



IDENTITY, OTHERIZATION AND REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN THE VISUALS OF OXFORD ESL TEXTBOOKS AT MIDDLE LEVEL

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Abstract

School textbooks are considered as an important source for transmitting the ideologies based on gender roles and these roles are highly embedded in our society. This has challenged the sociopolitical identities of females. (Mirza, 2006). The study aims to explore the gender identity, otherization and representation in the visuals of Oxford ESL Textbooks at middle level. The data is taken from the Oxford Modern English, ESL textbooks at Middle level. The theoretical framework is based on the model of Intercultural communication by Acton & Holliday (2004). It categorizes the themes into i.e. theme of identity, theme of otherization and representation. The analysis has proved the operational hypothesis that the school textbooks are responsible to identify the marks of gender equity and equality. Moreover, the argument is supported through a rationale as it is generally believed that school textbooks are developing the concepts of gender roles and identities amongst the students and teachers. The study has many future implications as it is going to highlight the roles and transformations of roles with reference to gender in Oxford ESL textbooks.

Keywords: *Oxford ESL Textbooks, Middle Level, Identity, Otherization, Representation*

1. Introduction

This study highlights the gender portrayal in the ESL textbooks at middle level. It is of the view that visuals and the text in the school textbooks are responsible for the projection of identity of gender and also acknowledges the representation and otherization. Moreover, textbooks represent the society and the systems ingrained in it. These are not only portraying gender but also constructing the ideologies in the learners as well as in the teachers' minds.

The relationship between language and identity is deeply established. There is no doubt that language is the core of identity and textbooks may help to promote identity that is foregrounded and some roles are being mitigated or suppressed through otherization. As mentioned earlier, this study aims at analysis of visuals, it adheres to Holliday and Acton's model of content analysis. It is intended to find out that how gender is being represented in these textbooks. How their identity is being constructed for young learners and how their roles are marginalized. The aim of the study is to explore the gender identity, otherization and representation in the visuals of Oxford ESL textbooks. The present study is significant to explore the themes given in the theoretical framework. The study potentially explains about gender portrayal and develops the concepts about the gender of both students and teachers. It determines the gender role by putting the following research question at forefront;

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How gender is identified, otherized and represented in the visuals of Oxford Modern English at Middle level?

2. Literature Review

Gender portrayal is one of the significant occurrences in the ESL textbooks. It pays attention to the roles they play and a variety of tasks they perform. Textbooks are the major source of information as Rattray (2012) investigates that the first point to consider for the text is the choice of lexis made by the authors of the form. Secondly he mentions about the underlying assumptions in the text. He indicates that how texts are exploited in classrooms. Language must be understood by linking it with specific culture and ideologies lying in it. Whereas,

Mirza (2006) takes her sample texts from four provinces and calculates the roles of gender with reference to editorial boards, HEC rules, Punjab government rights for females and school textbooks from various schools of four provinces. She enables us to prospect into the categorization of genders through the textbooks across four provinces. Textbooks have contributed a lot in saving the culture as well as they have performed a major role in manipulating the ideologies. Likewise, the very idea is followed by Sabir (2008) talked about the importance of textbooks in his research work. He investigates that school textbooks are the major source of information and students can have a lot of impact over their minds and thinking patterns the way ideas are presented in the books. Any kind of representation regarding gender inequality will make the students biased. These aforementioned researches pave the way for the present research and highlight the importance of gender and the way it is represented, identified, otherized.

Sakita (1995) reveals that gender biasness is presented in Japanese books as well. The study was done on more than 10 published books in Japan. The level of the study was Primary and Secondary level. The results revealed that gender inequality is found greater and the major portion was based on male dominance. Tietz & Wendy (2007) researched on the textbooks of introductory accounting. The research found that females are represented mostly in domestic activities and men are shown as working outside the homes performing certain jobs. The research showed that gender inequality is found greater in the textbooks.

Hall (2014) investigated the Iranian textbooks of English as Foreign Language (EFL) at Secondary level. The males are represented greater in number in characters and females are represented as less. However, the characterization and the roles assigned are biased and clearly represent the male dominance in the textbooks which construct the gender identities and create the stereotypes of genders as well.

Ullah et.al (2014) represented the historical aspect of the characters in the textbook and shown the females as less heroic. However, Ullah et.al (2013) investigated the national textbooks of English, Urdu and Pakistan studies in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from class 1st to 8th and revealed the ideology of male patriarchy. The study further investigated the four main areas that are male dominance, gender roles of male and female, patriarchal family structure and sports as the area of men. UNESCO's (2004) research on textbooks from class 1 to 10th showed that the



representation of female is only 7.7% out of 251 personalities. The less representation of female gender signified the dominance of male.

It viewed that the textbooks of English, Urdu and Pakistan Studies are biased against women. In addition to, Durrani (2008) had taken identity as a sensitive subject to deal with in terms of textbooks as the study revealed that the leading roles e.g. military and religious roles are represented through male characters. The gender construction is biased. Andrews and Thoms (2008) investigated the power of images in the textbooks and highlighted the significance of images in the development of language and learning of the students. As this study follows through the phenomena that textbooks are responsible to create the identity of gender and has the power to represent and otherize. The argument is proved by the visuals of the ESL textbooks at middle level. The present study adheres to the theoretical framework of Acton and Holliday (2004). The model categorizes the themes of identity, representation and otherization as follows:

2.1. Theme of Identity

This theme deals with how people construct their own identities. Two concepts are to be focused in this theme; multi-facetedness of other people and the way people talk. The evidence of complexity is that layers and facets are unexpectedly juxtaposed with what is expected. Complex multi layered and multifaceted society juxtaposes itself with what is unexpected and there is complex representation of artefacts and instances.

Culture resources include ceremonies, clothing, etiquette, family, festivals, fine arts, food, ideology, language, literature, music, personality and religion.

Setting 1 POLITICALLY DISTASTEFUL TO YOU	Ideology	Literature	Personality
Setting 2 STRANGE MORAL CODE	Clothing	Etiquette	
Setting 3 DOES NOT RECOGNISE WHO YOU ARE	Ceremonies and Language	Family	Festivals
Setting 4 BIG C CULTURE YOU CANNOT IDENTIFY WITH	Fine arts	Food	Music

This is to show how different cultural resources can be used by a particular person in particular settings. Cultural resources are meant to show various aspects of culture that exist in our society.

2.2. Theme of Otherization



This theme deals with exploration of a major inhibition to communication by looking at how, so easily, we can construct and reduce people to be less than what they are.

A. STEREOTYPING	Ideal characterization of the foreign other.
B. PREJUDICE	Judgment made on the basis of interest rather than emergent evidence.
C. OTHERIZING	Reducing the foreign other to less than what they are.
D. ESSENTIALISM	Imagined characteristics of the 'culture' (or 'women' or 'Asians').
E. CULTURISM	Reducing the members of a group to the pre-defined characteristics of a cultural label.

This is to show multiplicity of culture dealings and projection of stereotypes as others.

2.3. Theme of Representation

This theme deals with a macro look that how society constructs the foreign *Other* on our behalf. It refers to seek a deeper understanding of the representations of the foreign Other which are perpetuated by society. Further it refers to naturalization which is very much similar to institutionalization, reification and routinization.

NATURALIZATION which is very much similar to INSTITUTIONALIZATION (where new behavior becomes established practice in an institution)
REIFICATION (where something which is only an idea considered as real)
ROUTINIZATION (where new behavior becomes a routine).

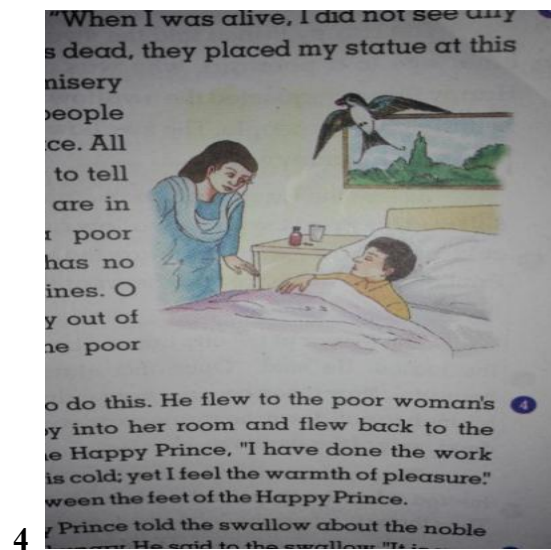
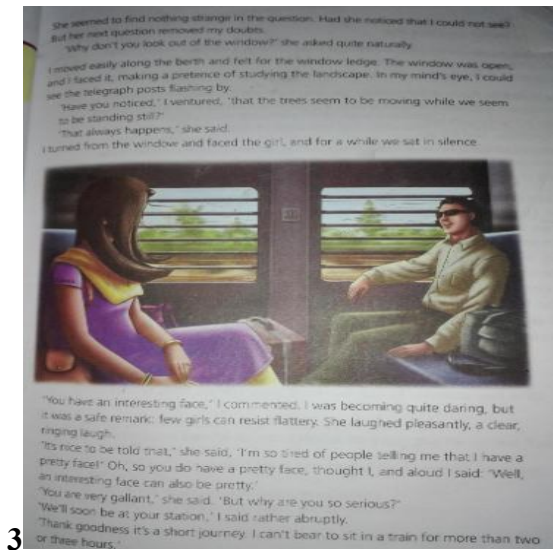
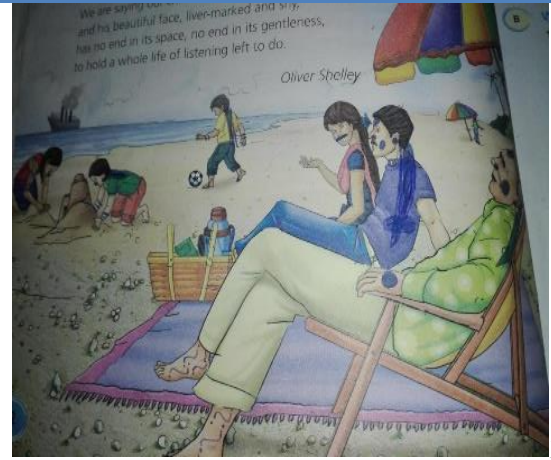
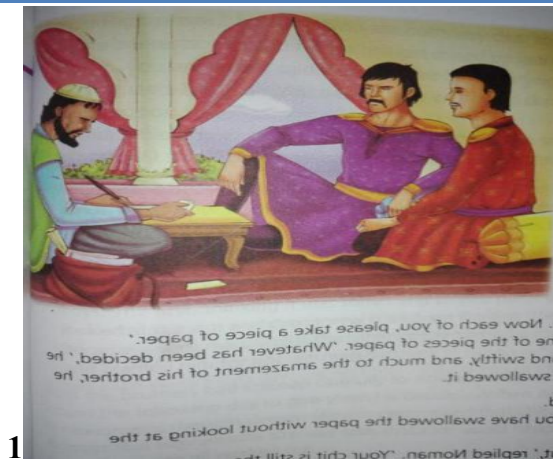
3. Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study, for which it takes into account a design for the content analysis by Acton & Holliday, 2004. The data comprises of twelve visual samples. These visuals have been selected from the ESL textbooks; Oxford Modern English at middle level. The books are taken from 6th-8th classes. Every 5th picture has been selected as sample from the respective books. The analysis aims to prove the conjecture that the Oxford ESL textbooks are responsible to promote the gender representation affecting the social roles of males and females. It does not only create the gender stereotypes but also plays a crucial role in determining the roles distribution in the society and demarcating the equity and equality of both the genders.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Theme of Identity

This theme talks about the identity and gender portrayal. In addition to, it emphasizes on the Gender roles in society. 1



The visuals taken are referring towards the identity which is created in the textbooks. The pictures indicate that women equally share the responsibilities and enjoy their existence as an independent being. She truly engages herself with her family.

Furthermore, In Visual 1 it is shown that a female has the right to relax and enjoy in the holidays but she is busy in managing her house and shows care for her family members too. On picnic days she shares an equal partnership from the side of her husband and plays her role to cook food for everyone. It also presents that in our society female are supported in their tasks. They do it on the behalf of the male members as well. Their burden is shared by males. Their role is not marginalized. The suppression of one gender and dominance of the other is negated in these pictures taken for the analysis which further supports the portrayal of identity as per the framework taken. The negation of gender suppression is highlighted in the scenery.

The framework of theme of identity takes into the account the following parameters for constructing identity i.e. Ideology, literature, personality, clothing, etiquette, ceremonies and language, families and festivals, fine arts , food and music.



Setting 1 POLITICALLY DISTASTEFUL TO YOU	Ideology Visual 2	Literature	Personality Visual 2
Setting 2 STRANGE MORAL CODE	Clothing Visual 3	Etiquette Visual 1,4	
Setting 3 DOES NOT RECOGNISE WHO YOU ARE	Ceremonies and Language Visual 3	Family Picture 1	Festivals
Setting 4 BIG C CULTURE YOU CANNOT IDENTIFY WITH	Fine arts	Food Visual 1	Music

In the present analysis, Visual 2 is presenting the scene of a Royal court. It is projecting the male oriented society in which mostly the prominent tasks are performed by the male section of society. It adds that males can command, advise and can be a counselor as well. He could be a well read and knowledgeable addition in our society. The picture shows that female has no contribution in the tasks performed. Men are contributing much and they are capable enough to have influence because they are the powerful and vocal section of the society.

This picture is nearly a representation of Petrarchan society which is devoid of female participation. If this representation is smeared on the canvas of society then it will speak a volume about the exploitation of women which refers to the parameter of ideology according to the framework taken for the analysis. While, Visual 3 shows that female has an independent identity. A female is enjoying her talk in the journey on a train with a male. It depicts that female has a right to move freely and enjoy as she wants. She is wearing a normal dress with open hair. The analysis truly negates the stereotypical image of the women. Although, the supporting details of this visual shows an opposite opinion.

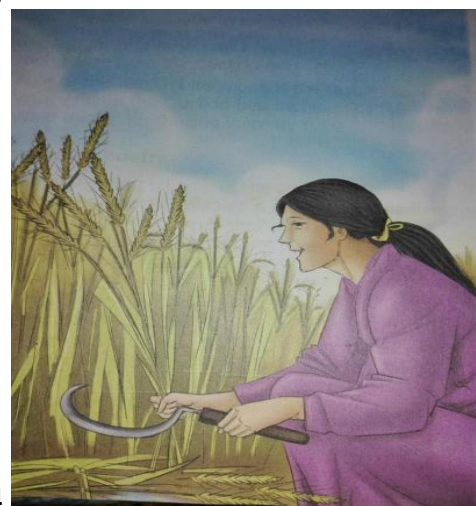
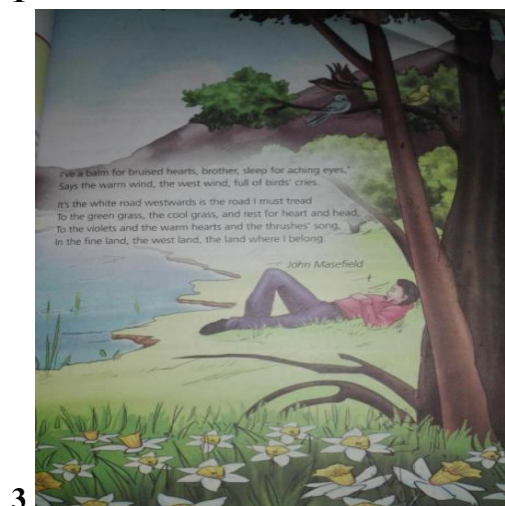
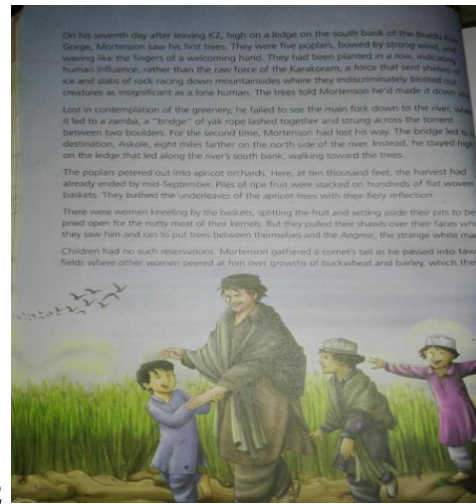
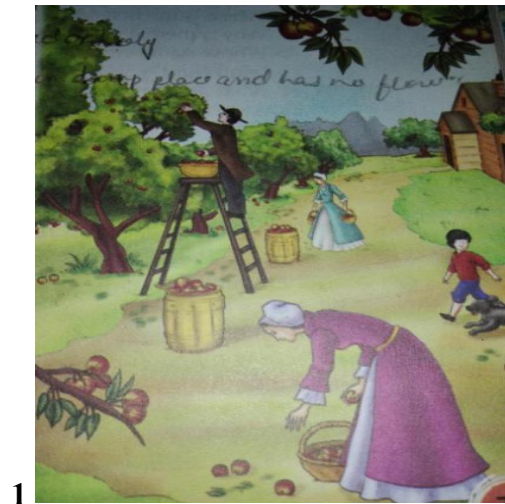
The expressions used in the text such as *“Interesting Face”*, *“Ringing Laugh”* are used in the text to explain her beauty. The text is supporting the aesthetic sense of men when they admire and appreciate the beauty of females. The text line *“few girls can resist flattery”* adds into it. It refers to clothing and language as per the framework taken for the analysis.

In the last Visual 4 a female is standing beside a boy lying on the bed. Text supports the boy as her son. The son is sick and his mother is treating him. This shows that female looks after the family very well. Nursing is not her profession but her nature is so. She is affectionate and kind hearted. It adds to the nature of females that they are caring and nurturing. This picture depicts the female as emotional and caring being. This is her basic contrast with male who are practical and emotionally strong. They are logical and intelligent that is why they are considered superior than female. This image is projecting emotional aspect of women. She has nursing and soothing

nature. She is kind and loving. It refers to the paradigm of etiquette in the framework taken for the analysis.

4.2. Theme of Otherization

This theme talks about the otherization of gender in the ESL textbooks. It discusses about the marginalization of gender. It sheds light on the view that how a gender is marginalized and otherized.



These given visuals are showing the stature of male and female in the society. Male is enjoying high and upright postures while female have humble and low status. Male can lead but female is to be led by males. Man should perform prestigious roles while female can perform humble task.

The marginalization of roles is highlighted in the visuals. These explain the division of labor in two genders. These make clear that how society is playing a crucial role in constructing an identity of a gender. The demarcation of duties is projected through the picture and it is adding



that duties and activities fix the label of particular identity which is decided by the society and nobody can challenge it. The visuals are portraying that number does not change the strength and the value of the gender because value is always decided by the society. It does not matter that whether the text is being composed by male or female.

The projection will be the same because texts are the true picture of a society. If the society is confining them in real life they are marginalized in the texts and vice versa. Visual 1 is referring towards the services provided by the females. The social norms are male oriented but it is a sort of paradox that they are exempted of these norms. All norms and rules are only applicable to women because they are submissive and docile as indicated in the text "*There were the women kneeling by the baskets and splitting the fruits...*". It is projecting that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon. It is built according to social norms and structures. Literary canon and rules have no liberation to alter it.

In the present study, Visual 2 is highlighting the role of a man as a discoverer and explorer. He has scientific brain and can add something new to his generation while female has very mechanical role in the society which does not contribute any innovation. The two genders are being represented at the distances of two poles apart. Male are bold and intelligent and female are introvert and perform dictated role and she should be sidelined. It is presenting an idea that female is to serve everywhere. She could be found at a place where she has to do her work. She has to share the burden of her husband but has no contribution in the facilities and entertainment enjoyed by her husband. The distinction in rights and responsibilities in male and female is accentuated in the visual. Males have more rights than accountabilities while female have a lot of tasks to do and little rights to enjoy. Moreover, Visual 3 illustrates the limitations of gender activities. It is showing that man can enjoy nature and its beauty by laying on green grass near lake far from his home but a woman can't it is because she is not having that much liberty and leisure time to spend at such a beautiful place. It is projecting an ideology that female have to stay inside the home to perform domestic talks while outside enjoyment is for the man only. Man, alone is laying there without his family which signifies that might it be a taboo to go along with family.

It is represented here that there is no concept of gender equality in the society. Each and every aspect is marginalized and is fixed by the society. There is demarcation instead of equality. It further advocates the view that only man can make discoveries can explore the world. Men can take the children outside for enjoyment and entertainment. Women ought to stay inside the home or ought to perform domestic roles.

The framework of theme of otherization takes into the account the following parameters:

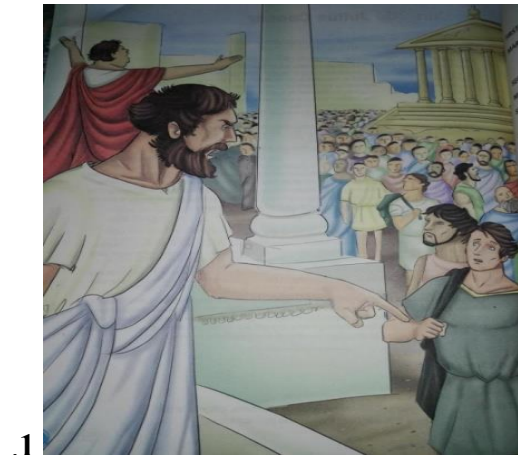
A. STEREOTYPING	Ideal characterization of the foreign other.
B. PREJUDICE	Judgment made on the basis of interest rather than emergent evidence.

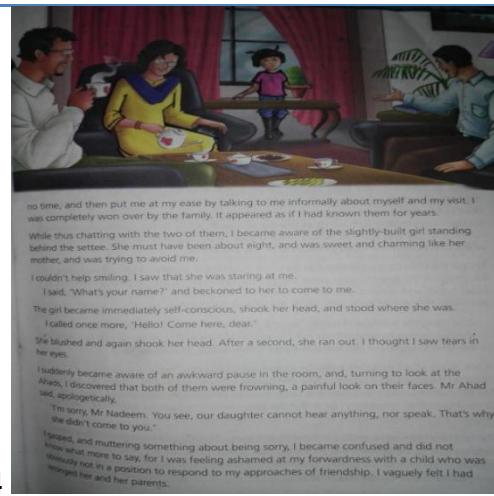
C. OTHERIZING	Reducing the foreign other to less than what they are. Visual 1,2,3,4
D. ESSENTIALISM	Imagined characteristics of the 'culture' (or 'women' or 'Asians').
E. CULTURISM	Reducing the members of a group to the pre-defined characteristics of a cultural label.

The study shows that Visual 4, illustrates the stereotypical picture of female stature in the society when she has to work outside her home. She has only task to serve others and has no privilege for providing her services. She is perceived as for granted object. The image is strong argument to the opinion that it is a stereotype to deal the women like labor. She is not independent in making decisions on her own. This visual is showing that women are the suppressed part of the society. However, she is working in the fields with a smile on her face which adds into her courage as well as love for her relations for which she is working. It shows the status of female and male in society and signifies that later one is dominant over former.

4.3. Theme of Representation

This theme discusses about the representation of gender in the visuals of Oxford ESL textbooks. It further reveals the construction of the gender in society and the way it is represented





These visuals are representing role distribution of gender in society. These pictures represent the expectation of social system from the both genders. 3 out of 4 visuals are projecting the domestic tasks and indoor activities for females while professional and all outdoor activities are projected to be performed by male sector of society.

The study shows that Visual 1 represents the alluding orientation of society regarding gender tasks. On the behalf of these portrayals it has been clarified to young learners that every gender has its own demarcated role to perform in system. As it is shown that a male is authoritative as, the man is pointing towards the crowd as ordering them. Each gender has its own contribution to this social stratum. In Visual 2 it is shown that females are supposed to look after their household chores and brought up their kids because they are naturally adapted for such tasks. It refers to the paradigm of naturalization as per the framework taken for the analysis. To look after somebody requires deep love, affection and soothing nature women soul is blessed with all such stuff in order to make her suitable for this work. On the other hand, male too has its fabrication that is well suited to his performances.

The framework of theme of representation takes into the account the following parameters i.e. naturalization, reification, and routinization.

NATURALIZATION which is very much similar to INSTITUTIONALIZATION (where new behavior becomes established practice in an institution)	Visual 2,3,4
REIFICATION (where something which is only an idea considered as real)	No reference visual
ROUTINIZATION (where new behavior becomes a routine).	Visual 1,2,3,4

The study reveals that Visual 3 is epitomizing real and clarified social structure regarding gender tasks. It represents that females are beauty of society each and every aspect of beauty is associated with females they are symbol of colors and charm. They not only look after their houses rather they make their family to feel like a home. She is the one who is training her child to be a good person. She is the one who is at the back of her husband to support him. She is there



to manage his house in his absence. Female organizes life of her dear ones. The visual is also evident for centralized character of women. It is being communicated that society owes much to women for its survival and existence.

This pictorial description is balanced and symmetrical as it is also speaking a great volume about role of Male in society. He is the one who is running this society and supporting it. He is the financial head of house as he has to earn his livelihood for his dear ones. He has to be bold and authoritative because he has to deal other people outside his homes. He is courageous, bold and ruling attitude outside his home. In home he is also loving and affectionate. He interconnects with his children and enjoys family get to gather. Dress patterns of both genders has also depicted, jewelry in hands, fingers, around neck and on forehead is very significant among Asian women while among men *shalwar* suit and pent shirt is common.

In the last Visual 4, it is shown that a female is sitting with a bowed head with the guests and enjoying gossips. She has served them with the tea and other eatables. Moreover, these visuals are delimited to only household chores. Although, females now-a-days working in all spheres of life. They are excelling and taking interest in all professions.

The analysis refers to the paradigm of naturalization and routinization according to the framework taken for this research.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Hence, the study emphasizes on the gender portrayal in the school textbooks at middle level. The study shows that gender is a social construct. It is society which assigns a gender with certain tasks and roles to perform accordingly. Males as well as females should get equal opportunities to represent themselves in the world. The entire universe is created for human beings without any demarcation of the areas to whom it belongs. The universe itself is a message for human beings to live freely. It advocates the projection of roles to perform by males and females according to their will. The study proves that textbooks are the major sources of providing information about the gender. Likewise, gender portrayal is one of the significant occurrences in the ESL textbooks. It pays attention to the roles they play and a variety of tasks they perform. Furthermore, the study has its primary focus on how ESL textbooks are responsible to promote the gender equity and equality. They not only promote the roles of gender rather it suggests to promote gender identity without any disparity. However, the study also encourages the future researchers to identify the gender roles by such gender portrayal in the textbooks.

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