

# **A Study of the Representation of Social Actors in Touchstone Series: A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective**

**Abdullah Sarani<sup>1</sup>**

*English Department, Faculty of Literature and Humanities,  
University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Zahedan, Iran*

**Somayeh Kord**

*English Department, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University  
of Sistan and Baluchestan, Zahedan, Iran*

## **Abstract**

This study is an attempt to interrogate different ways in which social actors are represented through two independent (linguistic & visual) modes of communication in EFL textbooks in light of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches. For the purpose of this study, gender related features were identified according to the categories introduced in Van Leeuwen's (2008) and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) frameworks in *Touchstone* series. The results of this study indicate that male and female participants were represented differently through both visual and linguistic modes of representation. For the case of linguistic gender representations, it was found that a female oriented ideology has been practiced through this series. Visual gender representation results, on the other hand, showed that males were stereotypically represented as more salient and idealized participants than females. The findings of this research can provide teachers, learners, curriculum designers or course book developers with potential implications.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Social Actors, Gender Representation, Gender Bias, Ideology

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## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, a large number of various ready-made English as a Foreign Language textbook series are accessible on the market from which teachers, students, and curriculum designers or generally educational staff can easily get access to presupposed reliable sources. It is widely believed that these series which are commonly written by well-known authors, provide

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: sarani\_ling@hamoon.usb.ac.ir

undoubtable and high quality sources in the field of teaching and learning English, without properly realizing hidden meanings, intentions or realities behind the covers.

There is some evidence to claim that textbooks are discursive bodies through which power related ideologies are sometimes produced or transferred to a group of people. Ndura (2004) argues that the content of language textbooks reflects social and cultural biases to which students are consciously or unconsciously exposed to. This indicates that textbooks transmit more than linguistic items including 'social behavior, norms and values' to the readers or hearers (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009, p. 13). A textbook may employ terms or pictures which present one sex as dominant over another, and bring about gender bias. Accordingly, Amerian and Esmaili (2015) assert that whereas EFL textbooks play an essential role in both constructing and transferring gender stereotypes and social values, it is worth evaluating these sources to help teachers and learners gain a better insight into gendered biased constructions in light of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

CDA involves several approaches to investigate a wide range of issues related to discursive patterns. Yet, the immediate goal of CDA is to investigate and unfold the dialectical relationship between discursive practices and sociocultural structures and how discourse is influenced, presented and shaped by power relations of dominant groups (Fairclough, 1995).

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2008), language and visuals are two modes of communication and none can be considered superior to the other. Both can be used effectively to express particular semantic relations. While words provide the facts, the explanations, images provide interpretations to facilitate transfer of meanings or intentions (Berger, 1972).

In this study, attempt directed to uncover gender representation realities and true meanings encoded into the images and texts, and to investigate possible visual and linguistic significant differences between the representations of males and females in the content of *Touchstone* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) series written by Michael McCarthy, Jeanne McCarten and Heken Sandiford. The results of this Content Analysis study would offer more than counting frequencies for the presence of a particular form. As Krippendorff (2004, p. 3) asserts, *Content Analysis* is a technique consisting of a "systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter" that helps researchers to get a better understanding of specific phenomena in social studies.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Data Collection and Procedures**

Written by Michael McCarthy, Jeanne McCarten and Heken Sandiford, *Touchstone* series (2014) is being taught as EFL teaching course book in many English language institutes and schools around the world. To meet the purpose of the current study, the content of 69 reading texts and a sample of 60 randomly selected images from *Touchstone* series were carefully analyzed and then gender related features were extracted based on the frameworks introduced by Van Leeuwen (2008) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). The results of Intercoder reliability tests showed that the collected data was considerably in agreement. Chi-square tests were run by SPSS to determine differences between the representations of males and females.

### **2.2 Van Leeuwen's (2008) Socio-semantic Framework**

Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic approach provides a discursive framework to critically explore the ways social actors are visually and verbally represented in the texts and images. For the case of gender representation studies, only some of the features of his framework were considered relevant. They were derived as follows:

- INCLUSION/ EXCLUSION: Social actors can be included or excluded purposefully to deliver a meaningful message to the readers or hearers.
- ROLE ALLOCATION: This refers to the roles that social actors take in the representations. Social actors may be represented as active forces through the process of *Activation* or they may be *Subjected* or *Beneficialized* through the process of *Passivation*.
- GENERICIZATION/ SPECIFICATION: While the former indicates on representing social actors by generic terms, the latter concerns with presenting social actor as individuals (*Individualization*), groups (*Collectivization*) or by treating them as statistics (*Aggregation*).
- PERSONALIZATION: It refers to representing social actors as personalized human beings. This includes representing social actors by determining their occupation (*Functionalization*), terms that put them into different social classes (*Classification*), their surnames, with or without honorifics (formalization), their names and surnames (*Semi-formalization*), adding standard titles or ranks (*Honorification*), representing social actors as relationally belonging together (*Relational Identification*) or by representing social actors as unspecified individuals or groups (*Indetermination*).
- IMPERSONALIZATION: It refers to impersonalizing social actors by means of a quality assigned to them (*Abstraction*) or by means of references to a place or thing closely associated with them (*Objectivation*).

### 2.3 Frameworks of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006)

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) advanced a descriptive framework which can be used as a critical tool to trace and uncover intended meanings, including power inequalities, in visual semiotics. Features introduced in their frameworks are applicable to "both of single images and of composite text such as layouts" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 187). The following features were discovered crucial to achieve the goals of the study.

### 2.3.1 Narrative processes

When participants are connected by a vector, they are represented as doing something to or for each other. The following categories have been selected to investigate male and female representations through narrative processes:

- *Actor*: The participant from which the vector emerges, or which itself, in whole or in part, builds up the vector.
- *Goal*: The participant at whom or which the vector is directed.
- *Reactor*: The one from which the vector is formed by an eye line.
- *Phenomena*: The participant to which the eye line is directed.

### 2.3.2 Conceptual representation

Conceptual representations refer to representing participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence. This includes three subcategories:

- *Classificational Processes* relate participants to each other in terms of a 'kind of relation, a taxonomy: at least one set of participants will play the role of Subordinates with respect to at least one other participant, the Superordinate.
- *Analytical Processes* relate participants in terms of a part-whole structure.
- *Symbolic processes* are about what a participant means or is. Human participants in Symbolic Attributive processes usually are not being shown as involved in actions.

### 2.3.3 Representation and interaction

Representation and interaction are all about designing the position of the viewer and the interaction between the producer and the viewer of the image.

It includes the following subcategories:

- *The Gaze*: Whether it's *demanding*: Participants are looking directly to the viewer and demand them to enter into some kind of imaginary relations, or *offering*: Participants are looking somewhere else other than the viewer.
- *Social Distance*: Participants are presented at *personal* (close-up shot), *social* (medium shot) or *public* (long shot) distances from the viewer.
- *Perspective and The Subjective Image*: The selection of an angle, a 'point of view' implies the possibility of expressing subjective attitudes towards represented participants. In *Horizontal Angle*, participants may be presented in a *frontal* (Involved) or *oblique* (Detached) angle. In *Vertical Angle*, participants may be presented in a *low* (Insignificant), *high* (*Significant*) or *eye level* (*Equal*) angle.

### 2.3.4 The meaning of composition

The meaning of composition deals with the ways in which the representational and interactive elements are integrated into a meaningful whole. Among subcategories defined under this title, the followings were found influential to study gender related biases.

➤ *Informative Value* which deals with the placement of participants (*Left (Given), Right (New), Bottom (Real) and Top (Idealized)*), implies specific informational values.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Inclusion

As can be seen in Table 1, females were included significantly more than males (54.9% vs. 45.1%). The following examples show male and female inclusion in *Touchstone* series:

*Example 1. Mike Powell from the United States jumped 8.95 meters... (Book3:28)*

*Example 2. From the moment she took those first tentative steps (Book 4: 8)*

Besides, the results of the Chi-square test ( $p > 0.05$ ) indicate that there is not any significant difference between the two excluded groups of social actors ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 1

*Chi-square Results for Male and Female Inclusion/Exclusion*

Inclusion/Exclusion	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Inclusion (Total: 2,187)	987 45.1%	1200 54.9%	20.74	.000
Exclusion (Total: 236)	111 47%	125 53%	.831	.362

### 3.2 Role Allocation

This section deals with what Van Leeuwen (2008) defines as the roles that social actors are given to play. Based on the results in Table 2, it can be concluded that females were activated and subjected significantly more than males ( $p < 0.05$ ). The followings are examples of a female and a male activated social actor.

*Example 3. She had no idea of the consequences. (Viewpoint 1:16)*

*Example 4. So I (Martin) invited her over ... (Book 1: 104)*

In example 3, the female social actor is activated by 'having no idea' while in example 4, the male is activated by the action of inviting. Here, the important point is to consider types of actions by which males and females are represented as activated or subjected social actors.

For the case of beneficialized representations, both males and females (50% each) were equally given beneficialized roles. However, results of the Chi-square test ( $p > 0.05$ ) suggest no significant difference between the two beneficialized groups.

Table 2

*Chi-square Results for Male and Female Role Allocation*

Role Allocations	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Activation (Total: 1.420)	613 43.2%	807 56.8%	26.504	.000
Subjected (Total: 382)	162 42.4%	220 57.6%	8.806	.003
Beneficialization (Total: 32)	16 50%	16 50%	.000	1.00

### 3.3 Genericization and Specification

Considering male and female genericization and specification, the results in Table 3 indicate that there was not any significant difference between the two groups' genericization ( $p > 0.05$ ), though females were marginally (50.3% vs. 49.7 %) represented by generic terms more than males.

For the term specification, females were specified as individuals (69.4%) more than males (30.6%) and this difference can be considered statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the following example individualized male and female are represented.

*Example 5. English-born Daniel Radcliffe and Emma Watson were barely 11 years old when... (Book 4:104)*

Moreover, the result of the Chi-square test ( $p < 0.05$ ) confirms that females were significantly specified under collectivization more than males. Below is an example of collectivized form of representations.

*Example 6. Correct grammar is usually employed by educated people of higher social status, such as great writers... (Viewpoint 2:36)*

And finally, both males and females were almost equally treated as statistics, though the result is not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 3

*Chi- square Results for Male and Female Genericization/Specification*

Genericization /Specification	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Genericization (Total: 177)	88 49.7%	89 50.3%	.006	.940
Individualization (Total:937)	103 30.6%	234 69.4%	50.923	.000
Collectivization (Total: 583)	252 43.2%	331 56.8%	10.705	.001
Aggregation (Total: 22)	12 54.5%	10 45.5%	.182	.670

**3.4 Personalization and Impersonalization**

Based on the results displayed in Table 4, it can be concluded that females were personalized under functionalization, classification, relational identification, formalization and semi-formalization categories significantly more than males ( $p<0.05$ ). Examples of female functionalization, classification, relational identification, formalization and semi- formalization are provided below.

*Example 7. Turkish historian and archaeologist Muazzez Ilimiye Cig believed... (Viewpoint 2: 17)*

*Example 8. A few days ago, I pointed out my twelve-year-old niece to a friend. (Book 2:114)*

*Example 9. When his mother began posting videos of Justin singing on the Internet, he became an 'overnight sensation'. (Book 4: 114)*

*Example 10. Amateur chef Christine Ha captured America's heart. (Book 4:8)*

*Example 11. Ha won the title, \$250,000, and a cookbook deal. (Book 4: 8).*

However, for the case of honorification, no significant difference between males and females were discovered. Besides, males and females were equally presented as indeterminate participants (50 % vs. 50 %). Here is an example for male and females indetermination:

*Example 12: Somebody hacked into her friend's email account and sent urgent messages to everyone in the contacts list.*



Concerning impersonalized representation of social actor, males and females were equally impersonalized under abstraction category, and in term of objectivation, the Chi-square results ( $p > 0.05$ ) did not support any significant difference between males and females.

Table 4

*Chi-square Results for Male and Female Personalization/ Impersonalization*

		Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value	
Personalization	Functionalization (Total: 213 )	90 (42.3%)	123 (57.5%)	5.113	.024	
	Classification (Total: 693)	278 40.1%	415 59.9%	27.084	.000	
	Relational Identification (Total: 98 )	30 30.6%	68 69.4%	14.735	.000	
	Formalization (Total: 70 )	21 30%	49 70%	11.200	.001	
	Semi-formalization (Total: 80)	24 30%	56 70%	12.800	.000	
	Honorification (Total: 7)	5 71.4%	2 28.6%	1.286	.257	
	Indetermination (Total: 70)	35 50%	35 50%	.000	1.00	
	Abstraction (Total: 12)	6 50%	6 50%	.000	1.00	
	Impersonalization	Objectivation (Total: 153 )	75 49%	78 51%	.059	.808

### 3.5 Narrative Processes

With respect to visual gender representations, following results have been discovered. The most salient examples for each feature were selected, then they were analyzed based on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) frameworks to discuss the meaningfulness of the ways in which each gender was depicted.

The results in Table 5 show that there is not any significant difference between the two groups represented as actors. However, a difference in types of action in which each gender is involved is discovered through qualitative

analysis. In the following Figs. some female participants can be seen babysitting and serving food.



*Figure 1*



*Figure 2*



*Figure 3*



*Figure 4*



*Figure 5*



*Figure 6*



*Figure 7*

Out of 60 images randomly selected as the sample of the study, only one case showed a man babysitting and non as serving food. Instead, some men were represented as participants involved in activities such as working with electronic devices, driving and volunteering next to females.



*Figure 8*



*Figure 9*



*Figure 10*



*Figure 11*



*Figure 12*



*Figure 13*



*Figure 14*



*Figure 15*

The results indicated that there is not any significant difference between male and female participants who were represented as goals. As it was discussed with the active representations of male and female participants,

types of action by which each gender is subjected to, need to be considered as well. The following is a salient example chosen from the sample images to throw light on the point.



*Figure 16*

Fig. 16 displays an old couple in a frame. The old woman's hand created a vector directed to the old man's arm. Thus, the old woman is represented as the actor and the old man to whom the vector is directed is depicted as the goal. In this case the old woman is shown as a participant who is relying on the other participant, the old man. Although the old man is portrayed as the goal, his supportive role is implicitly aroused by his dominant gesture, look and the action he is subjected to.

Concerning participants represented as reactors and phenomena, though more females were object of the look (phenomena), no significant difference between the two groups was explored ( $p > 0.05$ ).



*Figure 17*

A woman and two men portrayed in a shot in Fig. 17. As can be seen, the men formed vectors by their eye lines towards the woman. Thus, they were given the role of reactors and the woman to whom the look is directed was given the role of phenomena. Another notable point in this figure is the way

that the female participant avoided to make eye contacts by looking down not to the male participants. This may imply the act of shyness. Moreover, the man who is represented on the left side of the image was given a supportive role by the way in which the woman leaned her arm (the vector) on his shoulder (the goal) as if she is relying on him.

Table 5

*Chi- square Results for Representation in Narrative Processes*

Narrative Processes	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Actor (Total: 121)	60 49.6 %	61 50.4 %	.008	.928
Goal (Total: 36 )	18 50 %	18 50 %	.000	1.00
Reactor (Total: 141 )	72 51.1 %	69 48.9 %	.064	.801
Phenomena (Total: 70 )	34 48.6 %	36 51.4 %	.057	.811

**3.6 Conceptual Representations**

Table 6 shows the Chi-square results and percentages for males' and females' conceptual representations. The results show that there is no significant difference between male (46.2%) and female (53.8%) social actors depicted as classified participants ( $p > 0.05$ ). Many classified participants were portrayed as colleagues, friends, classmates, so on.

*Figure 18*

In Fig. 18 a man and three women were depicted. As it displays, three women represented on the right side of the image were classified as friends. They seem to be talking and the way that they leaned to each other implies the act of gossiping. The man, on the other hand, kept the distance giving

them a kind of strange disapproving look which means he is not involved in whatever the women doing.

For the case of analytical representations, the results indicate that there is not any significant difference between male and female participants. As shown in Table 6, only in few images, the participants were represented by their body parts (i.e., hands, arms, legs, hair) leaving the whole figure unknown.

Although males were marginally portrayed as symbolic participants (66.6 %) more than females (33.4 %), the results of the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 (1) = .667, p = .414$ ) indicated that there is not any significant difference between the two groups. Yet, based on qualitative analysis, males were represented as more superior symbolic participants next to females.



Figure 19

In Fig. 19 a male and a female participant are presented. On the right side of the image, a man is shown firmly standing next to the woman, looking somewhere out of the frame. In this case the male participant is associated with symbolic values as he is just posing for the camera, not being involved in any action or forming any type of vector (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). He is presented as a symbol of companionship and support next to the women.

Table 6

*Chi-square Results for Conceptual Representations*

Conceptual representations	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Classification (Total: 173 )	80 46.2 %	93 53.8 %	.977	.323
Analytical (Total: 7 )	1 14.3 %	6 85.7 %	3.571	.059
Symbolic (Total: 6 )	4 66.6 %	2 33.4 %	.667	.414

### 3.7 Representation and Interaction

Participants' gaze, to or away from the viewer, signal kinds of relations they want to engage the viewer with (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The results in Table 7 show that there is not any significant difference between male and female representations as demanding or offering participants.



*Figure 20*

South Korean male and female participants are represented in Fig. 20. The man displayed on the left side of the image is holding his head higher and keeping his arms open; thus, reflecting a more confident demeanor. The woman, on the other hand, is keeping her arms and legs close to her body. Here, the viewer is the object of the look since both participants are looking directly to the viewer and smiling which, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), means the participants are demanding that the viewer enter into an imaginary relation of social affinity with them.

About 84% of the participants were not looking directly to the viewer thus all were represented as offering not demanding ones which as mentioned by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) means that there is a detached connection between the viewer and the presented participants as if there is no viewer watching them. Participants are considered objects and phenomena of the viewer's observation and contemplation, and that is corresponding to the purpose of this EFL series.

Table 7

*Chi-square Results for the Direction of Participants' Gaze*

Gaze	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Demanding (Total: 27 )	12 44.4 %	15 55.6 %	.333	.564
Offering (Total: 159 )	78 49.1 %	81 50.9 %	.057	.812

As reported by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), being represented in personal, social or public distance suggests different (ranging from close to far away) relations between viewers and represented participants. The results show that males were portrayed as keeping personal (51.4 %) and social (51.3%) distance more than females. But, as regards public distance, female participants were depicted as keeping public distance more than males (58.7 % vs. 41.3 %). However, none of these differences is statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 8

*Chi-square Results and Percentages of Participants' Distance*

Distance	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Personal (Total: 70)	36 51.4 %	34 48.5 %	.057	.811
Social (Total: 39 )	20 51.3 %	19 48.7 %	.026	.873
Public (Total: 75 )	31 41.3 %	44 58.7 %	2.253	.133

Representing participants from either frontal or oblique angle is associated with detachment or involvement of the participants. "The frontal angle says... that what you see is part of our world, something we are involved with. [According to] oblique angle, what you see is not part of our world; it is their world, something we are not involved with" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 136). Despite of the slight differences between male and female participants represented in oblique and frontal angles, the qualitative analysis revealed none of the differences as significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 9

*Chi-square Results for Detached/ Involved Participants*

Horizontal Angel	Male	Female	Chi-square	p-value
Involved	73	66	.353	.553
(Total: 139 )	52.5 %	47.5 %		
Detached	16	28	3.272	.070
(Total: 44 )	36.4 %	63.6 %		

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) claim that the choice between high, low or eye level angles reflects the difference between representing the participant as a significant and superior one who has power over the viewer (low angle), an insignificant and small one over whom the viewer has power (high angle) or presenting the participants equally with no power issue being involved (eye level angle). As can be seen in Table 10, most of the male and female participants (81.17%) were seen from an eye level angle (equal) suggesting that no power difference involvement was highly desired in this series. Although more female participants were portrayed from a high (57.9% vs. 42.1%) and an eye level angle (55.8% vs. 44.2%) than males, the statistics prove no significant difference between two groups ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 10

*Chi-square Results for Significant, Insignificant and Equal Representations of the Participants*

Vertical Angel	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
significant	8	11	.477	.491
(Total: 19 )	42.1%	57.9%		
insignificant	8	8	.000	1.00
(Total: 16)	50%	50%		
equal	61	77	1.855	.173
(Total: 138 )	44.2%	55.8%		

**3.8 The Meaning of Composition**

Specific informational values can be encoded by the way in which participants are placed on the left, right, top and bottom of the pictures. As mentioned by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), elements placed on the left side of the image are presented as culturally familiar ones; those which are



already known and accepted by the viewers. Placement of elements on the right side of the image indicates that they are new; something that is not known or accepted yet and the viewer must pay attention to. The upper part (more salient) of the image is where participants can be represented with idealized or generalized informative values while the lower section is where they can be seen as real pieces of information (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

Considering the results in Table 11, female participants were placed on the right side of the images significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more than male participants (67.6% vs. 32.4%). And male participants, on the other hand, were represented on the left side significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more than females (66.7% vs. 33.3%).



*Figure 21*

In Fig. 21, a male and female participant are shown in their work place. Each one is wearing a different dress code that entails specific functions they are engaged with (one might be superior to the other). As can be seen, both participants are looking to the viewer thus, they are represented as demanding ones. They demand the viewer to enter or involve into a relation of social affinity with them (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2008). Though, the male participant is more salient and eye catching as he is depicted from a closer distance to the viewer in foreground, leaving the woman less eye catching at the background. Regarding 'Given' and 'New' informational values, the male participant who is placed on the left side of the image is represented as 'Given'; someone who is culturally and socially accepted (perhaps as a

surgeon) by majority of people. And, the female participant who is placed on the right side is represented as 'New'; someone who needs to be known and accepted by people, either in the role she is engaged with or her placement in the background as less salient participant!

Concerning 'New' and 'Given' representation of participants, male participants were more placed at tops (Given), and females were frequently placed at the bottom of the images (New). The results of qualitative analysis also prove that these differences to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.095$ ).



*Figure 22*

A couple was portrayed in Fig. 22. The male participant created a vector to the female participant's arm (the goal) thus, he is represented as the actor who is taking care of her. His placement at the top (Idealized) left (Given) side of the image shows him as an idealized type of men who takes care and supports his wife and such role for a man is culturally and socially accepted by people. The female participant, on the other hand, is portrayed at the bottom (Real) right (New) side of the image depicted with a real informative value; a weak participant who cannot take care of herself by her own and who needs to be paid attention to.



*Figure 23*

Figure 23 provides another evident example of participants' placement in the pictures. As shown in the image, a male participant is depicted at the top left side of the image as he is going the stairs up which reflects a dynamic determined picture of that participant in the mind of the viewer. Hence, he is represented as an idealized man who attempts to move up the ladder and this idea is what has been generalized and accepted by people. At the bottom right side of the picture a woman with a child sitting on her lap is presented. As can be seen, she is engaged with doing multiple tasks at the same time (e.g., babysitting, talking on the phone, writing and looking at the monitor). This is the real representation of a modern working woman that the viewers must pay attention to.

Table 11

*Chi-square Results Participants' Placement*

Placement of Participants	Male	Female	Chi-Square	p-value
Right (Total: 74 )	24 32.4%	50 67.6%	9.135	.003
Left (Total: 69)	46 66.7%	23 33.3%	7.667	.006
Top (Total: 26 )	20 76.9%	6 23.1%	7.538	.006
Bottom (Total: 32 )	10 31.3%	22 68.8%	4.50	.034

#### 4. Discussion

This study was an attempt to investigate and uncover any significant verbal and visual gender representation differences in *Touchstone* series with respect to the features introduced in Van Leeuwen's *Discourse and Practice* (2008) and Kress's and Van Leeuwen's *Reading Images* (2006).

As regards the results, some significant differences between male and female social actors were detected. In terms of linguistic gender representation differences, it was found out that female social actors were significantly included more than males that may be associated with a female oriented ideology in this series. The outcomes can be considered in contrast

to previous studies such as Hosseini Saadabad and Bagherzade Kasmani (2014), and Amerian and Esmaili (2015) which indicated on the presence of more male social actors in some other EFL series.

Concerning role allocation, the results manifested that more females were represented as both active, dynamic forces and subjected participants in the texts. Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that female social actors were significantly specified as individuals and as groups more than males. In line with these results, Sahragard and Davatgarzade (2010) affirmed that more females were represented as active independent individuals in *Interchange* (3rd Ed.) series.

With reference to the results of personalization, again more females were represented as personalized participants by their jobs or what they do to fulfill the needs of society (functionalization), by terms that put them into different classes (classification) and by their relationship to others (relational identification).

Moreover, the results of this study showed that more female social actors were represented by their surnames (formalization) or names and surnames (semiformalization) suggesting that females were represented as identified individuals more than males. These findings are compatible with the results of studies conducted by Amalsaleh (2004), and Stockdale (2006).

Proceeding from the visual gender representation results, significant differences between the ways in which male and female participants were depicted in *Touchstone* series were discovered. Despite of the fact that there was no significant difference in active representations of male and female participants, the qualitative observations suggested that each gender was depicted differently in certain stereotypical roles which considered to be appropriate for them, at least in sample images. With respect to the qualitative and quantitative results, it was uncovered that males were represented as given information, more salient, idealized and superior participants while female participants were introduced with new and real

informative values which apparently tended to display them as less superior participants playing ordinary or stereotypical roles in different situations.

These findings contradict to the results of the studies carried out by Dominguez (2003) which indicated that no gender stereotypes were practiced through *New Interchange Intro*, and by Ahour and Zaferani (2016) in which they came to this conclusion that males and females were presented equally in *Top Notch* series through representational, interactive and compositional modes of meanings.

Marefat and Marzban (2014) investigated gender identity in a national ELT textbook dialogue and the results showed that male participants were depicted as active doers and focus of attention, and females, on the other hand, were underrepresented. Likewise, in another research conducted by Tajeddin and Janebi Enayat (2010), males were found to be depicted as empowered, active and dominant participants in *New Headway*, *Top Notch* and Iran Language Institute English textbook. These findings are partly in line with the results of the study.

It is worth mentioning that visual and linguistic modes of representations were not employed in a complementary way. As discussed earlier, the linguistic mode of gender representation found to be female oriented, in the view of the fact that more females were included as active, dynamic and identified individuals. But, gender representation bias in the visual mode of representation twisted toward males, as they were stereotypically depicted as salient, significant, and idealized participants more than females.

## **5. Conclusion**

As noted earlier, stereotypical or imbalanced representations of gender through EFL textbooks, can considerably influence readers or hearers positive/negative perception toward either males or females. These discriminations can sustain predetermined patterns of behaviors for males or females and unfair treatments towards them. It should be pointed out that gender biased representations toward either gender may prevent those

opposed to such ideologies from realizing their full potential and, as a result, make them disqualify themselves to function properly in activities which are stereotypically represented to be inappropriate for them. Therefore, the study was an attempt to investigate significant differences of linguistic and visual representations between males and females in *Touchstone* series to provide those who desire to get advantageous of this series with good knowledge of gender discriminatory factors. In a word, considering the sample, the results of the study uncovered gender bias existence through CDA perspective in the pre-mentioned series.

Not to mention, practicing perfect and pure gender equality is hardly achievable in large multimodal contents. But, by taking discriminatory factors and their potential consequences into consideration, efforts can be directed towards reducing extreme gender inequalities. Just as important is teachers' and learners' awareness of inequitable representations and the possible outcomes. Learners and teachers are less likely to get influenced by inherent ideologies and messages encoded in texts or images if they become critically literate.

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