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	作成者: Tatsuki, Donna Hurst
	メールアドレス:
	所属:
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Doing Gender and Ethnicity: An Analysis of Ministry of Education Approved ELT Textbooks in Japan and Germany

Donna Hurst Tatsuki

Textbooks are ubiquitous in language classrooms—it seems that almost every classroom and course has one. Despite their widespread use, there is not universal agreement regarding their benefits. Some researchers decry their lack of pedagogical flexibility and their tendency to reflect the pedagogic, linguistic and cultural/ideological biases of their authors (e.g. Allwright, 1982). Researchers such as Porreca (1984), Florent and Walter (1989), Clarke and Clarke (1990), Carrell and Korwitz (1994), Renner (1997), Ansary & Babaii (2003) and Tatsuki (2010) have shown that textbooks can often times contain examples of gender bias, sexism, and stereotyping. Examples of such inequalities include the relative invisibility of female characters, the unrealistic and sexist portrayals of both men and women, stereotypes involving social roles, occupations, relationships and actions as well as linguistic biases such as 'gendered' English and sexist language.

Critical Discourse Analysis as a framework for the examination of text and talk within the context of institutional settings such as the classroom can be used to uncover bias in texts and to show how text/talk functions to maintain social order. Language can act to both reinforce as well as to challenge the status quos perceptions and expectations of gender and ethnicity. However, it is rare to find foreign language textbook analyses that focus on both gender and ethnicity as social, cultural and educational constructs.

Knudsen (2003) reports that gender research as it has been done in Europe and North America falls into three varieties: 1) Gender as Category, 2) Gender as Construction, and 3) Gender as Deconstruction. Knudsen suggests that future research methodologies should follow three steps in the research process by using "research in gender as category and gender as construction before moving into gender as deconstruction" (p. 2) as well as working with wild practices and remnant capital analysis, looking for the meaningless, the staged and the fragmented.

As Knudsen (2003) proposed, this study followed a three-step research process to examine how gender and ethnicity is done in Ministry of education-approved ELT texts for Junior High School students in Japan and Germany[1]. Data from a previous study of Japanese ELT textbooks (Tatsuki, 2010) will be compared with data drawn from three German ELT textbooks in order to observe how ethnicity and gender are done in two distinct but EFL contexts. In Japan, textbooks (and educational issues in general) are centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education at the national level, so ministry approved texts were selected for that study. In Germany, on the other hand, the responsibility for the German education system lies primarily with the Länder (states) and the system varies throughout Germany because each Bundesland decides its own educational policies. However, one publisher (Diesterweg) provides ELT textbooks for a very large number of German states, so its series (at three levels of difficulty) was selected for this study.

First, gender and ethnicity were each examined as a category in order to describe the issue of visibility via naming, identities, roles and verbosity. Considering how gender and ethnicity can be used as positions to construct in order to maintain an ideology in which one group is subordinate to another is the second step in this research. Examining

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1   For this paper, ELT texts for the first year of junior high/secondary school from each country are compared. Note however, that with the exception of Berlin/Brandenburg, secondary school begins in the 5th year in Germany whereas in Japan it begins in the 7th year.

firstness, initial conversational turn distribution and the use of images are three ways of assessing possible subordination among groups. The final stage involved deconstructing gender and ethnicity by examining them symbolically, looking for the meaningless, the staged and the fragmented.

This study is timely because a large proportion of these textbooks in both countries are written by committees that are predominated by middle-aged, native male educators—female educators and those of non-native ethnicity are largely absent from or are under-represented in the textbook creation process. As Holmqvist and Gjörup note, "A majority of the contributions in the textbooks are authored by men. There is no evidence, however, that male authors cannot address issues or provide role models for females. The problem is that learners might get the impression that female authors do not produce interesting or useful texts as they are not represented to the same extent" (p.15). It is one of the tenets of CDA that the words we speak or write are purposeful (not arbitrary) regardless of whether we are consciously aware of the linguistic choices. Thus, research such as this is of interest because textbooks may inadvertently contribute to the cultural prejudices and personal biases that learners, unwittingly and unfortunately absorb as a by-product of study.

Gender and Ethnicity as Categories

Knudsen states, "The potential of analysis using gender as a category is that the invisible women, and invisible women's lives, can be made visible" (p.3). Naming, identities and roles will be the means of describing the nature of gender and ethnicity based visibility in the target textbooks.

Naming, Identities and Roles

Whether a character is named or unnamed is an important part of visibility. In the Japanese textbooks, half of all female characters, whether Japanese or foreign were named and half were unnamed

whereas male characters were more likely to be named, especially if Japanese (See Table 1). Most of the named roles were students. There are no family member characters for either male or female Japanese teachers whereas ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers—foreign/Non-Japanese teachers) both female and male have named family members in the stories. Among ALTs with names, most (6) are female yet in the case of Japanese teachers, most are male (5).

The unnamed or non-named characters in Japanese textbooks tell another story. Only females play the role of unnamed clerks and most of those are foreign. Female students whether Japanese or foreign make up the majority of nameless students too and both foreign and Japanese mothers appear without names in these texts—Japanese fathers are absent completely thus are neither named nor unnamed but foreign fathers when present have names.

Table 1. Named and Non-named Characters in Japanese textbooks

	J-f		J-m		NJ-f		NJ-m		Text total
	+N	-N	+N	-N	+N	-N	+N	-N	
Sunshine 1	3	5	2	5	0	8	4	6	33
New Horizon 1	2	2	2	0	3	2	3	0	14
Total English 1	3	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	9
New Crown 1	2	2	1	0	5	0	2	0	12
Columbus 21	2	5	6	3	3	2	3	5	29
One World	2	0	2	1	3	2	3	1	14
Sub totals	12	14	15	9	16	15	16	12	
Total	26		23		31		28		

In the case of German ELT textbooks there is one immediate and striking difference in comparison with Japanese textbooks. Although the illustrations and photographs in the textbooks and the selection of family/given names present people who appear to come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, the ethnicity of the characters is NEVER explicitly discussed. The stories in all three books are set in the UK and center around the lives of a group of young people who become friends at

school. Although they all take German as a foreign language, none of the students is identified as ethnically or culturally German. Furthermore, none of the characters are identified as either native speakers of English, or learners of the language. Therefore the following analysis of the German ELT textbooks will focus only on gender.

Table 2 summarizes the named and non-named characters according to their genders. Overall, female characters outnumbered male characters but there were some interesting differences related to naming. In *Camden Market* (CM), unnamed characters outnumbered named characters for both genders, whereas in *Portobello Road* (PR) it was nearly even regardless of gender and in *Camden Town* (CT) it was nearly even for males but wildly different for females.

Table 2. Named and non-named characters in German ELT textbooks

	F		M		??	Text total
	+N	-N	+N	-N	-N	
Camden Market	7	12	5	9	3	36
Portobello Road	11	11	9	10	0	41
Camden Town	23	2	8	7	0	40
Sub totals	41	25	22	26	3	
Total	66		48			

The roles played by the named and unnamed characters tell another story. Although both males and females could be unnamed clerks and customers, only female family members lost their own identities. For instance, we are introduced to a woman known as Gillian's Mum and David's Mum but her spouse, the father of those children is called Mr. Williams. In another example of identity loss, the female German teacher in both PR and CM had no names, yet the male teacher in CT was identified as Mr. Grey. Furthermore, there was an unnamed policewoman in PR but a male Detective Blake—not only was he named, he was a higher rank!

Gender as Construction

Gender (and ethnicity) can be used as positions that construct and maintain an ideology in which one group is subordinate to another. As Knudsen says, such a false gender ideology serves to "keep girls in a subordinate position and a traditional feminine identity." In Farooq's (1999) study of one EFL text used in Japan, despite an overall balance between males and females in terms of verbosity, male characters initiated 63% of all male female dialogs and provided 89% of the follow up moves. In the following tables, verbosity, initial conversational turns and firstness will be considered.

Verbosity

The popular stereotype that females talk more than males is held up in two of the Japanese textbooks (see Table 3) and two of the German textbooks (Table 5). When gender and ethnicity are considered together, Japanese female characters in the textbook Sunshine are the most verbose over all and foreign females in *Total English* speak more than any other group. Farooq (1999) reported a similar balance in terms of overall verbosity.

Table 3. Verbosity by Gender and Ethnicity in Japanese Textbooks

	J-f	J-m	NJ-f	NJ-m	??	Total
Sunshine 1	532(28)	259(14)	99(5)	405(22)	583(31)	1878
New Horizon 1	153(16)	127(13)	271(28)	311(32)	118(12)	980
Total English 1	208(16)	155(12)	302(24)	138(11)	477(37)	1280
New Crown 1	302(25)	229(19)	208(17)	285(24)	177(15)	1201
Columbus 21	230(16)	390(27)	411(29)	189(13)	219(15)	1439
One World	155(12)	186(15)	254(20)	261(21)	410(32)	1266

Percentages in parentheses

However, when we look at who starts the conversations, a different pattern emerges (see Table 4.). In the case of three textbooks (*Sunshine, New Horizon* and *One World*), males significantly out perform females as the initiators of interactions even though in terms of verbosity they

were about even. Yet in the case of *Total English*, even though females were more verbose, males initiate marginally more interactions. Only in *Columbus 21* does female verbosity seem to go with female initiation of conversations. The speaker who initiates a conversation may be setting the topic and possibly is in a stronger position to control the direction of the interaction. Although verbosity in *New Crown and Columbus 21* was similarly distributed by ethnicity, when turns are considered, Japanese speakers appear to take the lead. In the case of *New Horizon* this switch is even more dramatic--Foreign speakers may be more verbose but Japanese speakers took more turns. And this pattern is upheld with respect to initial turns (see Table 4).

However when ethnicity and gender are considered together the picture is more complex. For instance, in *Total English*, although Japanese characters take more turns, foreign females take more turns than any other group. Yet when we look at who takes the initiative (see Table 4), in *Total English*, the foreign females are no longer in the lead. In the case of Sunshine, Japanese females were the most verbose (even compared with all other textbooks) yet initiated fewer interactions than foreign males. In the case of *One World*, foreign females and males were equally verbose yet when it came to initiating conversations, males initiated twice as often as females. Overall, males tended to initiate turns more than females (109 turns versus 89), giving them a slight power advantage. "We should never again speak, or read/hear others' words,

Table 4. Initial Turns by Gender and Ethnicity

	J-f	J-m	NJ-f	NJ-m	??	Total
Sunshine 1	15(18)	10(12)	2(2)	16(19)	40(48)	83
New Horizon 1	5(12)	4(9)	5(12)	17(40)	12(28)	43
Total English 1	9(15)	9(15)	7(12)	3(5)	31(51)	59
New Crown 1	17(27)	11(17)	7(11)	11(17)	18(28)	64
Columbus 21	10(26)	11(28)	5(13)	3(8)	10(26)	39
One World	3(7)	5(12)	4(10)	9(21)	21(50)	42
	59	50	30	59		

Percentages in parentheses

without being conscious of the underlying meaning of the words. Our words are politicized, even if we are not aware of it, because they carry the power that reflects the interests of those who speak"(McGregor 2003).

The German textbooks also told a couple of interesting stories. In the textbook aimed at the lowest proficiency learners (CM), males not only displayed more verbosity, they also tended to initiate more conversations (Table 5). The other two textbooks, which are aimed at higher proficiency learners, showed a reversed trend—females displayed more verbosity and also initiated more turns. One may wonder if it was a coincidence that the textbook aiming at students that are likely destined for the lowest income brackets (by virtue of a lower ultimate educational attainment), also displays the most conservative gender role preserving tendencies.

Table 5. Verbosity and turn initiation by gender in German Textbooks

	f initial (turns)	m initial (turns)	f total words	m total words	Total words
Camden Market	8	10	628	676	1304
Portobelllo Road	22	16	1097	840	1937
Camden Town	27	10	2089	1603	3692
Total	57	36	3814	3119	

Firstness

Firstness is another aspect of gender construction and Porreca (1984) defines it as "Given two nouns paired for sex, such as male/female, the masculine word always came first, with the exception of the pair ladies/gentlemen" (p.706). Farooq (1999) reported that when pronouns were listed, 'male first' occurred 83% of the time. In Tatsuki's previous study (in press) there were only two overt examples of male firstness--one in *Sunshine* and one in *Columbus 21* in which boys and girls are mentioned in that order. In the case of three other examples male family members are mentioned before females. In the German

textbooks, among the examples of male firstness were in the use of "him/her" and "he/she" in activity directions for speaking with a partner (CT) and the use of the title "Boys and Girls" (PR) in the lesson on parts of the body.

Gender as Deconstruction

Knudsen writes, "Gender as deconstruction emphasizes how gender should be studied as staging and masquerade. Gender has to be analyzed symbolically. It is about 'Doing Gender', not about being a gender (West & Zimmerman 1987). "Gender is what you interpret and negotiate it to be. The way you cut your hair, for example, is a gender-sign on your body. Your hair is an interpretation of the sign 'woman' or 'man'" (Knudsen 2003: 5). Gender is something that we achieve—we do gender.

Images

If one considers these textbooks in the context of an equality discourse (Marshall, 2004), it would make sense to look at images and how they might make one gender positive at the expense of the other. Gender "positioning" through textbook images has been investigated by Fairclough (1989) and Berger (1972). According to Glaschi (2000), "individuals or groups of individuals are positioned by discourse as "inherently inferior," "in control," "weak," "strong," and so forth" (2000: 33).

In the case of the Japanese textbooks, most of the student characters in these textbooks wore school uniforms, which in Japan are strictly gender coded—skirts for females and trousers for males. Although some female characters wore short hairstyles none of the male characters varied from the traditional short conservative cut. In terms of staged images, five photographs depicted females in so-called "non-traditional" situations (e.g. scientist, hockey player)—it should be noted, however, that in every one of them, the female was also foreign.

Gendered images also were associated with vocabulary items. In 11 cases the verb study was associated with photos or images of males and only three with females. When illustrations that depicted embarrass-

ment were collected, it was striking to note that every instance (22 instances in 6 first year textbooks) showed a male student/character feeling or reacting embarrassedly. In some cases the reaction was to some social gaff (running, spilling, breaking) but disturbingly some portrayals of embarrassment were depicted in conjunction with the learning of English or the maintenance of social relations (giving flowers, returning an eraser).

Kawamichi (2007) did a follow up study on the gendered images associated with specific verbs—textbooks often display a verb for vocabulary learning under a picture of a character performing the verb. She selected 18 MEXT approved textbooks to be used from 2006 to 2010 (including the six reported on in this study). She found that although the over all distribution appeared even (46% female; 54% male), there were interesting imbalances at the vocabulary item level. For example, in the area of communication both males and females *chat*, *talk* and *visit* equally but females were depicted more often with the verbs *chat*, *greet* and *write* whereas males were associated more with *email*, *hear*, *listen*, and *read*. Among the highest frequency verbs, males were more than twice as likely to be associated with *do*, *eat*, *get*, *read*, *ride study*, and *watch* than females who on the other hand were associated strongly with *have*, *practice*, *take*, *use* and *write*. One very interesting phenomenon however was the distribution of creative arts verbs: males were depicted 60% of the time with creative verbs (*paint, make, play* [a musical instrument]) and represented a whopping 89% of the characters depicted with cook. And in the school context males were seen most frequently (68%) and when females did appear they were often depicted as teachers (18%). Kawamichi concludes,

> Language is like a mirror that not only reflects the culture but also the social values of the time. Certainly equal rights and consideration for men and women have changed in Japan from that of a dominantly male-oriented society. However in some situations, men seem still to be more dominant than women. ...Although these results are a bit disturbing, I

believe that they were largely unconscious on the part of the textbook creators. I think that language teachers should always be sensitive to the idea that the interior of the language and social biases unconsciously appear… (22).

Consider two "meaningless" or twisted messages: There was a picture of a Japanese female declaring that she likes English but not Science. This image is unfairly paired in the textbook with a Japanese boy who declares that he likes basketball but not soccer. This is hardly an equivalent juxtaposition. Furthermore, why would a language textbook make any learner practice the pattern "Ken speaks English well--I don't speak English well" reinforced with the stereotypical gesture of male embarrassment.

In the German textbooks there were some images that could be said to uphold gendered stereotypes. For example in CT the people in all of the photos depicting students playing the role of a magician were male. Images of people baking cakes were female. In both PR and CM, the male character named David was depicted as disorganized and haphazard in his personal grooming, even proclaiming, "I hate the bathroom" in PR. But the strongest gendered images came from CM and CT in the sections on "jobs around the house". In both textbooks, a female character complains that boys do not do their fair share of housework. The CM text goes as far as to declare that "Boys have and easy life" with a picture of Caroline dressed as Super Girl and holding Charlie single-handedly above her head. The PR textbook, on the other hand is completely
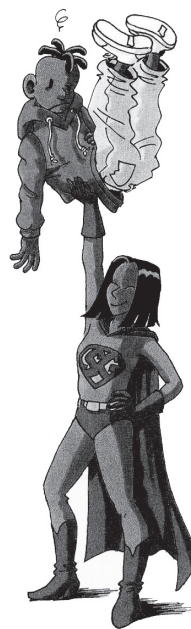
Figure 1. Supergirl (Camden Market, p. 56)

neutral on this topic, describing a "Busy Family" in which all members share the chores of daily life with no complaints about each other.

Discussion

The explicit identification of Japanese and non-Japanese characters in the MEXT approved textbooks sits in stark contrast to the lack of explicit ethnic/racial/cultural identification in the German textbooks. The German textbook authors and editors should be applauded for their efforts to promote a multicultural, multiethnic society with a remarkably low number of stereotyping and biased images or discourses. In the Japanese context, the continued insistence on "otherization" and essentialist views of culture and ethnicity that remain exclusive rather than inclusive are at the root of a continued general failure to produce fully competent communicators of foreign languages despite years of study.

Taken all together these images coupled with the language in these textbooks may be considered almost alarming if we recognize that language does not just reflect some aspect of reality—language is a central force in our continual creation and construction of reality (Bergquist & Szcepanska 2002; Borch 2000; Peskett 2001). Even in 2010 we are not producing textbooks and learning materials that are free of gender and ethnic biases.

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