

## A Content Analysis of the Extent of Using Feminine Representation in the Action Pack 9 Student's Book Textbook

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### Abstract

The present research aims at examining the extent of using feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 Student's Book Textbook. The researcher proposed one question to be answered " to what extent does the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook use the feminine representation in terms of pictures, proper nouns, texts or terms?"

A content analysis is carried out in search of pictures, terms, texts and proper nouns that represent females in the chosen textbook. A table that shows the categories, frequencies and percentages has been presented and discussed. The results have revealed that the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook does not include a sufficient feminine representation and the researcher has suggested few recommendations.

**Keywords:** Action Pack; feminine; content analysis

## تحليل محتوى مدى استخدام التمثيل الأنثوي في كتاب الطالب 9 Action Pack

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### ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة مدى استخدام التمثيل الأنثوي في كتاب الطالب "أكشن باك 9". طرح الباحث سؤالاً واحداً للإجابة عليه: "إلى أي مدى يستخدم كتاب الطالب "أكشن باك 9" التمثيل الأنثوي من حيث الصور، والأسماء العلم، والنصوص، والمصطلحات؟" أجري تحليل محتوى للبحث عن الصور، والمصطلحات، والنصوص، والأسماء العلم التي تمثل الإناث في الكتاب المختار. عُرض جدول يوضح الفئات، والتكرارات، والنسب المئوية، وناقشه. كشفت النتائج أن كتاب الطالب "أكشن باك 9" لا يتضمن تمثيلاً أنثوياً كافياً، واقترح الباحث بعض التوصيات. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** أكشن باك؛ أنثوي؛ تحليل المحتوى.

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### **Introduction**

Gender differences is a worldwide argument that has been going on for many years in different fields. However, female empowerment is still a work in progress around the world, and the secret to balance, prosperity, and growth is the empowerment of women. Such empowerment is an integral part in education as well, and Jordan has always been one of the leading countries in supporting education for women. QRF Fact Sheet cites that "Jordan achieved gender parity in primary education enrollment in 1980, and women are enrolling in secondary and tertiary education at higher rates than men" (2018, p1).

The present study is not after the concept of equality or feminism, rather than investigating the female representation used in the books that our female students are studying, especially when learning EFL; for it is important for them to be able to connect with this foreign language by being represented in it, whether in pictures, terms, texts or proper nouns. So, to what extent are female students learning about female leaders, role models, or female representation at all in the Action Pack Series, which is the curriculum that all Jordanian public schools teach our students.

Arthur and Fenyi (2023) states that one of the main forces for development and change in any society is education. Education is the means by which social problems are evaluated and rectified. They also add that for young people, especially females, to become empowered and alter their lives, education is essential.

In its latest educational statics, the Jordanian Ministry of Education (MOE) shows that in Jordan ١.١٠٤.٦٣٩ of school students are female students, and 95.067 of its teachers are female teachers. With such big numbers of females in our education system, the researcher, as a female teacher herself, feels that it is significant for female students to feel that their gender is included and well-presented in the textbooks they are learning, knowing that the same books are being studied by their fellow male students and that can deliver different messages. Out of her belief that female and male students need to be presented in the same manner, the researcher is studying the extent of using feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 Student's Book Textbook.

Textbooks are the most common and often utilized educational tools in

schools. Because of the beliefs they convey, they have a big impact on how people build their knowledge (Mihira, 2022; Paudel & Khadka, 2019). Since textbooks are a kind of ideology formed in the culture in which they are created, it includes the depiction of gender construction contained in textbooks, which will affect the maintenance of both positive and negative representations of gender in society. (Fahik, 2020; Gebregeorgis, 2016)

### **The Problem of the Study**

As mentioned earlier, Action Pack is the official EFL curriculum that students study in all Jordanian public schools. The student's book textbook is the basic tool that teachers use in teaching EFL. Action Pack 9, student's book textbook in particular, is the focus of the present research, and due to its importance in teaching students not just EFL, but also culture, ethics and many other life aspects through this language. The researcher believes that it is important for such a textbook to represent females, and their presence should be noticeable and relevant.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The present research aims at analyzing the Action Pack 9 Student's Book textbook, as the main textbook for teaching EFL in the Jordanian public schools for the academic year 2023 / 2024 in terms of investigating the extent of using feminine representation; pictures, terms, texts or proper nouns.

### **The Significance of the Study**

This study is hoped to shed the light on the feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 Student's Book Textbook and provide insights for (a) curriculum designers and the decision makers to consider such a sensitive matter when developing new curricula in the future. (b) for teachers to be more enlightened regarding gender awareness when teaching this book to different genders; males or females, and to be able to shed more light on this and how it can start

conversations about females and their roles and contributions. (c) for fellow researchers to conduct similar researches on other Action Pack textbooks and ,may be, to compare and contrast EFL books with different subjects' textbooks.

### **The Question of the Study**

This research aims at answering the following question:

To what extent does the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook use the feminine representation in terms of pictures, terms, texts or proper nouns?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Encyclopedia Britannica defines language as a system of conventional, spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, communicate. Such definition helps us identify the role of language on different aspects in our life. People communicate in a way that reflects their culture when they engage in interpersonal communication (Kashima, 2014).

Mihira (2022) states that the environment is one of many factors that affects how a certain group of people uses language. The role that gender plays in communication greatly influences how men and women use language. For many years, researchers have been interested in examining and studying the gender representation in teaching textbooks, especially in teaching EFL. This interest comes from the belief that gender representation has a direct connection with the acceptance of this language from its learners, and when it comes to gender representation. Hamdan and Jalabneh (2009) concludes that every study shows that male characters shaped and dominated the conversation subjects in EFL textbooks.

Textbooks are an important source of information for teaching learners' conventions and values (Yonata et al., 2017). Some of the reasons why textbook is important to be analyzed related to gender issues in education are: 1) Nearly 80% of students and teachers utilize textbooks as their primary source of information and instruction (Blumberg, 2008). 2) Textbooks offer youngsters factual information about the subject matter and serve as the primary means of

guiding and influencing their behavior and ideologies (Paudel & Khadka, 2019).  
3) There is evidence that textbooks have the ability to impart values and social norms. It either intentionally or inadvertently included gender-biased material in the textbooks. (Yonata et al., 2017).

The Action Pack Series has been the official EFL curriculum from grade 1 to 9 since 1998, and it is designed according to General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes, which dictates that "English language teaching should be interactively attempted and evaluated in light of the basic principles of communicative language teaching." (Ministry of Education 2006, p.9)

As the Core Values of the Jordanian Ministry of Education state " Freedom, justice and equality, good citizenship, affiliation, moderation, respect for opinion and other opinion, transparency, responsibility, leadership, and building effective partnerships.", as the researcher sees it, justice and partnership should also be achieved when teaching EFL via the Action Pack, so is this the case?

The focus of this study is the Student's Book textbook, and Allwright (1990) views textbooks as " textbooks as opposed to teaching materials for concepts and activities. In light of this, it is important that EFL textbooks represent both genders in a relatively just manner.

As the present study is a content analysis study, Palmquist (1990) asserts that content analysis is a study tool that focuses on the intrinsic characteristics and real substance of media. It is used to objectively measure the existence of specific words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences inside texts or collections of texts.

When examining sexism in ESL textbooks, Porreca (1984) states that "sexism continued to flourish in ESL materials. Although females comprised slightly over half the population of the United States, they were depicted or mentioned only half as often as males in both texts and illustrations." (p. 718).

Lee and Collins (2008) examined the improvements in the status of women in Hong Kong were reflected in patterns of gender representation in Hong Kong secondary English textbooks. They concluded that that "the female to male

characters ratio were higher in recent textbooks, greater use was made of gender-inclusive pronouns and the neutral address title Ms." Which is similar to the terms that the researcher is looking for in the preset study.

The case is not that different in Jordan, as cited in Nofal & Qawar (2015) In Jordan, Shteivi (2003) conducted a study on the representation of gender roles in 96 primary school textbooks. He found that the majority of public roles were male dominated, 87%, whereas female roles were traditional such as teaching."

Hamdan and Jalabneh (2009) conducted their own study in order to examine accurately the dominance of gender in conversational topics, mainly, dialogues and comprehension passages in Action Pack Series, and correspondingly they concluded that textbooks practically reflect reality; but, this is due to the fact that women's stereotype is visible more than men's.

Grauerholz and Pescosolido (1989) examined 2216 children's books from the children's catalog investigating if males and, or females were present in the title, the gender and type of central character (e.g., adult, child, animal), and the gender of the author. The results of their research showed that there were unequal representations between males and females. Such results show us that the female-male representation has always been under the microscope and the female representation is, mostly, less.

Sana' M, Bataineh and AlHawamdeh (2021) conducted a content analysis of the pronunciation and spelling activities in action pack ten to find out whether or not pronunciation and spelling are adequately covered in the student book and activity book, the extent to which spelling and pronunciation activities are emphasized, and the focus of these activities in action pack 10. In order to do that, four content analysis sheets were developed, and frequencies and percentages were used. The results revealed that Action Pack 10 includes both of pronunciation and spelling activities. The results, also, showed that a separate section with one activity in each unit for teaching pronunciation is included, and that each activity focuses on meeting one pronunciation outcome (as prescribed in the Teacher's Book of Action Pack 10). Moreover, no particular section for teaching spelling was found, but spelling is explicitly integrated in some of the writing activities. Only 17.5% of the writing activities, included in the Student's

Book and Activity Book, have an explicit focus on spelling, as prescribed in the Teacher's Book of Action Pack 10.

### **Concluding Remarks**

After reviewing the literature, the researcher noticed that this study, in the Jordanian EFL context, is similar to Sana’M, Bataineh and AlHawamdeh (2021) in terms of research methodology; content analysis. However, it is different because it searches for the feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 Student’s Book Textbook. At the best of her knowledge, no other studies were conducted regarding the feminine representation in any of the Action Pack Series Textbooks in Jordan. Hence, the present study is hoped to contribute to the previous literature by offering empirical data that may help EFL teachers and curricula designers when designing future textbooks in order to produce a more comprehensive and inclusive learning tools.

### **Methodology**

As this study aims at analyzing the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook, content analysis is the basic method for the research. It is a systematic method that is based on techniques that aim at finding results, which means that content analysis is the means and not the end.

In this study, the researcher is analyzing the 2013 Action Pack Student's Book Textbook, which is authored by Virginia Paris based on the General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes for the English Language: Basic and Secondary Stages in Jordan, and published by York Press.

For the data collection process, the researcher chose the 9th grade student's book textbook to be studied. Next, the textbook was examined to make sure that it is representative of the needed data that the research is concerned with. Throughout her research, the researcher was looking for pictures, terms, texts and proper nouns that represent females and the frequency of the use of any feminine representation in the chosen textbook.

After that, a table of findings has been done in order to measure and examine the feminine representation in the textbook in terms of frequency and percentage.

### **Validity of the study**

The instrument, which was used in this study, is valid, for it is a content analysis paper to examine the extent of using feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook. Furthermore, the researcher also believes that the analysis conducted in this paper is valid because it was conducted in a systematic manner that was based on specific, identifying categories, and certain steps that allowed the researcher to reach accurate findings and results. In addition, the researcher believes that if any other researcher replicates the same steps of analysis, under the same conditions he /she would get to same results and inferences.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

As Berelson (1952) views it, content analysis is a research method for the quantitative, systematic, and objective description of the communication's transparent content."

The extent of using feminine representation means how many pictures, terms, texts or proper nouns are used in the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook to represent female in various ways and manners and what is the frequency of such items.

According to the researcher, the feminine representation we are examining here is pictures of women or girls, texts that talk about or represent females, terms such as mum, mother, sister or wife, and proper nouns, such as Faten or Sally.

Action Pack is the EFL curriculum in Jordan, it is taught for all levels; from grade one to twelve in all public schools. It includes a Student's Book, an Activity Book, a Teacher's' Book, Flashcards (for some levels) and listening records or cassettes. This curriculum is designed in reference to the General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes set by the Jordanian Ministry of Education.

### **Findings and Results**

The researcher has conducted a content analysis in pursuit of pictures, terms,



texts or proper nouns that includes feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 Student's Book Textbook. Table (1) shows the results of the content analysis. The researcher has found a total of 36 items (pictures, terms, texts or proper nouns) that represent females. This number is divided into 17 pictures, 8 terms, 1 text and 10 proper nouns. More illustration will be discussed in the upcoming sections.

**Table 1**  
**(The extent of using feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 Student's Book Textbook)**

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Pictures        | 17               | 47.2              |
| Terms           | 8                | 22.2              |
| Texts           | 1                | 2.8               |
| Proper Nouns    | 10               | 27.8              |
| Total           | 36               | 100%              |

In light of the content analysis process that has been conducted, the researcher has found that the total number of items that represent female in the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook is 36. The pictures that represent female are 17 pictures as 47.2% of the total, whereas the terms that represent females are 8 terms, mum (or mother), sister, aunt, wife, grandmother, Mrs. and woman, and they are as 22.2% of the total number, the texts that represent or talk about a female is one text, which is 2.8 of the total number. Finally, the proper nouns that represent females are 10, as 27.8 of the total number.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The content analysis of the selected textbook aims at searching for items that represent female in Action Pack nine student's book textbook, the results of this study reveal the extent of using pictures, terms, texts or proper nouns that represent females is not fair or enough. Therefore, the researcher believes that the textbook does not include feminine representation in an efficient manner in a way that female students would not really connect to the textbook or feel that they are

well- presented in what they learn on daily basis.

Moreover, after conducting this content analysis study, the researcher believes that even the feminine items that did represent females were not inclusive enough. The results shown in (Table 1) show that only 17 pictures of females were shown in a textbook that consists of 80 pages, and the pictures were not of a great purpose, they were just a part of a listening exercise or an illustration. Only 8 terms that mention females, and even when they are there, they are in short sentences or short examples. The researcher believes that such representation does not allow female students to feel included when learning a language through a textbook that does not represent them in a fair manner.

Similarly, the results show that only 10 proper nouns that refer to females were mentioned in the entire textbook, so how would a 14 or 15- year old girls feel when learning a textbook that is, mainly, representing the opposite gender?

In addition, the entire textbook include only one text that represents females as role models. The researcher does not believe that one text, a very short one, is actually enough to inspire female students or let them feel included.

### **Conclusion**

the findings of this content analysis study show that the extent of using feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook is not enough and efficient. In addition, the researcher would highly recommend for those who are in charge of designing curricula to consider improving and changing the EFL textbook that is the being taught for the 9th grade students in public schools.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forth for EFL teachers, the Ministry of Education, and future researchers:

- 1- EFL researchers are recommended to conduct similar studies on other Action Pack textbooks of different grades.
- 2- EFL researchers are recommended to conduct similar studies on Jordanian curricula of different school subjects' textbooks.

- 3- Textbook and syllabus designers are recommended to be more inclusive when representing genders in textbooks.

### **The Appropriateness of the Study**

Oxford dictionary defines "appropriateness" as "The quality of being suitable or proper in the circumstances." In The present research, the researcher concluded that the extent of using feminine representation in the Action Pack 9 student's book textbook is not efficient and fair to communicate to 9th grade female students. Moreover, the research was conducted appropriately and thoroughly for several times.

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