the same time female is given a minor or weak role. The text also reinforces the societal stereotypes by presenting girls as passive and coward who could not protect themselves and their assets from the male thief. They also confessed their fault to go outside, and promised not to go

Parents

"Dad! I'm going to meet my e-mail friend."  
 "When?" I asked.  
 "Now."  
 "I'm coming with you."  
 "No, I'm going alone."  
 "Look, Anuja..."  
 "You are obsessed dad. Nothing is going to happen to me."  
 Anuja , my daughter is only 13. She spends most of her time on computer chatting with her friends and sending e-mails. She has many e-friends. A

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page, 119)

This text is a part of a conversation between Anuja and her father. Anuja wants to visit her e-friend and asks her father to go outside alone, but her father wants to give her a company thinking that it is not suitable to go out alone as well as to meet the friend... He suspects ...anything may happen to her. Anuja tries to convince him saying 'nothing is going to happen to her there' but her father's concern is that she is younger, but spends most of her time on computer chatting with her friends and sending e-mails and she has many e-friend.' It shows that the community perceives girls are weak and are not able not protect themselves from possible harm. Girls need to company of others to go outside especially father, brother no matter whether they are physically able to protect them or not. In Nepalese traditional society and still

at present, at childhood girl depends on her father, at teenage/adulthood she depends on her husband and at old age she depends on her son. This text reinforces this discriminatory concept and sustains unequal social norms and construct.

#### Jitiya Festival

Jitiya is an important festival of Nepali married women of Mithilanchal and Tharu women of all castes. This festival is named after Masabashi's son Jimutavahana, a blessing son of the Sun. Masabashi was an unmarried princess who spent her life as hermit living in a hermitage.

Jitiya falls in the month of Ashwin (September–October). It is celebrated for three days on Saptami (the seventh day) Astami (the eighth day) and Navami (the ninth day). The fasting day, Astami, is called *Jitiya*. The married women take *brata* (fast) for the good fortune of their children, husband and family. In this festival, brothers invite their married sisters to their homes, and the married women go to their *maiti* (maternal home).

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page, 174)

This excerpt is taken out from unit sixteen about Jitiya festival of Tharu community of Nepal. It describes that an unmarried princess gives birth of a son who is blessing son of the Sun. The son is regarded as a hole soul with divine power and the devotee are all females who take holy fasting not for her, but also for her kins and husband. It portrays stereotyped gender role of women. It reveals power dynamics of a man and woman: *woman gives birth a man, the man is with divine power, woman worships the man, for her children, husband and her home*. Brother are institutional representative of 'Maiti' (Maternal house), not a sister. Thus, it reinforces traditional gender role and imbalanced social norms by presenting women as religious and care taker of the families. Only such types traditional roles are given to the female.



(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page, 184)

In this excerpt, Sushila wants to go to university for her further study but her father denies to spend money for her study but ready to spend for her marriage though they are poor. She asked for study. When she tried to ask question to her father, her mother reminded her not be rude with her father and finally tries to convince her husband to send daughter in university. In this text, girls are portrayed as a responsibility of parents. Marriage is regarded as more important than higher education for girl. Father's quotation 'We have considered the best course for you is to do what Nepalese young ladies have done for centuries' reveals this fact.

**Gender in images.** The ratio of images depicted in the textbook highlights a significant gender imbalance. Upon counting the visibility of males and females in the images, there is a stark dominance of male representation. Out of 251 pictures included in the textbook, 170 images depict males, while only 81 depict females. This disparity indicates a clear bias in terms of exposure, demonstrating discrimination against female representation and the need for balanced representation in educational materials to ensure that both genders are equally visible and valued.

In textbook, there are many pictures where male character is given powerful, risk-taker, professional and superior roles. On the other hand, female is given secondary roles. This textbook's images and visibility make differences between male and female about wrong conceptions towards children. This type of conception generates the ideology of gender images and visibility according to their mindset. While we analyze the images included in the textbook, we vividly find gender discrimination. In page no. 6, 12

and 110 the following pictures have been presented.



Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook pages, 6,12,110)

In the first picture we see that women are in sari, blouse, jewelries and makeup. They are dancing, having lunch and doing lots of fun, while male is simply sitting and having lunch. The number of males is also less than of female. Similarly, in the second picture, boy was taking photo of girl. Boy was photographer and girl was giving a pose. The style of photographer and the size and shape of the camera shows that the man is professional photographer and the dress, the pose, the eye-glasses, the hair-style and background scene show that the girl is a model and the photo is taken for modeling purpose. In the third picture, the girl is arranging the business items on the shelf in the department store as a sales person. These images show that the involvement of females in the party is more than that of males, they often enjoy in the party, dress up, make up and entertainment, modeling, photographs and work in a lower-class job.

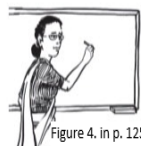


Figure 4. in p. 125



Figure, 5 in p.154

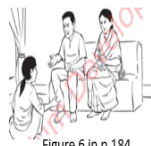


Figure 6 in p.184

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook page, 125, 154, 184)

Similarly, in the pictures above in pages 125, 154 and 184 respectively, women's visibility

is higher than that of the man. In figure 4, a woman is a teacher in traditional dress: sari and blouse, is about to write something on the board. Figure 5 (taken from p.154) consists of three people are in sitting room of their house. The picture, the window, curtain and sofa show that it is the sitting room of their house. A woman with white hair might be grandmother and another woman with dark hair might be mother of the boy. The boy seems a teenager who is getting blessings and moral lesson from his grandmother and in front of his mother. The figure 6 is portrayed in page 184 of the textbook in which a girl sitting on the floor is in front of her parents in the sitting room. The posture, hands position, sitting style and face of the girl shows that she is convincing her parents about the importance of higher education rather than marriage in her age and asking permission to go university. Parents' facial expressions: raising eyebrow, eyes and hands show that they were arguing against higher education and insisting for her marriage.

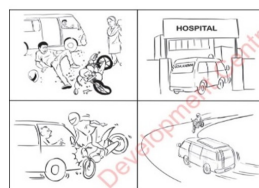


Figure 7 p.125



Figure 8 p.152

(Source: Grade 10 compulsory English textbook pages,125,152)

However, in figure 7, male visibility is more than that of the female. Overall, the first set of pictures reveals a motorcycle accident. The hospital's ambulance was going somewhere, on the way, he sees an accident, caused when motorcycle coming from the wrong side collided with a van, where the motorcyclist is lying on the road opposite to his motorcycle, his motorcycle is also lying on the road and his helmet is on other side. The ambulance driver

stopped the ambulance. A girl likely in nurse's get up, came closer and asks the driver to take the victim to the hospital. In figure 8, males have been visualized more than the girls. These pictures are about bungee jumping, mountain climbing, paragliding, and rafting in each of them, males are presented. While analyzing these pictures, it is found that females are presented as a teacher, caretaker of their children and family members, they are kind but not much powerful, courageous. But males are presented as risk-takers, courageous, stronger. Thus, such pictures given in the textbook, reinforce gender biased ideology, societal stereotypes roles were given to women and men.

#### ***Gender in occupation, roles and activities.***

Various occupations, roles and activities have been assigned to male characters. They are teacher, businessperson, doctor, reporter, photographer, farmer, driver, woodcutter, chairperson, producer and postman. For example, reading text 'Reading II', page 136, is a conversation between two male characters portrayed as doctor and reporter., both are prestigious jobs. In page 171, males are exposed as a farmer, postman, driver and officer; likewise in page 125, a man is presented as a businessperson. Similarly, in page 50, a reading text 'Movie Review:2012 entitled 'Perfect Disaster' is mentioned where movie director, producers, script writers, and protagonist are represented by male characters and in page 81, there is news report on "Lionel Messi" who wins FIFA world player award for fifth time who is a male.

While analyzing the assigned roles, males are given strong, primary and adventurous roles such as in page 12 of the textbook, females are exposed dancing and having fun; whereas males are sitting and having lunch. Similarly in page 19, a male is shown in negative role

but powerful and fearless character who steals laptop from school. In page 19 (2), it is shown that two people; a man and a woman are going to temple together where woman is holding pooja thali who looks more religious and believer in Gods than the man. When we analyze the given textbook, it is found that female's dominant occupations are nurse, model, salesgirl, teacher, housewife (e.g., in pages 48,110,114,125). Their roles are caretaker of family who are normally shown having fun, religious and obedient to their seniors (e.g., in page 6, 12, 84).

#### **Discussion**

The representation of gender in the Grade 10 compulsory English textbook was analyzed, employing feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2007) and multimodal frameworks (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001; Norris, 2004). The study found persistent gender biases in the textbook, ranging from authorship imbalance to the representation of male and female roles across textual and visual elements. These insights tie with previous scholarships namely Lazar (2007) and UNESCO (2007) that emphasize how textbooks often reflect societal power imbalances and perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes. Lazar (2007) and UNESCO (2007) argue that textbooks are not just instructional tools but cultural artifacts that reflect societal values, norms, and ideologies. They often reflect the patriarchal social order and reinforce gender inequalities. The imbalanced authorship with only one female author among three textbook contributors and all poems authored by men in the selected textbook, underscores male dominance in content creation. Such exclusive practices are consistent with feminist's CDA that interrogates those societal institutions, including curriculum and educational materials, often marginalize women's



contributions and prioritize male perspectives (Lazar, 2007; Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). The absence of female-authored literary works (i.e., four poems all written by male author) and high focus on male-centric narratives reinforce patriarchal norms, diminishing women's visibility in cultural and academic spheres. The study reveals male dominance in authorship and literary content, which aligns with findings from prior studies. Accordingly, Bachore and Semela (2022), Khadka (2019), Nur and Farzana (2024), and Paudel and Khadka (2019) identified male-oriented occupational roles and conventional depictions of women in textbooks. Bohara (2022) highlighted the deficit in gender balance in both text and imagery in Nepali textbooks. The lack of female representation, especially in literary works, suggests an implicit bias where male contributions are privileged over those of females. This aligns with feminist CDA's emphasis on critiquing discourses that sustain power imbalances (Lazar, 2007).

Visual and textual analyses further reveal stereotypical portrayals of gender. Male characters have often been depicted in active, leadership roles, whereas female figures have been relegated to passive, subordinate roles. For instance, males are associated with "risk-taking" and "strength," while females have been depicted in nurturing or backgrounded capacities. This contrast aligns with Sheldon's (1987) observations of traditional textbooks, where boys are presented as agents of action and girls as dependents, enduring hierarchical power dynamics.

The analysis of textbook's multimodal elements, using Kress and Leeuwen's (2001) and Norris' (2004) frameworks, uncover systemic and interactional gender biases. From Kress and Leeuwen's (2001) social

semiotics perspective, there was frequent use of stereotypical gendered verbs like boys "lead," girls "help", reinforcing traditional roles. These replicate findings of Dean (2007) and Zafar and Malick (2006), who discussed how linguistic choices in textbooks magnify gendered representations. Similarly, while analyzing the visual representations of male and female, male characters are often portrayed in active roles, while females are relatively represented passively, reflecting patriarchal ideologies. This corresponds to Norris' (2004) observation that the foregrounding of images can emphasize hierarchical gender roles. In the textbook, the prominence given to male-oriented topics have underscored cultural and social influences that prolong gender biases, as highlighted by Bachore and Semela (2022), Brugeilles and Cromer (2009), Nur and Farzana (2024), Selvi and Kocaman (2020), and Upadhyaya and Sah (2019). From Norris' (2004) perspectives of level of actions, it was found that males were usually assigned to higher-level actions, such as decision-making roles, and females are associated with lower-level actions (e.g., passive or supportive roles), preserving stereotypical hierarchies. This resonates with feminist critiques that highlight systemic marginalization of women in social discourses as stated by Holmes (2008).

Exercises in the textbook frequently depict females in passive, subordinate, or less empowered roles while assigning active, socially responsible roles to males. This reflects a biased approach to content development that aligns with gender stereotypes entrenched in societal norms (Lazar, 2007; Lee, 2014; Sheldon, 1987). Female characters are portrayed as indulging in passive or leisurely pursuits, such as watching movies or being careless about school. This suggests that girls prioritize entertainment over personal or academic



development (page 9,55, 148). Similarly, like in page 15, girls are often portrayed as weak or subservient, such as Sangina as scared and unable to challenge Jack, reinforcing ideas of male dominance and female vulnerability. While males are depicted as humane and socially responsible (e.g., "He helps needy people"), while females are shown as indulging in self-centered activities (e.g., "She likes watching serials"). This creates a contradiction that aligns males with societal contributions and females with trivial pursuits (p.139). In the same line, the prominence of males in roles such as leaders, advisors, or active participants (e.g., pages 8, 13, 31) reinforces the perception of male dominance in societal and professional spheres and passive roles women align with traditional domestic or passive responsibilities (e.g., Linda in the kitchen, p. 197). This is consistent with findings of Brugeilles and Cromer's (2009) study, who highlighted that gender roles in educational texts often replicate societal inequalities.

The biased representation in various exercises in the textbook allies with patriarchal ideologies critiqued by feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. According to Lazar (2007), CDA reveals how power imbalances are sustained through discourse, making textbooks a crucial site for interrogating and challenging gender norms. This may impact on learners in cognitive development and socialization. Exercises influence students' perceptions of gender roles, often discouraging girls from pursuing leadership or non-traditional roles (UNESCO, 2007). By repeatedly depicting girls as passive and boys as active, textbooks reinforce societal stereotypes, shaping learners' worldviews. The analysis of texts demonstrates a consistent pattern of portraying women as inferior, dependent, and confined to traditional roles. This aligns with findings of

Sheldon (1987) and Lazar (2007) who argue that educational materials often replicate societal hierarchies and fail to encourage critical thinking about gender equality that have potential implications for students' perceptions and identity development as argued by Lee (2014). The text entitled "A Scary Secret of Two Sisters" (p. 97) portrays women as disobedient and weak, passive, materialistic, and incapable of self-defense. The sisters' reliance on male authority figures (e.g., seeking parental permission) reinforces their lack of agency, perpetuating the idea that women need external protection and guidance. Similarly, in page 119, the text presents female's dependency on male figures. Anuja's father's insistence on accompanying her reflects the entrenched societal belief that women cannot ensure their own safety. This depiction resonates with the traditional Nepalese societal structure, as described by Pandey (2006), where women's mobility is restricted, and their independence is often curtailed by male-dominated family dynamics. Females are also portrayed as caretaker and religious actors like in page 174 where the description of the Jitiya festival reflects a deeply entrenched power dynamic. Women are portrayed as devoted caretakers, fasting and worshiping for the benefit of male family members. The absence of reciprocal roles for men highlights the unequal division of spiritual and domestic responsibilities, aligning with Ghosh's (2014) argument that religious narratives often perpetuate gender hierarchies.

The textbook also reveals power dynamics in education and marriage. The text from page 184 illustrates how the education of women is deprioritized in favor of marriage, perpetuating the notion that a woman's primary role is as a wife and mother. The father's remark, "We have considered the best course for you is to do what Nepalese young ladies have

done for centuries,” reflects a deep-seated cultural norm where women’s education is viewed as secondary to familial obligations. This representation perpetuates structural inequalities in education, as described by UNESCO (2007), which highlights that societal biases discourage families from investing in girls’ education. The depiction also aligns with Kabeer’s (2005) assertion that traditional gender roles are a significant barrier to achieving gender parity in education that restrict individuals’ potential for diverse identities and experiences as claimed by Selvi and Kocaman (2020).

While analyzing textbooks in terms of empowerment opportunities for women, it is found that there is a noticeable absence of empowering narratives for women. There are no female characters portrayed as independent, confident, or successful in non-traditional roles. This imbalance limits opportunities for female students to envision themselves in empowered roles, as described by Brugeilles and Cromer (2009) and Paneru (2019), who emphasize the importance of balanced gender representation in educational materials.

## **Conclusion**

By employing feminist CDA and multimodal frameworks (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001; Norris, 2004), this study provides a deeper understanding of how power and gender are entrenched in educational texts. The findings underscore the need for a more balanced and inclusive representation of gender in textbooks, revealing that existing ELT textbooks reinforce gender stereotypes, where males are constantly portrayed as dominant, adventurous, and strong, while females are restricted to traditional, passive, and subservient roles. It limits opportunities

for students to engage with diverse and equitable portrayals of gender roles.

These representations not only reflect but also reinforce societal norms, restraining the potential of educational materials to inspire transformative change. The analysis of texts, images as well as the exercises reveal that the textbook lacks those texts those can empower narratives for women, reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies and undermining efforts toward gender equity. As Sheldon (1987) notes, textbooks have a profound influence on shaping perceptions and expectations of young minds.

These insights suggest that all the key stakeholders such as textbook developers, curriculum designers, and educators should adopt a more gender-sensitive approach by integrating diverse representations that challenge traditional norms and promote gender equality and equity, empowering learners from diverse backgrounds. It links to raise awareness of implicit gender biases in teaching materials and teaching techniques, equipping teachers with strategies through teacher training programs to address them effectively in the classroom. If we address these biases, textbooks can challenge stereotypes, foster critical thinking and inspire learners to visualize a more inclusive and equitable future. Therefore, as highlighted by Brugeilles and Cromer (2009), textbook should not merely reflect social norms and values but also serve as social transformational tool.

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