

## Lipstick on pigs: Critical discourse and image analysis of non-humans in U.S. children's ESL textbooks

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### ABSTRACT

**EN** Gender equality in language learning has received considerable attention in research on classroom policy and materials. Within studies of materials like language learning texts, most research focuses on content analyses of character roles and images, with sometimes purposeful exclusion of non-human characters. However, non-humans in children's picture books comprise almost 60% of the characters children read. Therefore, their representations of gender, including biases, overt sexism, and covert sexism should be examined. In this study, I examine gendering of non-human characters using corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Additionally, I use critical image analysis to discuss pictorial gendering of non-human characters within 12 textbooks in two of the United States' most widely used textbook series for language learning in elementary schools. Results indicate a strong preference for aggressive and adventurous male characters, male supremacist ideologies, and the suppression of female agency.

**Key words:** CORPUS LINGUISTICS, CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS, GENDER AND LANGUAGE, ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL), CRITICAL IMAGE ANALYSIS

**ES** La igualdad de género en el aprendizaje de idiomas ha recibido una atención considerable en la investigación sobre la política y los materiales en el aula. Dentro de los estudios sobre materiales como los textos para el aprendizaje de idiomas, la mayoría de las investigaciones se centran en el análisis del contenido de los roles y las imágenes de los personajes, con una exclusión de los personajes no humanos. Sin embargo, los personajes no humanos de los libros ilustrados para niños representan casi el 60% de los personajes que leen los niños. Por lo tanto, deben examinarse sus representaciones de género, incluyendo los prejuicios, el sexismo manifiesto y el sexismo encubierto. En este estudio, examino la representación de género de los personajes no humanos utilizando la lingüística de corpus y el análisis crítico del discurso. Además, utilizo el análisis crítico de la imagen para analizar el género pictórico de los personajes no humanos en 12 libros de texto de dos de las series de libros de texto más utilizados en Estados Unidos para el aprendizaje de idiomas en las escuelas primarias. Los resultados indican una fuerte preferencia por personajes masculinos agresivos y aventureros, ideologías de supremacía masculina y la supresión de la agencia femenina.

**Palabras clave:** LINGÜÍSTICA DE CORPUS, ANÁLISIS CRÍTICO DEL DISCURSO, ANÁLISIS DE LIBROS DE TEXTO, GÉNERO Y LENGUAJE, INGLÉS COMO SEGUNDA LENGUA, ANÁLISIS CRÍTICO DE LA IMAGEN

**IT** L'uguaglianza di genere nell'apprendimento delle lingue è stato oggetto di notevole attenzione nella ricerca su norme scolastiche e sui materiali didattici. La maggior parte degli studi sui testi per l'apprendimento delle lingue si concentra sull'analisi del contenuto dei ruoli e delle immagini dei personaggi con l'esclusione, a volte intenzionale, di personaggi non umani. Tuttavia quasi il 60% dei personaggi nei libri illustrati per bambini è non umano. Pertanto, dovrebbero essere esaminate le rappresentazioni di genere, inclusi pregiudizi, sessismo palese e sessismo nascosto di tali personaggi. In questo studio si esamina la rappresentazione del genere di personaggi non umani usando la linguistica dei corpora e l'analisi critica del discorso. Inoltre, viene utilizzata l'analisi critica delle immagini per discutere la rappresentazione del genere di personaggi non umani all'interno di 12 libri in due delle serie di libri di testo più utilizzate negli Stati Uniti per l'apprendimento delle lingue nelle scuole elementari. I risultati indicano una forte preferenza per personaggi maschili aggressivi e avventurosi, ideologie suprematiste maschili e soppressione dell'agire femminile.

**Parole chiave:** LINGUISTICA DEI CORPORA, ANALISI CRITICA DEL DISCURSO, ANALISI DEI LIBRI DI TESTO, GENERE E LINGUAGGIO, INGLESE COME SECONDA LINGUA, ANALISI CRITICA DELLE IMMAGINI

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## 1. Introduction

When considering one's favorite childhood stories, at least one tale with fantastical characters may come to mind. These characters permeate children's spaces—amplified, reinvented, and reimagined through various forms of technology in both social and academic contexts. Curriculum writers often choose literacy materials from published children's literature, adapting them to fit the target level, age, and teaching context. The resulting schoolbooks are often relied upon not just for content area learning, but also for reinforcing a society's cultural values and norms, including gender roles which can involve gender bias and stereotyping (Witt, 2001). We know that children's interactions with books have the potential for not only gender role assimilation, but also for promoting social change (Capuzza, 2020). As such, it should come as no surprise that books used in U.S. English as a second language (ESL) classrooms as language learning curricula carry great weight, as they are often viewed and accepted more readily by the children whose teacher has chosen and read these books to them (Wharton, 2005).

Children's literature and English language learning literacy texts have historically limited the potential of female agents (Blumberg, 2015). However, most historical studies have ignored the roles that non-human characters play in offering potential opportunities for male and female agents and readers (Sunderland, 2015). While some scholars have examined gender in children's literature or language learning texts, few have employed systematic linguistic analysis to study gendering of non-human characters in language learning texts. As many language learning texts adapt full length picture books or literature for use in language learning, it is imperative that we understand what these fantastical characters are communicating to young language learners acquiring language, literacy, and social norms simultaneously from these texts (Harro, 2000).

In this study, I engaged in the previously uncharted realms of language learning material study by examining the linguistic and visual gendering of non-human characters within 12 English language development (ELD) textbooks adopted by the two largest ELD markets in the United States, the states of California and Texas. Together, these markets represent 2.4 million young readers each year (Sanchez, 2017). I had two research questions:

- 1) How are gendered non-humans represented discursively?
- 2) How are gendered non-humans represented visually?

To answer these questions, I employed critical multimodal linguistic analysis through Critical Discourse Analysis and visual analysis. Critical multimodal linguistic study is rare in current empirical research of gender in language learning materials, and the study of non-human characters in linguistic analyses are new to this field. To increase the validity of linguistic analysis, I employed computational software to analyze linguistic phenomena related to non-humans, a technique of corpus study first used in textbook gender analysis by Yang (2011). I built my analysis and recommendations upon what is currently known about gender representations of non-human characters in children's materials.

## 2. Literature review

First, it is necessary to explain what is meant by *non-human characters*. These are agents within works of fiction and sometimes non-fiction that are not human. These are often animals gendered through nomenclature, appearance, and personification. They are also fantastical characters like fairies, giants, trolls, and other mythical creatures. Included here are gods and goddesses, which are part of religious and folkloric texts. These can also be personified objects, such as toys and other household items. "Non-human characters" can even include elements of nature that are personified and gendered in works of literature.

### 2.1. Gender and children's fiction

A genre that has received considerable attention with regard to gender is children's fiction. Researchers have analyzed the stories themselves for thematic representation, considered how children receive and act upon fiction stories, as well as studied how children perceive gender within them. However, very little has been done to analyze the *language* of children's fiction. Instead, most research has settled on content analyses. In contemporary analysis of content, children's literature has been found to consistently stereotype characters into gendered binaries and demonstrate gender inequality between characters,

content, and pictures (Crisp & Hiller, 2011; Mattix & Sobalak, 2014; McGrabe, Fairchild, Graurholz, Pescosolido, & Tope, 2011). These works show that there are more male protagonists with more interesting activities than female characters or non-binary characters. Males are given greater autonomy and traits such as bravery. Females are less often central to the stories and are more likely to engage in maternal roles of understanding, sympathizing, and comforting. As Hamilton, Anderson, Braudus, and Young (2006) describe in their study of parents in children's fiction, females are far more often engaged in homemaking activities.

Other studies have confirmed uptake of gendered stereotypes when children are repeatedly given reading materials that contain them, demonstrating the profound roles children's fiction play in the formation of ideologies on gender. One notable and recent example is Hill and Jacob's (2020) project wherein circle time sessions were recorded and analyzed while gender ambiguous stories were read, with explicit conversations about gender. The authors found that children perceived gender based on adornment, coloring, posture, activities the characters engaged in, and the names given to them. This study found that children made similar comments regarding gender regardless of the human or non-human nature of the characters, and they tended to assign gender binaries even to ambiguously drawn and ambiguously described characters.

### ***2.1.1. Visual analysis in children's fiction***

Visual analyses of gender in children's fiction have historically found that visuals do support the text in terms of gendering (Nilsen, 1971, 1977; Sunderland, 2010). Thus, as Caldecott winning books place females within the home through role allocation, images of females are likewise in the home, wearing domestic clothing (Sunderland, 2010). In particular, Nilsen (1977) remarked on the overuse of aprons in illustrations for female characters. In more contemporary studies, visual analysis has demonstrated more egalitarian attempts at character representation, with more options for children's picture books featuring gender ambiguous characters or characters who identify as LGBTQIA or who are drawn as less stereotypically or traditionally feminine or masculine (Capuzza, 2020; Hill & Jacobs, 2020). However, in terms of frequency of visual occurrence or being alone in an image, males experience far greater visual representation in contemporary children's fiction than females (Hamilton et al., 2006; McGrabe et al., 2011).

### ***2.1.2. Thematic analysis of non-humans in children's fiction***

Little work has been done to examine gender representation, biases, or sexism within children's literature focusing on non-human agents. Even fewer studies have been conducted through linguistic analysis. The first work examining non-humans for gender representation within children's literature was by Nilsen (1971). Publishers at this time recommended authors write fewer books with female protagonists because while girls would read about male or female protagonists, boys would not read about female leads. Teachers were requested to find more books with male protagonists for classroom use as well, to encourage boys and girls to participate. Nilsen uses the terms "boys' books" to refer to books with male protagonists and "girls' books" to refer to books with female protagonists. In her study of gender in Caldecott-winning picture books, she compared "boy's books" with "girl's books," examining characters' activity, characters' size within illustrations, and gendered themes about romance, domesticity, and adventure. In these analyses, she examined non-human stories separately from human stories. She considered the use of gendered pronouns and compared them to anthropomorphic illustrations and found that even when illustrations did not gender the character, the masculine pronoun was used, suggesting that unless the character is drawn with female traits it is automatically male. She found that male non-human characters were an incredibly common occurrence in children's award-winning literature, naming Dr. Seuss books for their ratio of 7 to 1 male to female characters. She also examined the personality traits of these characters and found distinct stereotypical attitudes constructed for male and female non-humans. In addition to identifying female non-humans in mothering roles, books portrayed females as fashion conscious, sick, and lonely.

Bradley and Mortimer (1972) examined picture books from the School Library Service's recommended lists and found that for anthropomorphized male characters, there was greater activity, autonomy, exploration, bravery, disobedience, mastery of skills, and aggression than for females, besides having a greater quantifiable presence in the stories. Female anthropomorphized characters displayed no autonomous behavior and instead were consistently victims.

In a study by McGrabe et al. (2011), an examination of Caldecott award winning books from 1900-2000 demonstrated minimal improvement over time in representation of female non-human characters. They found that male animals are central characters in 23% of books per year, compared to female non-human centralization of 7%. They found that as of 1990, disparity in gender for animal characters was still

two males to every one female. They posited that these disparities pointed to the symbolic annihilation of women and girls particularly through female animals.

Finally, Ferguson's (2018) analysis of the top 100 children's books for 2017 saw that 60% of characters were non-human and 73% of those non-human characters were male. Ferguson also found that males were more likely to be dangerous creatures, such as dragons, bears, and tigers, while females were smaller and meeker such as birds, cats, and insects. From these content analyses, we can glean that non-humans have played a large role in children's literature for decades, and that they are still much more likely to be male than female or neuter.

### ***2.1.2.1. Linguistic analyses of non-humans in children's fiction***

In 2010, Sunderland questioned whether Nilsen's (1977) assertions about gendered pronouns for non-humans could still be true and called for up-to-date research on this topic. In fact, as of 2012, Sunderland claimed that most work to date had focused on content in gendered fiction, such as roles and actions of protagonists. She advocated for and produced work that engages the *language* of gendered fiction for analysis—what the characters were like, did, and said—and how this was linguistically presented. She advocated for linguistic analysis which she described as “looking closely at language in a principled and often systematic way” (p. 63). Samples of linguistic analysis of gendered fiction include analysis of titles of books for gender, character naming, male and female pronoun use, and physical and emotional adjectives. In even more current work, Sunderland (2015) pushed for the field to examine gender in non-human characters within language textbooks both linguistically and visually. This work seeks to respond to her prompting.

Beyond Nilsen's (1977) study of gendered pronouns mentioned earlier, Lieberman (1986) explored Hans Christian Anderson fairytales through linguistic focalization, or the construal of different characters' points of view. He identified beauty as an asset for fairytale females such as the Little Mermaid. The Andersen version of this tale uncommonly provides her point of view more often than the prince. Through a feminist linguistic analysis, the researcher examined how, for the want of love, the mermaid sacrificed her literal voice and her necessary tail to be near the prince.

### ***2.1.2.2. Visual analyses of non-humans in children's fiction***

In Nilsen's (1971) paper on gender in Caldecott winning picture books, she coined the term “occult of the apron” to describe the overwhelmingly female uniform for children's literature books. She recounted images of non-human characters as well—mother alligator, mother rabbit, mother donkey, and mother cat—all wearing aprons. She wrote of the need to investigate picture book illustrations because these were promoted for children during their most impressionable life stages. She blamed artists for many of the issues surrounding male-centric illustrations. At that time, freelance artists were three times as likely to be male. Thus, when they illustrated children's literature, they drew from their impressions and memories of childhood unless the text itself directed them otherwise.

In their examination of notable children's books from 1995-1999, Gooden and Gooden (2001) also found greater instances of male animals (116) over female animals (78) in illustrations. They argued that continued imbalance in gender representation and the continued gender stereotyping was harmful to male and female readers. Yabroff (2016) noted that most illustrations in the top 100 booklists from Scholastic and Time did not have gendered illustrations but relied on the text to gender the non-human characters for them. This linguistic gendering where pictorial gendering is not present is an important reason to conduct multimodal analyses to glean a thicker description of gender representations for the most common characters in children's readers. The common framework for these studies was content analysis, which relied on head counts to determine stereotyping and representation. However, counts alone should not be solely relied upon to examine the issues of non-human gender representation and the possible harmful effects on young readers.

## ***2.2. Gender and ESL texts***

As this project aims to examine gendering in children's ESL texts, it is additionally necessary to focus on not just children's picture books but on child and adult ESL texts. Over the last three decades, both content and linguistic analysis of textbooks for gender construction have investigated sexist language, female visibility, firstness, and gender stereotypes (Giaschi, 2000; Hartman & Judd, 1978; Mustapha, 2015; Porreca, 1984). Hartman and Judd (1978) defined “firstness” as “a subtler convention of language. . . the ordering of

sex pairs like male and female, Mr. and Mrs., brother and sister, husband and wife, which are usually ordered with the male first, with the single exception of ladies and gentlemen" (p. 390). These studies have provided quantitative and qualitative data on the unequal treatment of gender in educational materials. While research regarding gender in American-made ESL materials is virtually non-existent, gender role representation in English language textbooks in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts outside of the United States has been studied more recently and with greater depth. These studies demonstrate a perpetual display of women in more stereotypically feminine professions and men experiencing a wider variety of roles allocated to them within the text (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Pakuła, Pawelczyk, & Sunderland, 2015; Sadeghi & Maleki, 2016; Yaghoubi-Notash & Nouri, 2016). Sadeghi and Maleki (2016) and Yaghboubi-Notash and Nouri (2016) both employed Van Leeuwen's approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) with an emphasis on social actors. Pakuła et al. (2015) examined Polish EFL textbooks at varying age levels and found that women were relatively powerless next to men within the texts. Women and men had different roles, representing conventional and gendered stereotypical role allocation. Their study was incredibly thorough, examining both texts and their consumption.

Linguistic study of textbooks in EFL and ESL contexts has consistently revealed that women are given secondary roles in classroom materials twice as often as men (Chankseiani, Silova, Palandjian, Mun, & Zholdoshalieva, 2018; Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Lee, 2014; Porreca, 1984; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015). Through an examination of linguistic representation—pronouns, nouns, and other gendered grammar markers, research has consistently shown males in first positions (e.g., as lead character) within learning materials at least twice as often as females (Graham, 1974; Porreca, 1984; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015). In other contexts, however, EFL textbooks have demonstrated improvements in this area. For instance, in Parham's (2013) analysis of children's EFL textbooks in Iran, she found nearly equal linguistic visibility for male and female human characters. In Hong Kong, Lee and Collins (2015) compared the same textbook series from 1988 to its updated 2005 version and found significant improvements in this area.

### **2.2.1. Visual analysis in ESL texts**

There are two frameworks that are commonly employed in visual textbook analysis: Giaschi's Critical Image Analysis (2000) and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Actor Network plus Representation and Viewer Network (2008), where Visual Social Actor Network examines exclusion and inclusion, and Representation and Viewer Network examines distance, relation, and interaction. Giaschi's framework is derived from Fairclough's CDA and contains seven questions for analyzing gaze, agency, and body language. In van Leeuwen's framework, analysis includes who is and is not included, who could have logically been included, character agency, cultural representations, and individual vs. group members on display, as well as relative distance between viewer and character in image and angle of gaze.

From the current EFL context and the historical ESL context, we see evidence of textbooks containing more male images, more males at work, and more male dominated images (Hartman & Judd, 1978; Porreca, 1984; Yang, 2016). A historical look at ESL texts from Porreca (1984) noted that men were displayed at work five times as often as women. In more recent studies, there is movement towards equality in gender representation pictorially (Lee, 2014; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015; Yang, 2016). Lee's (2014) comparison of Hong Kong English textbooks from 1988-2005 claimed that while there were still significantly more men than women in the images, there were more women-only images, and more women and men represented equally in images in the 2005 edition of the text. Visual analyses of textbooks produced for the Iranian school system in Amerian and Esmaili's (2015) investigation of *The American Headway Series* showed more male-only pictures and more male-dominant pictures. Only 24% of images showed equal numbers or male and female characters. In each of these studies, however, the analysis was based on a simple counting of characters to determine gender equity pictorially. Dabbagh's (2016) study in the Iranian EFL context more thoroughly applied Van Leeuwen's framework to visual analysis, examining gaze, space, distance, body display, and activity in addition to the simple counts conducted by previous studies. Dabbagh found that males were 1.5 times more active in images, males looked at the viewer more often than females and were framed in close ups more often. Yet, Dabbagh found greater balance in spaces such as work and home images with males and females, and he found similarities in body display such as clothing choice that represents religious ideologies regarding dress.

Giaschi (2000) conducted Critical Image Analysis (CIA) on texts in the Eastern European and Asian contexts. In his 2000 study, he found that women's heads were often inclined towards a man. When the woman's gaze was averted and the man's gaze was upon her, his facial and body language showed physical

signs of tension or anger. Mustapha (2015) used Giaschi's framework to examine gender positioning through visual images in ESL books in Nigeria. He employed four parts of the CIA framework to conduct his analysis and found that males within the Nigerian ELT context were positioned visually as inherently superior, strong, and in control in professions, social activities, and conflicts, but inferior in the domestic domain to females. Females were only viewed as superior in the domestic domain.

### **2.2.2. Non-humans in ESL texts**

There are limited studies examining non-human gendering in language learning materials. Often, non-humans are explicitly removed from analysis in language learning materials, despite their prevalence and importance to child learning (Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Parham, 2013). In Bhattacharya's (2017) small-scale study of Indian English language learning textbooks, using content and linguistic analysis, just one section was given to non-human gendered characters. In this section, Bhattacharya found that masculine pronouns gendered otherwise neutral characters. She brought attention to the fact that in Hindi, several animal names are feminine, but the English descriptions of them used masculine pronouns. She also described how the use of metaphors positioned male non-human characters as powerful, strong, and aggressive. Similarly, in an analysis of early-literacy textbooks in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Chankseliani et al. (2018) found that animals and insects were humanized to promote ideologies of ethicized and gendered moral education. A study of the language showed foxes to be predominantly female through naming and pronoun use, and to be described as sly and dishonest, whereas bears and wolves were male and "less smart."

Just a few studies of non-humans in ESL materials have examined images. In Yang's (2016) visual analysis of Hong Kong primary English language texts, the author determined that non-human characters – while not gendered in the same ways as humans, were still gendered and often in exaggerated ways. The study noted clothing and accessories such as handbags to ensure readers understood the gender of the non-human character. The study of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstani early literacy books described above (Chankseliani et al., 2018) found that anthropomorphism of insects and animals also translated to images that were gendered stereotypically. Bears, bees, and other animals wore traditional clothing and exemplified gendered stereotypes of women and men in their societies to reinforce heteronormative and nationalist ideologies of "normalness" of gendered and ethnic divisions.

## **3. Rationale for current study**

In a given year, in well-known collections of children's literature (e.g., Caldecott winners, Top 100 Booklist, etc.), between 27% and 60% of children's books contain non-human characters (Sunderland, 2010). Using images of non-humans for marketing purposes is a proven strategy that demonstrates the power of non-human characters over the child as consumer (Karpyn et al., 2017; Veer, 2013). Harju and Rouse (2018) describe books with non-human characters as "featur[ing] anthropomorphized protagonists who stand in for human characters, imparting moral and social codes through their attributes and actions" (p. 456). This is not only true for original, non-paraphrased, or adapted works sold in bookstores; classroom texts featuring non-human characters are also shown to teach lessons about morality and social norms. And, while children in classrooms are socialized to trust their teachers and therefore to believe what their teachers share with them through the curriculum, English Language Learners are even more prone to take up the social codes within the narratives of non-humans, as they are simultaneously acquiring language, literacy, content, and cultural norms. With the prevalence and relative importance non-humans play in conveying what is valued to children, it is surprising that, in 2021, no greater depth of work has been conducted into what messages about gender roles and ideology are being conveyed and potentially taken up by this more vulnerable group of children in U.S. public schools. Thus, this study seeks to better understand the way language and images of non-human characters portray gender roles and ideologies in English language learning textbooks. Implications of this research will affect how educators both choose the best reading passages for their language learning students, but also how they might use texts to open discussions to promote efforts of critical literacy in language learning.

## **4. Methods**

### **4.1. Data**

While many nations publish curriculum on a national level, in the United States, states decide on the textbooks used in the classroom. As Texas and California have the highest student populations, publishers

often write curriculum with these two contexts in mind, or in collaboration with these two boards of education (BOEs). Books created for Texas and California educational contexts are then marketed to other states as well. Therefore, Texas and California's BOEs often make curricular choices that affect the books read across the United States. In other words, two large educational governing bodies with their own political and ideological motivations tell publishers what they would like to see and read, and those books are published nationwide (Blumberg, 2015). For this reason, I examined 12 textbooks from two series published by Rigby, a Houghton Mifflin company, and Benchmark Education Company for the Texas and California ESL classrooms, examining gender representation and positioning linguistically and pictorially through systematic analysis.

The first series, *California Benchmark Advance: Texts for English Language Development*, is a Benchmark Education textbook series printed in 2018 and currently adopted by California's public schools, the largest school system in the United States for English language learners. This text is also printed and distributed to schools nationwide without the California Standards for Language Learning. The second series, *On Our Way to English: Texas*, was printed by Houghton Mifflin Company in 2014 and is currently adopted through 2022 by Texas, the state with the second largest population of English language learners nationally. This series is also printed nationally and is currently adopted in its national form in Louisiana and Florida. These texts are designed to meet learners of various ages and proficiency levels and considers kindergarten to be the first or beginner year of English for most language learning pupils. Thus, as the texts progress from kindergarten through fifth grade, the pupils are progressing in grade level and proficiency level, placing 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at an advanced level of English language proficiency in reading with scaffolded writing and speaking activities. I examined 6 books in each series from kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. As these texts contained exercises, quizzes, vocabulary, and grammar explanations in addition to reading, I chose to focus only on readings that gave explicit instructions to learners to produce language. While reading in general in the second language is beneficial for acquisition, I am concerned with readings that contained both instructions for production and references to gender, because I wanted to focus on the students' opportunities for engagement with the readings that reference gender. For each series, optional supplementary materials exist, but there are no instructions or references to these supplements in the principal textbooks, and they are sold separately from the textbook series.

#### 4.2. Corpus linguistics

To examine these texts through systematic linguistic modes of inquiry, I employed corpus linguistics to gather and analyze the data within the 12 books using a sample corpus approach (Leech, 2007). Corpus linguistics is defined as procedures for analyzing some set of machine-readable texts deemed appropriate to study a set of research questions. The set of texts is called the corpus and is usually too large to rely on hand and eyes alone (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). I specifically employed ANTCOnc as a computational tool for organizing and managing my data (Anthony, 2019). This allowed me to have more accurate quantitative analysis of linguistic features of the texts. Yang's (2011) study used concordancing techniques similar to the methodology of the current study, examining collocations of he/she, man/women/woman boy/s, girl/s in a series of primary textbooks, but Yang's study was limited by the small size of her corpus (14,340 words) and by her restriction to collocation. This study is based on a much larger corpus—*Benchmark Advance* contains a corpus of 44,757 words, and *On Our Way to English* contains a corpus of 18,039 words—and includes a wider range of gender-concerned features and is as such more on par with more recent corpus studies such as Lee and Collin's (2016) corpus study of 29,216 words.

All the texts were entered electronically and then edited manually. I first annotated the corpus for linguistic references to gender, then performed collocational and concordance analyses on these readings. Specifically, I annotated all gendered nouns: proper names; terms like "man/en," "woman/en," "girl/s," "boy/s;" familial terms denoting gender such as "aunt," "uncle," "brother," "sister," "husband," "wife," "nephew," "niece," "son," "daughter," "mother," "father," "grandmother," "grandfather;" and their derivatives, both in English and Spanish (such as "abuelo" and "abuela"). Next, I annotated all mentions of gendered pronouns: "he," "him," "she," "her/s," "his" and their derivatives, such as versions ending in the suffix "-self." I considered and annotated linguistic stereotyped words, such as "master" and the "-man/en" and "-ess" suffixes. Then, I annotated address titles that refer to gender, such "Mrs.," "Ms.," and "Mr.," in addition to "Mister" and "Miss." From these annotations, I then labelled collocated adjectives. Next, I labelled verbs that collocated with "she" and "he," as these are the most frequently occurring representations of male and female agents within the texts. I used the clusters tool to identify the verbs within five words to the left and right as a means of identifying the kinds of activities associated with males and females, following the example of Lee

and Collins (2015). I additionally annotated the readings to denote genre and human or non-human. To analyze gender representation in the series, I used frequency counts and collocational analysis. The Word List tool was used to configure token versus types of words in each series. The collocate tool was used to examine the verbs associated with male and female agents, and the concordance tool elicited frequencies of individual words and phrases in a KWIC (Key Word in Context) format, which shows collocates of the word chosen and identifies common phrases.

### **4.3. Critical discourse analysis**

Following data collection through ANTCONC, I chose Fairclough's framework for CDA. CDA is a derivative of critical theory, which is any theory concerned with the critique of ideology and domination. Fairclough's approach to CDA reflects an examination of the power *behind* discourse, not just the power *in* discourse. There are two main assumptions of CDA: language is a social event that is related to the speaker's selection of vocabulary and grammar that is "principled and systematic" (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979), and the purpose of CDA is to make clear the opaque linguistic elements that lead to or protect unequal distributions of power (Wodak & Meyer, 2001) to ultimately change the existing social reality (Fairclough, 2015).

My study relied on two stages of CDA known as description and interpretation. Description entails a linguistic uncovering of the text and regards the grammar and vocabulary present as choices from among the options available depending on the genre. To interpret the features of the text, it is important to realize what other ways meaning could have been made morphologically or grammatically. Interpretations are generated by what is in the text (description) and what is "in" the interpreter in addition to the sometime religious, sociopolitical, and historical powers of the society in which the discourse is being produced (Fairclough, 2015).

### **4.4. Visual analysis**

Many previous studies that included visual analysis relied on frameworks for analyzing people and therefore had to eliminate non-humans from their investigations (Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Parham, 2013). Those that have attempted to analyze non-humans in the same way they analyzed humans have found that these methods fall short (Hill & Jacobs, 2020; Yang, 2016). However, when studies relied on principles of gendered anthropomorphism as an art sub-genre, their analyses were more relevant in their findings relative to their context (Chankseiani et al., 2018; Nilsen, 1971, 1977; Perea, 2018; Yarbrough, 2011). Cibos and Hodges (2009) categorized the key elements necessary to achieve gendered anthropomorphism as anatomy, rhythm, mass, facial features, and functional details. Anatomy entails making curvier lines for female bodies and sharper lines for male bodies. Rhythm refers to the consistent exaggeration needed for those lines to ensure viewers understand the maleness and femaleness of the characters, such as rounded bellies on male bears and elongated torsos, fingers, and toes on females. Mass refers to the exaggeration of weight needed to mimic both animal size and gender: greater weight for bears in general, but even more so for male bears than for females. Facial features commonly exaggerated to denote male vs. female are lips, fuller for females than for males. Functional details refer to coloring and patterns, clothing, and accessories with suggestions to remove decorative items like bracelets, earrings, and skirts from male animals. Thus, after cataloguing each image within NVIVO and annotating it for traits of gendered anthropomorphism, following Cibos and Hodges series of drawing manuals beginning in 2009, I noted that with non-human characters, clothing, facial features, coloring, and mass/size were the most frequently conveyed visual markers for gender within these two series. Earlier studies of non-humans in children's books and learning materials concluded that gendering most often happens through coloring, clothing, physical features, and postures (Burke & Copenhaver, 2004; Hill & Jacobs, 2020; Perea, 2018; Yang, 2016). I first annotated images based on whether the character was an animal or a mythical creature and whether it was gendered pictorially and/or linguistically as male or female. If an image contained no visible gendering (i.e., it was drawn as anatomically accurate for the kind of animal it represented), I eliminated it from my visual analysis. I then gave each image a mark for containing one of the traits of gendered anthropomorphism, such as facial features that gender the character, clothing/adornment, coloring, and size.



## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Description phase of linguistic analysis

Through repeated close readings of both series, which I will refer to as *Benchmark* (California) and *OOWTE* (Texas), I catalogued types, token appearances, gender, and non-human form of characters (e.g., robot, dwarf), as well as short descriptions and linguistic references and page numbers for each occurrence. I then compiled a table to demonstrate the linguistic gendering of non-human characters by both series in Table 1. Table 1 also shows that *Benchmark* had far more stories and poems about animals and other non-human characters than did *OOWTE*, which predominantly featured human stories.

Table 1  
*Gender of non-human characters by series*

Gender	Benchmark	OOWTE
Male	88	15
Female	28	5
Non-gendered	3	0

#### 5.1.1. Nouns and pronouns

Linguistic gendering in these texts was predominantly demonstrated using pronouns. Sometimes, the names of the characters were helpful in determining gender, as with the fairy Tinkerbell in a Peter Pan retelling in *Benchmark Advance*. I did not rely solely on proper nouns for linguistic gendering but looked for pronouns to confirm.

The ratio of male to female non-human characters was quite high in *Benchmark* at 3.14 to 1. *OOWTE* had fewer non-human characters but shared a similar ratio of 3:1 male to female. These findings are nearly double those of Gooden and Gooden (2001) who examined Caldecott and other notable picture books from 1995-1999 and found a ratio of 1.5:1, but on par with Ferguson's (2018) study of children's picture books at 2.4:1 suggesting that these textbooks are moving in the same direction as current children's picture books—more male centric—for non-human gender representation.

I also examined character types and found that male non-humans were more likely to be large than were female non-humans and more likely to be aggressive creatures such as bears and lions. These findings are represented in Figure 1 for the *Benchmark* series. I did not present a chart for *OOWTE* as it was almost completely small animals for males and females.

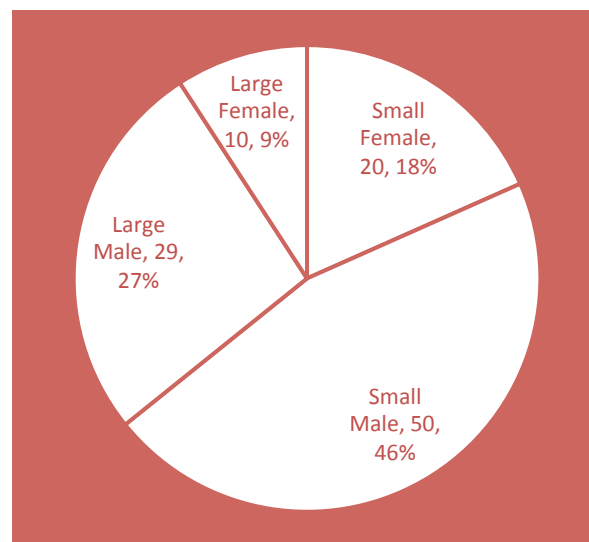


Figure 1. Non-Human Gendering by Size - Benchmark

There were characters in each series that were only male, such as dogs and badgers. There was just one occurrence total in both series of a fox being female. Non-human females in each book were frequently

quite small such as ladybugs, snails, beans, beetles, ants, birds, and fairies. However, there were female cows, a giraffe, a dragon, and a giant within the two series. There are also a few small male animals, such as a mosquito, a gnat, and a crawfish, although these small males each accomplished something huge using their size to their advantage. For example, the mosquito was blamed for a never-ending night in an African folktale (*Benchmark*, Grade 1 Unit 6), and the gnat boasted about taking down the King of Beasts in the retelling of the Aesop tale (*Benchmark*, Grade 4 Unit 2). Overall, there were both more tokens and more types of male non-humans than female non-humans (2:1) in both *Benchmark* and *OOWTE*, as shown in Figure 2.

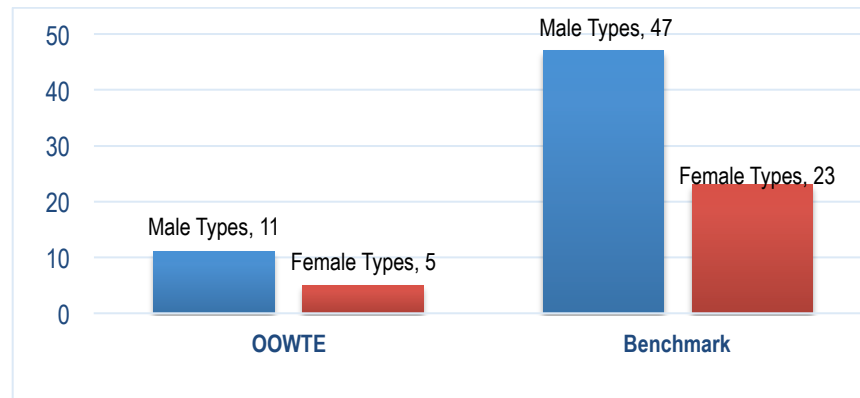


Figure 2. Non-Human Character Types

### 5.1.2. Adjectives

Through an examination of adjectives, males were frequently described by character traits that emphasized intelligence, such as “clever,” “cunning,” “intelligent,” and “crafty” as in “Crafty Fox” (*Benchmark* Grade 1 Unit 4 and Grade 3 Unit 6), “Clever Raven” (*Benchmark* Grade 5 Unit 8), and “Wise Friend Fox” (*Benchmark* Grade 2 Unit 6). The adjective “little” is used only for females.

In *OOWTE*, females are often characterized as less intelligent than males as in “Fox and Crow” where the male fox flatters the crow through compliments of her beauty. She sings for him, dropping her cheese to do so. He then pokes fun at her before taking the cheese and running away.

- 1) Between bites of the cheese, the grinning fox said, “You have a voice, madam, I see, but what you want is wits.” (*OOWTE* Kindergarten).

Another example is a female cow in *Benchmark* Grade 1 who “knew not how” to thank the farmer boy for getting her home.

Females are also characterized as being slow in contrast to their faster male characters. An example of this is of Kate the Country Mouse in “City Mouse Country Mouse” (*Benchmark* Grade 1) where Kate’s slow quiet life is too boring for Clyde, the City Mouse. Kate does not like the speed at which life moves in the city and returns home, happy to be in the quiet countryside.

When females are able to accomplish something, this often surprises the male characters as in “Tortoise and the Hare” (*Benchmark* Kindergarten), “How the Beetle Got Her Coat” (*Benchmark* Grade 2), and Snail in “How Water Came to Dry Lands” (*OOWTE* Grade 4). In each of these stories, the female is described in ways that emphasize her slowness. Tortoise is described as:

- 2) ...plodded along, slowly putting one foot in front of the other as tortoises do. “I may be slow,” said Tortoise, “but I always try hard to do my best.

The Beetle has this description:

- 3) “The beetle crawls so slowly,” he thought. “She can’t possibly win!”

Snail has several adjectives to describe the intensity of her slowness:

- 4) Snail was small and slow.
- 5) The people watched as Snail went slowly to the ocean. Some shook their heads and said, "She's so small, and the bottle is so big!"
- 6) When Snail finally returned, everyone was asleep. Slowly, the exhausted Snail climbed the hill to her home. She was so tired that she dragged the water bottle on the ground.

In each of these tales, the female must overcome the obstacle of slowness with some other characteristic she possesses: the Tortoise and the Snail are both determined; the Beetle can fly.

## **5.2. Interpretation phase of linguistic analysis**

### **5.2.1. Males supreme vs. females demeaned**

These stories perpetuate gender stereotypes that females are the weaker, fairer sex as well as less intelligent than males. This has been a trope for centuries and promotes consumeristic ideologies of male and female worth based on physical features. Magazines often push airbrushed versions of super-sized males and wafer-thin females onto consumers as "real" beauty, thus encouraging the sales of products that promise this beauty to the consumer (Talbot, 2010). Females who appear helpless and in need of rescue are a familiar trope of femininity as espoused by Jhally (2010) in his documentary on gender in advertising, *Codes of Gender*. Jhally demonstrated how masculinity is constructed through large males centering themselves and directing their gaze at the camera, whereas femininity was constructed through wafer thin females placing themselves off-balance through postures of brokenness, or through facial features that denote uncertainty such as biting the lip or laughing hysterically with face upturned. These images construct the tropes of masculinity and femininity that sell products and promote hegemonic masculinity as a social norm. These descriptions of masculine and feminine non-humans act in a similar nature, emphasizing what hegemonic and indeed toxic masculinity supports in male and female physique and behavior. An additional note to remember about these images is that they were drawn for these textbooks, not taken from the original sources such as Aesop's Tales. These images were drawn in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for texts published in 2014 and 2018. So, while words may reflect older ideologies or ideologies from other cultures, the illustrators had options to draw characters anatomically correct and to avoid these linkages. While the exact consumeristic ideologies expressed here have not been reported in EFL contexts, Chankseiani et al. (2018) claimed that non-humans emphasized ideologies of nationhood and traditional femininity for the Kazakhi context. Therefore, it appears that, as the U.S. is a highly consumeristic society, the ideologies emphasized by these non-humans are in line with priorities of the capitalist government in which the texts are created.

Additionally, adjectives that consistently place male non-humans as intelligent by nature continue the stereotype that male=smart and promote a dangerous binary that "others" females or discourages female readers from pursuing traditionally male enterprises. Power is then granted when discourses present the dominant forms as the default and other more diverse forms as "other" (Talbot, 2010). Demeaning female characters through adjectives of diminutive size and intellect are part of a traditional male supremacist ideology linking masculinity with achievement and femininity with physical appearance. Interestingly, in the Kazakhi context, while females were also seen as small and males as large, adjectives tended to paint females as sly and dishonest and males as unintelligent (Chankseiani et al., 2018). In each example above, it was the appearance of the female that had to be overcome in order for her to achieve, whereas the male appearance was not questioned but instead was assumed normative. Tortoise, Beetle, and Snail all verbally agreed to complete the physical challenges they undertook but were questioned and undermined through descriptions that depicted them as incapable, despite what they claimed to be able to do. Ignoring the voices of female agents and instead focusing on their physical or perceived mental flaws has damaging effects on society as evidenced by recent studies demonstrating children as early as age six have taken up the stereotype that boys are smarter than girls and defer to them in classroom situations (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpini, 2017). This is, however, an unfortunate and pervasive issue in the United States called "mansplaining" by popular culture, in which a woman's voice is ignored in favor of a male who takes over, explaining, typically to a female, in a condescending or patronizing manner. These examples qualify as "mansplaining" as the female voices are ignored, and male voices explain to them using demeaning language why they cannot complete the tasks they've agreed to (Conner, McCauliff, Shue, & Stamp, 2018).

### 5.2.2. Foregrounded males vs. backgrounded females

There were multiple instances in these series where the female was backgrounded through linguistic suppression or linguistic backgrounding, which is similar to findings from Samadikhah and Shahrokhi's (2015) study of two EFL series. One example of female backgrounding is in the folktale "How Water Came to Dry Lands." Here, there are two named female characters, Blue Bird Woman and Snail. Blue Bird Woman has one job in the story, telling Chief Deer Man what she has heard from the townspeople. He takes it from there and the story continues and finishes without her. While Blue Bird Woman is one character type, she is only referenced twice in the tale, and her presence is backgrounded through passive verbs and fewer descriptors. She had the ear of the people and could have played a larger role than what she was given. In fact, when I searched for the origins of this Navajo tale, I found a much stronger female presence for this character in published folklore. In the retelling by Geri Keams (1998), the character in charge was named "First Woman". There was no Deer Man who took over when Blue Bird Woman found out the townspeople were grumbling about water. In fact, the only Blue Bird Woman I found in Native American folklore was married to High Horse. She was a princess in Lakota mythology (Schell & Woldstad, 2012). This suggests an unfortunate homogenization of indigenous peoples by the writer of this piece, in addition to the unnecessary steps *OOWTE* took to background the original female protagonist in its retelling. Thompson (1990) calls this "concealing," which is when a text disguises or hides the working of power through hiding some of the information and telling only half-truths. In the Lakota myth told by Schell and Woldstad (2012), Blue Bird Woman has significantly more power than she is allocated in the *OOWTE* textbook. Additionally, in the Keams retelling (1998), First Woman is the chief and Snail is called "Snail Girl," and her image is quite magnificently drawn (see Figure 3 for comparison between the *OOWTE* image and the image in Keams [1998]). However, in the *OOWTE* retelling, her gender is only obtained through pronouns that are used to describe her. Finally, the titles are quite different. In the *OOWTE* title "How Water Came to Dry Lands", the passive voice is used—"water came." This acts to suppress the actions of Snail who is the one responsible for bringing water. The retelling by Keams is titled "Snail Girl Brings Water," which puts the female protagonist in first position within the title and gives the title active voice, with Snail Girl taking the action upon the water.



Figure 3. "Snail" (*OOWTE*) vs. "Snail Girl" (Keams, 1998)

Within *Benchmark's* Grade 2 Unit 2, the folktale, "Rough-Faced Girl" propels a non-human male, warrior named Invisible One, to the foreground, which conflicts with other retellings. Through a hasty promise from an invisible yet still somehow handsome warrior, Invisible One, that whoever can see him he will marry, a man's rough-faced daughter makes an unlikely match. In the textbook retelling, the father and the Invisible One negotiate the marriage agreement, and Rough-Faced Girl does not speak. Not only does her value come from her appearance and her marriage, but this story also removes the female character's agency and choice by excluding her voice in the marriage arrangement. It is assumed that the female character will be better off married to the handsome invisible being, and that she needs no say in the matter. These stories continue to reflect a sexist and patriarchal ideology through the hidden curriculum, which links achievement to masculinity and physical appearance to femininity.

I discovered the origins of "Rough-Faced Girl" and realized the depth at which this tale was altered by the writers of this series. Rafe Martin, an award-winning storyteller who has been a keynote speaker at myth, folklore, and storytelling conferences internationally wrote *Rough-Faced Girl* from his studies of the Algonquin peoples and their story of the female mystic on the shores of Lake Ontario (Martin, 2011). In his telling, the focus is on Rough Faced Girl's inner character, not her appearance, with little space given to the Invisible One. It was she who sought the marriage alliance with the warrior, not her father, showing agency and choice for the female protagonist. It was also the Invisible One's sister who negotiated the marriage, not the Invisible One himself, further demonstrating how the textbook version chose to propel the non-human male into the foreground. In fact, Sister and Rough-Faced Girl have far more lines than Invisible One. These two women dominate Martin's (1992) retelling.

Interestingly, the Algonquin tale has a family of three sisters, but *Benchmark's* version eliminates one sister. So, through eliminating one female character, diminishing the autonomous voice of Rough-Faced Girl and Sister and giving greater voice to the Invisible One, purposeful steps were taken by the author to diminish and exclude females from the text about a female mystic while simultaneously propelling the Invisible One to the foreground, further promoting patriarchal ideas about the need for males to care for females. Additionally, this misleading retelling of these indigenous folktales falsely implies an offensive eurocentric view on masculinity and femininity that was not present in the original while presenting indigenous peoples as homogenous.

### 5.2.3. Males go out vs. females stay in

There are multiple verb examples that demonstrate the adventurous nature of males, which is often contrasted by the more quiet, complacent nature of females. From a male dog following his owner to school (Benchmark K), pigs leaving home to build their own homes (Benchmark K) to Millie the female goat happily waiting on the children to come to her pasture to play (Benchmark K), and City Mouse Country Mouse, where Kate country mouse is content to stay home while her male city cousin lives an adventurous life, the reader frequently notices females going home or staying home. For instance, in Benchmark K, Mother Fox waits patiently at home for her son to go to the Hen's coop and grab her for dinner. There were 36 readings featuring a male non-human going out, a female non-human staying home, or both out of 64 non-human tales. These findings are like McGrabe et al.'s (2011) study, which found female parents in children's picture books were more likely to be within the home, caregiving. Crisp and Hiller (2011) found that males in their study did more interesting activities than females, which is also like this ESL context. This pattern constructs females as inactive and peripheral, with less agency than males. I found that there were more verbs and more concrete action verbs collocated with males than females. Verbs collocating with male characters tended to be highly active, and males contained a greater variety of action verbs than females. Female actions tended to exist within the home and were related to domestic arts. This pushes the ideology of gender essentialism, an ideology present in the post industrial revolution America and proliferated in the contemporary Christian church. Popular Christian authors such as Nancy Lee DeMoss tout this as Biblical and therefore rational, which normalizes this ideology in modern Christian families. Ironically, DeMoss describes this ideology in her book *Lies Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free*, where she claims that God wired men to be providers and protectors, who are therefore not well suited to childcare and homemaking, and that God wired women for nurturing and emotional support, making them perfect for childcare and homemaking (Wolgemoth, 2018). Thus, heteronormative WASPish (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) values are perpetuated in these texts through verb use and non-human gender roles. These ideologies have kept women under employed and underpaid since the Industrial Revolution and are used to rationalize discrimination and the gender pay gap (Beatty, 2017).

### 5.3. Description phase of visual analysis

In *Benchmark Advance California*, 44 animals and 34 mythical creatures were visually gendered through gendered anthropomorphism, meaning that 78 characters were visually gendered in this series in at least one of the four categories of gendered anthropomorphism studied (see Table 2). This means that 67% of characters who were linguistically gendered were also visually gendered in some way. There were several images of characters in this series that were either photographed or drawn as completely anatomically correct so there were no traces of gendering, which explains the difference between images and linguistic references. Sixty-two percent of linguistically male characters were also pictorially gendered, while 82% of linguistically female characters were also pictorially gendered. This may point to the use of the generic "he"

for animals within this series. Additionally, this may point to a more purposeful use of the pronoun “she” or of female proper nouns and purposeful use of female traits in illustrations.

Table 2  
*Benchmark gendering of non-human characters*

Gendering Type	Male	Female	Totals
Linguistic	88	28	116
Pictorial	55	23	78

In *OOWTE*, 14 animals and 13 mythical creatures were visually gendered, for a total of 27 (see Table 3). 81% of non-human characters were both linguistically and visually gendered. This shows that characters were more often visually gendered than linguistically gendered. One reason for this is that some characters went unnamed or undescribed but were pictured in the stories. Within *OOWTE*, non-human gendering was done both linguistically and visually at about the same rate, but there was additional gendering that occurs through the illustrations only. As there were far fewer gendered non-human characters in *OOWTE*, less firm conclusions can be drawn about visual representation overall.

Table 3  
*OOWTE gendering of non-human characters*

Gendering Type	Male	Female	Totals
Linguistic	16	6	22
Pictorial	20	7	27

### 5.3.1. Definition of terms for visual analysis

Following Cibos and Hodges’s (2009) instructions on gendered anthropomorphism, I noted four features consistently evident in these series. First, adornment is any form of accessory or article of clothing worn by the character. Anthropomorphic characters are most often clothed to represent stereotypical dress codes for male and female humans. Secondly, according to Cibos and Hodges and much of children’s picture book illustration research, male non-humans are larger than females of the same species. They also point to greater curving lines in shape for female anthropomorphized characters. Thus, size and shape refer to the curves or lack thereof, using anatomical renderings as a baseline, as well as comparative size of each gender of character by species. Third, I examined the colors used on clothing, skin, and fur, referring to stereotypes regarding pastels for females and primary colors for males. Finally, gendered facial features included rounded “doe” eyes for females versus the more simplistic black dot eyes that are norm in cartoon styling of non-humans, particularly animals. Additionally, full lips, use of make-up (rouge, eye shadow, eye liner, mascara, and lipstick), and fuller cheekbones characterized female facial features. Tables 4 and 5 summarize the occurrences of each these features of visual gendering for males and females, divided by series.

Table 4  
*Benchmark visual gendering by category*

Gender	Adornment	Size/Shape	Coloring	Facial Features
Male	39	13	9	21
Female	11	9	4	11
Totals	50	22	13	32

Table 5  
*OOWTE visual gendering by category*

Gender	Adornment	Size/Shape	Coloring	Facial Features
Male	6	5	3	1
Female	2	3	2	2
Totals	8	8	5	3



## 5.4. Interpretation phase of visual analysis

### 5.4.1. Adornment

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, adornment was the most common way illustrators gendered non-human characters, which aligns with studies from EFL contexts (Chankseliani et al., 2018; Sunderland, 2010; Yang, 2016). Females were gendered through facial features or through adornment in equal occurrences (11 times). Males tended to have few human additions, while the few female creatures were likely to contain more than one marker. Figure 4 demonstrates this phenomenon, as the Fox has no discernable male or female features, but his mother has what appears to be eyeliner on her eyes, a roller in her “hair,” and a blue apron tied on. Otherwise, she is drawn the same as the male fox.



Figure 4. Benchmark. Grade 1 Unit 4, “The Fox and the Little Red Hen”

Female characters in domestic clothing also insinuate gender essentialism, supporting the language in this series that a woman’s place is in the home. This is in line with visual analyses in children’s picture books in the 1970’s, where Nilsen noted the phenomenon of the apron on every woman, and from the Kazakhi context of Chankseliani et al.’s (2018) EFL study. Figure 5 demonstrates how adornment was used to gender the characters who are supposed to be the different tastes—Sweet, Salty, Tangy, and Spicy. The female characters had stereotypical female hairstyles—pigtails for the female child and a beehive hairdo for the female adult. And like the Fox in Figure 4, the female in Figure 5 also wears make-up. This time, she is wearing lipstick. Further, cat-eyeglasses and a dress adorn the female adult, while the female child also wears a dress. The adult male is dressed in a collared button up shirt, suggesting white collar work attire. These are not only gendered clothing and accessories, but dated as well, harkening back to 1950’s United States, where 2 out of 3 women worked within the home.

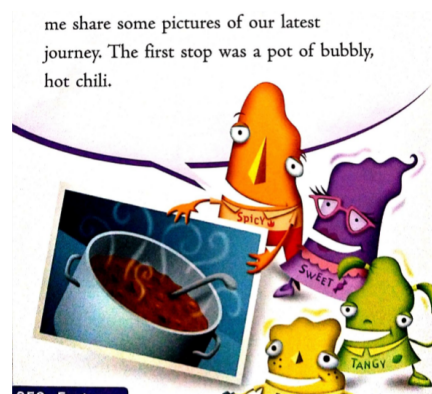


Figure 5. OOWTE, Grade 4 Unit 8, “Chef Jeff’s Nose”

### 5.4.2. Size and coloring

Illustrators and photographers commonly used size to make a character masculine. Female characters were sometimes drawn smaller than male characters in the same image and of the same character

type. One example is the giant in “Molly Whuppie” where the giant is huge, but “his wife”—the only name she is ever given—appears average height (Figure 6).

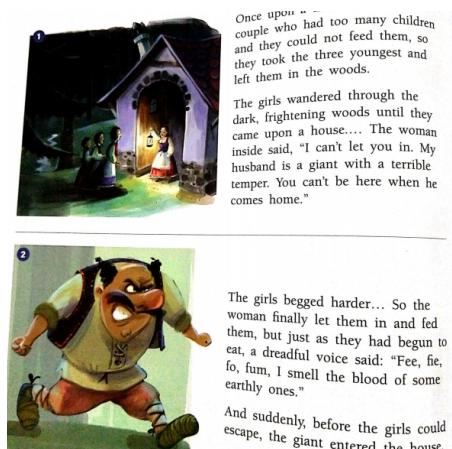


Figure 6. Benchmark, Grade 4 Unit 6, “Molly Whuppie”

Size and coloring were used in this series, though not to the extent of adornment or facial features. When coloring did occur, it accompanied adornment such as a pink dress for a female bear or a blue pair of overalls for a male rabbit, such as the one in Figure 7 from *Benchmark* Grade 4 Unit 6. While the pink/blue dichotomy was not exclusively used to gender (see Figure 4 for a female in blue), blue, brown, and red clothing were used 9 times for males, while white and pinks and purples were used 4 times for females. This is an interesting difference from Yang’s (2016) study of coloring in an EFL context, in which color was not a significant marker of non-human gender in the series analyzed. The “pink is for girls, blue is for boys” is a strict and socially constructed gender norm and marketing ploy promoting “gender normal” products starting with the 1980’s as a reaction to the second wave feminist movement, pushing back on their goals of gender equality. Thus, these texts support a heteronormative ideology of gender-color associations (Wolchover, 2012).

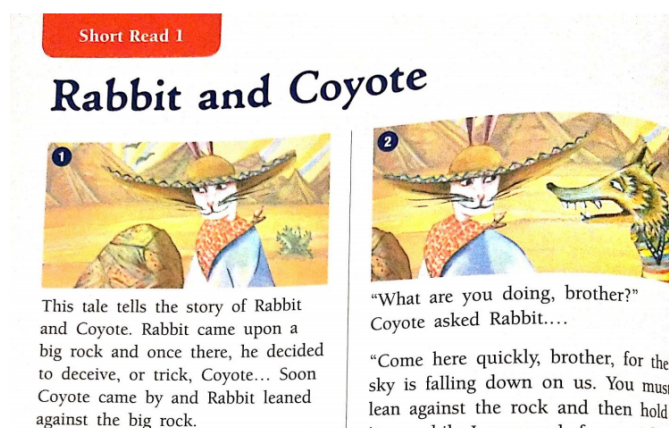


Figure 7. Benchmark, Grade 4 Unit 6, “Rabbit and Coyote”

One important instance of gendering for adornment and coloring was a comic about a dog and cat fight in the *OOWTE* kindergarten text (Figure 7). The male dog was colored shades of brown, and the cat shades of lavender. So, while a reader might judge the dog anatomically correctly colored for any dog, the cat was overtly feminized in appearance. It shifts the balance away from their species and onto their gender in a superfluous manner, which is what Thompson (1990) calls “fragmenting” or separating agents (in this case animals) to divide and rule. The illustrator emphasizes the sex differences between the characters



unnecessarily to split them into different groups. This shift takes the “cat fight” out of an animal-based scenario and insinuates that the cat fight is a female behavior, thus perpetuating the stereotype of the cat fight as a “sexy, ineffective, and amusing” characteristic of women (Reinke, 2010, p. 163). This is also a phenomenon described by Pakuła, Pawelczyk, and Sunderland (2015) as “multimodal disambiguation,” or when the gender or sexuality of the characters is not integral to the story, but either the linguistic or visual mode genders or sexualizes the characters.

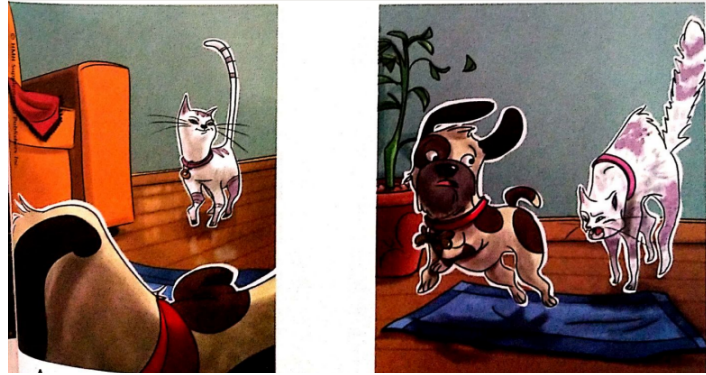


Figure 8. OOWTE, Kindergarten Unit 5, “Mack’s Bad Day”

Interestingly, the cat is never named, but is made linguistically female through the pronoun “she.” However, the dog is given the name “Mack” in addition to being gendered with the pronoun “he.” Naming the male gives him more power than the unnamed female, as named characters are more often principal characters while unnamed characters play peripheral roles. The very existence of this tale, with a male dog and female cat is quite stereotypical. Women are often compared to cats in fiction stories historically (Biggle, 1900; Earl, 1895). St. George Jackson Mivart, author of *The Cat: An Introduction to the Study of Backboned Animals, Especially Mammals* (1881) theorized that these connections are made because:

The cat also is favoured by that half of the human race which is the more concerned with domestic cares; for it is a home-loving animal and one exceptionally clean and orderly in its habits, and thus naturally commends itself to the good will of the thrifty housewife. (p. 1)

Mivart highlighted the connection to historical notions of femininity such as cleanliness and domesticity. Others claim the link is because cats are sensitive creatures and frightened by harsh treatment—again stereotypically like historical representations of females.

The premise of the text itself is somewhat problematic in that it was created in 2014 for an audience through 2022 yet refers to stereotypes about females from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, going so far as to highlight the femaleness of the cat through coloring, eye shape, and adornment. The dog’s collar is red, while her collar is pink, making them adorned in masculine and feminine colors, respectively. Along with naming the male, these strategies work together to give the male character dominance in the story, despite the aggressive behavior of the female. This follows de Beauvoir’s (1949) Hegelian approach to the historical othering of women. De Beauvoir made sense of this “othering” by claiming that males were dependent on the female’s inferiority for their status and power. In this cartoon, the male dog gains status using coloring and naming over the unnamed female cat.

#### 5.4.3. Facial features

The most common way gender was conveyed in non-human faces was through eye shape or lip shape. Female animals often had slanted, alluring eyes with long curled eyelashes while male animals did not have eyelashes, or they were not apparent. Non-gendered eyes were round and cartoonish. See Figure 9 for a side-by-side comparison of eye shape between a female and male animal. Exaggerated eye lashes are a popular trope of femininity in characters that harkens back to the days of Roman naturalist Pliny the Younger, who alleged that long eye lashes were a sign of female chastity—that she lost them after having sex. Thus, the equating of chaste femininity with exaggerated eye lashes has been reproduced and sexualized for

centuries not just in cartoons, but in fine art and poetry as well (Olson, 2009). In Figure 9, the text uses stereotypically masculine adjectives, “big” and “long,” but creates a feminine slant and long lashes to the character’s eyes, in addition to a full lip with pinkish red coloring. This is noticeably absent in the male penguin next to her. Stereotypically masculine features, such as a five o’clock shadow are absent. He is drawn in a more simplistic cartoonish style.

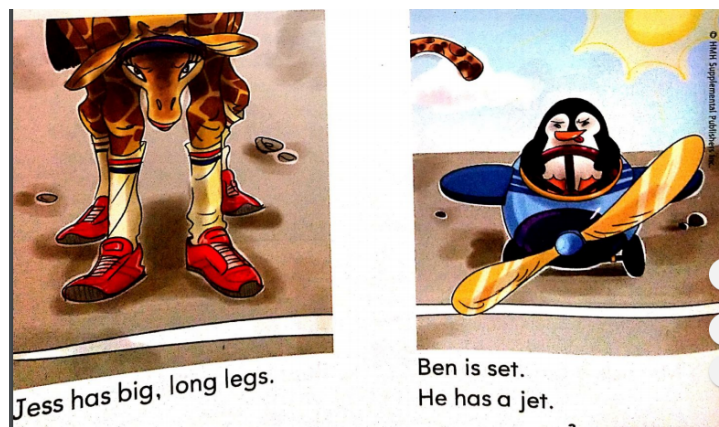


Figure 9. OOWTE, Kindergarten Unit 2, “Big Race”

I found this to be true consistently within both series. Females were given extra artistic development to ensure their gender was apparent visually, but male characters were not. It is simply assumed then that male is the unmarked animal norm, and female is marked, or *othered*, in multiple ways. Lee described this as one form of linguistic sexism known as “male as norm” ideology (2015). Butler (1999) described *othering* as one type of normative violence wherein the male subject is signified and the female subject is marked “off.” This is a common strategy employed by illustrators in these series: to assume a non-human is male unless drawn with female stereotypical add-ons.

Fifty-six percent of non-human characters with female gender markings had more than one gender marker in the *Benchmark* series. Thirty-four percent of non-human characters with male gender markings had more than one gender marker. This affirms the hypothesis that in this series, non-humans are presumed to be male more often unless add-ons are drawn to give female characteristics. Fewer markers lessen the intensity of visual gendering. In this series however, visual gendering was done in a way that gave more power to male characters, such as through adornment for a white-collar worker and a larger size than females, such as in the drawing in Figure 5. Figure 5 shows that it is the male who does the talking through a speech bubble. He is drawn larger and in workwear. These characteristics give him status in the image. The mother is colored purple and put in a dress and heels, with long lashes peering over her cat-eye glasses. Her head also appears to be sporting a beehive hairdo of the 1960’s. She is drawn smaller than the male, but larger than the male and female children. Even her name “Sweet” is a common pet-name for females in society that feminists have tried to squash from our vocabulary as it often accompanies a justification of male privileges as this very image suggests (Talbot, 2010).

What is perhaps the most important discovery was the prevalence of visual othering that takes place with non-human characters in these widely read textbooks. Yabroff (2016) noted that *Scholastic* and *Time Magazine* top 100 children’s books often had neuter illustrations but linguistic gendering. The same is not true for these 12 texts. Characters who are drawn neuter are assumed male as gendering happens more intensely with females, effectively othering them. In the image analysis of gendered non-humans, this was accomplished visually.

## 6. Implications and conclusion

This study uses several new perspectives in analyzing ESL textbooks made in the United States for U.S. public schools through linguistic analysis of gender representation of non-humans, followed by an analysis of the visuals in language textbooks. Instead of simple frequency counts of male and female non-humans or a relaying of the activities they engaged in visually, this study analyzed how gender is represented

via the language of the texts and how gender is visualized in illustrations of non-humans. Gender stereotyping was prominent in illustrations through various gendered anthropomorphic strategies: facial features, adornment, coloring, and size. Linguistic analysis supported the visuals in many respects as well, such as descriptive adjectives that construct male characters as larger, stronger, and more intelligent and females as smaller, weaker, and less intelligent.

As the descriptions and interpretations indicate, these textbooks are continuing outdated ideologies of male supremacy, gender essentialism, and heteronormativity using the socio-political mechanisms of patriarchy. These images were drawn to create an understanding of the texts, thus their agreement visually and linguistically. They are also drawn for individuals to relate to the images through their anthropomorphic features. However, recent research demonstrates that readers do relate to ambiguously drawn non-humans and that multimodal disambiguation is unnecessary (Hill & Jacobs, 2020). These texts create unnecessary binaries for gender norms, behaviors, and roles. So, though I believe the intent was to create characters that were relatable and that aligned with the text to support comprehension and for language learning purposes, the texts and images herd children into distinct binaries and may ostracize or intimidate readers who do not naturally fit into these strict categories. Additionally, perpetuating outdated gender roles through non-human characters—who have demonstrated to be effective marketing tools—continues to harm society as a whole.

These ideologies are outdated and permit a hidden curriculum of male supremacy. In a post-industrialized society, the notion that physical size makes one more powerful is no longer true when confronted with the true power of machines and computers, which can be created and run by anyone. Secondly, the ideology of male supremacy through intelligence is not accurate despite its proliferation here. In 2018, women made up 56% of college attendees. In 2017, 53% of PhDs were earned by women (McCarthy, 2018). The texts promote discourses of traditional masculinity and consumeristic ideologies of beauty that continue an institutionalized political-social system of male dominance by presenting these stereotypes as natural and therefore immutable. Critical theorist Janks (2014) wrote: "There is a great deal at stake in how we decide what is and is not part of nature" (p. 154). Naturalization is one of Thompson's modes of operations of ideology. If a society names something as natural, then we think it is unchangeable, absolute, and there is no need for further action. This leads us to draw conclusions based on cultural beliefs, not facts.

When comparing these findings with studies in EFL contexts, these sources are more in line with historical studies from the 1980's and from EFL contexts in Eastern Europe now but hold more traditional patriarchal ideologies when compared to texts in an Asian context (Lee, 2014; Lee & Collins, 2015; Yang, 2016). The United States has more work to do to catch up to the advances being made in these nations. When comparing results with children's literature books, the findings in these ESL texts are unfortunately similar in simple counts of male and female non-humans, activities, and gender roles to those Caldecott award-winning books from the last century and into current day (Ferguson, 2018; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; McGrabe et al., 2011). There are stories in each series of this study that are adapted from Caldecott winner picture books or from classic fables and fairy tales to be suitable for various levels of ESL instruction. Thus, it is not completely surprising to find these similarities exist. Yet, as evidenced in this study, there are original works and adaptations of folktales that are altered to fit the patriarchal hegemony of U.S. culture.

Educators can respond to these texts through critical literacy, having conversations with students that promote critical consciousness and language acquisition. Teachers should use ambiguously gendered protagonists from children's literature to get at the deeper meanings of gender and performance while challenging the naturalness of the textbook readings. Research notes that without proper teacher training on how to recognize gender bias, many teachers will miss it. Sadker (2000), a teacher trainer, researcher, and author, described how each time he begins a teacher-training workshop, he is reminded of the "gender blindness" most educators have. A specific recommendation for raising teacher consciousness of gender bias is through training teachers to examine their own textbooks for gender bias through linguistic principles of discourse analysis, such as that proposed in *TESOL Connections* (Burden, 2020). With additional training on identifying and responding to bias, teachers who may not have complete control over the texts in their classrooms can create a space for critical discussions and reflections while keeping the current series in the curriculum. Simultaneously, more endeavors to create a progressive curriculum employing critical pedagogies should be undertaken in conference with publishers so that future editions of these texts demonstrate marked improvements in these areas.

## 7. Limitations and future research

There were several limitations to this study that should be examined in future research endeavors. First, this study examined kindergarten through fifth grade textbooks, while middle and high school English Language Development texts were excluded. I focused only on printed words and images, but many textbooks now include listening prompts on a CD or mp3 that would provide another layer of linguistic study and potential influence on the learner's reception of gender messaging. In addition, I decided to only examine texts that contained instructions to the student for language production but examining texts without explicit instructions to produce the language could be included for a fuller picture of gender representation in the series. However, concerns over how much of the hidden curriculum would be taken up by students who are not required to produce the language before during or after reading should be considered in selecting texts for linguistic studies, as well as how the textbook asks students to interact with the readings. Finally, inter-coder reliability including Kappa coefficient measures should be adhered to in future research studies in this context, as they would enhance transparency and bring greater validity to the conclusions reached about the data collected.

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