Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)

Sexism in Current ESL Textbooks

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This article examines the problem of sexism in ESL materials—how sexism is manifested in ESL textbooks and with what consequences. Following a review of research on the relationship between language and sexism, a recent content analysis of the 15 currently most widely used ESL textbooks (according to a compilation of textbook lists from 27 ESL centers) is described. The study focused on the categories of omission in text and illustrations, firstness, occupational visibility in text and illustrations, nouns, masculine generic constructions, and adjectives. The findings are then summarized and analyzed, and the two least sexist textbooks and the main problem areas in the others are discussed.

The term *sexism*, which has been with us now for more than a decade, has become a household word (Graham 1975). It is probably most readily associated with economic issues, such as equal pay for equal work. The role played by language in maintaining and strengthening sexist values, however, is less widely understood or acknowledged. This is probably because linguistic sexism is much more deeply rooted and far more subtle than other forms of sexism. Indeed, language is such an involuntary function and so intimately intertwined with culture that it is often quite difficult to stand back and take an objective look at one's own language.

Language itself is essentially a neutral vehicle of communication which can be used to convey a wide range of attitudes and values. However, all speakers tend to use and create language which is flattering and useful to themselves. Those with enough power, authority, and influence can standardize usage. The creation of dictionaries helped to speed up the process of standardization. Since dictionary writers were male and the social system was a patriarchy preceding, as well as during, the time of standardization, English received a strong infusion of male-as-norm elements (Miller and Swift 1976). Thus, certain sexist usages of English, which are by no means obligatory, were accepted as normal and standard.

What are some of the specific ways in which sexist attitudes are conveyed through the language in textbooks? A review of the

literature will suggest a number of problem areas in recent textbooks and other educational materials.

One of the most widely examined manifestations of sexist attitudes is omission. When females do not appear as often as males in the text (as well as in the illustrations which serve to reinforce the text), the implicit message is that women's accomplishments, or that they themselves as human beings, are not important enough to be included. Coles (1977) examined five sets of popular adult basic education materials and found that in the total of 150 stories, men outnumbered women by a ratio of 3:1. Hoomes (1978) conducted a systematic examination of 28 high school literature anthologies for grades 9 through 12 and found that the overall ratio of total female characters to total male characters in the books was 1:3.5. Hellinger (1980), a native West German, conducted a thorough study of 131 passages from three English language textbooks used in German schools. She found that men participated in over 93 percent of the passages, while not even 30 percent of the texts included women. In addition, it was noted that 80 percent of the speakers were male. Arnold-Gerrity (1978) did a content analysis of a 1976 series of primary reading textbooks, examining, among other things, the visibility of female characters. She found that in the first four textbooks, for grades 1 and 2, there were twice as many male-oriented stories (i.e., about males) as female-oriented; in the three readers for grades 3 and 4, male-oriented stories were five times as frequent; and in the two textbooks for grades 5 and 6, there were three times as many male-oriented as female-oriented stories. Britton and Lumpkin (1977) compared reading, literature, and social studies textbooks published both before and after 1970 to determine whether guidelines to correct sexism had resulted in any positive changes. They found that females portrayed as major characters had increased by only 2 percent, up to 16 percent in the newer books.

Related to omission is the order of mention, termed *firstness*. To this author's knowledge, only one study (Hartman and Judd 1978) has focused any attention on this feature. It was found that, given two nouns paired for sex, such as *male/female*, the masculine word always came first, with the exception of the pair *ladies/gentlemen*. This "reinforces the second-place status of women and could, with only a little effort, be avoided by mixing the order" (390).

Another reflection of sexism is in the portrayal of males and females in occupational roles. For example, to what extent do textbooks contain a wide variety of occupations for men and only a limited range of occupational roles for females? Arnold-Gerrity (1978) found that men were portrayed in four times as many paying occupations as women and that the females were most frequently

portrayed in a housewife-mother capacity, occupied with household tasks and serving their children and husbands. Hoomes' (1978) study of high school literature anthologies found that the mean ratio of occupations and professions for females to those for males was 1:5 in text and 1:7 in illustrations. Hellinger's (1980) study of 131 passages from English language textbooks found that women were rarely engaged in any "demanding, interesting, or successful" activities, while male roles represented a broad range of occupational options. Only two women had gained professional status through their own efforts, and one of these remained anonymous. Coles' study of adult basic education materials revealed that 39 of the total of 61 females were engaged in only 11 occupations, and 19 of those 39 females worked as housewives. By contrast, 106 out of 192 males had 73 different occupations, ranging from truck driving to medicine. In general, "women managed little and owned nothing; on the other hand, men, while holding a large number of unskilled jobs, were the predominant occupants of skilled, managerial, and ownership positions presented in the stories" (1977:42).

In describing the creation of a school children's nonsexist dictionary, Graham (1975) discusses another reflection of sexism in language—nouns used to describe women and men. Before compiling their own dictionary, the lexicographers analyzed 5 million words from American children's textbooks. It was found that although there are actually more women then men in the real world, these textbooks contained over seven times as many men as women and more than twice as many boys as girls. Yet, in spite of these ratios, the word *mother* occurred more frequently than *father*. One of the lexicographers suggested that this was because, to a child, the mother has the primary parenting role. However, an analysis of the words *daughter* and *son* revealed that four times as many sons as daughters were referred to as the child of a male parent. Furthermore, two out of every three mothers were referred to in relation to their sons, and four out of five fathers had sons as children. Altogether, there were twice as many sons as daughters. Further, four times as many aunts had nephews as had nieces. There were also three times as many wives as husbands, indicating that the main character or speaker in the text was male.

Nilsen (1977) also analyzed words for females and males found in a standard dictionary. Her analysis revealed a number of interesting facts about the attitudes toward women and men which are reflected in our vocabulary. She found that there were more than five times as many words for things named after men as there were for things named after women (e.g., *Bartlett pear* versus *Mae West jacket*) and that, of the words named after women, the only two in common use

were both related to female anatomy. Nilsen also found that words for women very often reflected a passive role. For example, women were referred to very often as various types of food and flowers (e.g., *peach, sugar, cheesecake, wallflower, clinging vine*). In fact, the only time a man was referred to as a flower was in insulting him by comparing him with women and calling him a *pansy*. Animal words for females and males reinforced contrasting passive/active roles. Men were called by such words as *stud, buck*, and *wolf*, while words for women were generally restricted to names for helpless creatures such as *bunny, chick*, and *kitten*. Nilsen also noted the contrast in meaning of male/female word pairs. For example, in the word pairs *governor/governess, major/majorette*, and *lord/lady*, the male word has retained a seriousness and respectfulness, while the female counterpart has acquired a very diminished value. In the pair *master/mistress*, the female word has acquired a sexual connotation as well. *Master* is also used in many compound terms such as *master plan, master craftsman*, and so on, whereas *mistress* is not used in many compounds. This was found to be the rule for all noun pairs, with the exception of nouns dealing with sex and marriage, such as *prostitute, bride,* and *widow*, which form far more compounds than their male counterparts (e.g., *male prostitute, bridal shower, widowhood*).

Another manifestation of sexism is the use of the masculine as generic. This problem, more than the other features discussed, is rooted in the grammar of the English language itself. It is assumed that masculine generic constructions, which include words such as *man, mankind*, and the use of masculine pronouns when the sex of the referent is unknown, refer to people in general and that the distinction between a sex-specific word (e.g., *man* as a male) and its generic equivalent (*man* as a human being) is clear from the context. However, many studies have shown that people, including textbook writers, rarely conceptualize females when hearing or reading masculine generic nouns and pronouns.

Moulton, Robinson, and Elias (1978), for example, asked students to write an essay about the person mentioned in a particular sentence. This sentence was altered to include either a masculine generic pronoun or a female-inclusive (sex-unbiased) pronoun. There were significantly more male subjects in the essays written in response to the sentence with a masculine generic than in those written in response to the sentence with the female-inclusive pronoun. Taking another approach to the same problem, DeStefano, Kuhner, and Pepinsky (1978) asked subjects to select pictures which matched given statements. Most of the sentences contained one of the following words: *man, men, mankind, individual(s), human being(s),*

person, or *people*. The pictures were composed of stick figures in the following proportions: three males; one female; one male; three females; two males and two females; one half-male-half-female figure; and three half-male-half-female figures. The results indicated that *human being* and *people* were perceived as far more sex-inclusive than *man* and *men* were. Graham's (1975) survey of the pronoun *he* in young people's textbooks found that the ratio of *he* to *she* in the textbooks was about 4:1. Of the 940 times that *he* appeared, 744 referred to male human beings, 128 to male animals, 36 to people who were assumed to be male, and only 32 were references to an unspecified singular subject. In a study of children's textbooks, Nilsen (1977) went to two libraries and found books with the generic term *man* in their titles (such as *How Man Began*), then counted the number of pictures of males and females to see if *man* really expressed the meaning *men and women*. The books for younger children contained 267 pictures of males and only 33 of females. Those books written for older children had a better but nonetheless disappointing ratio: 310 males to 96 females.

But does sexism in textbooks really matter? Several studies provide evidence to suggest that it does indeed matter a great deal. The *Alpha One Reading Program*, officially endorsed and used in California in the 1960s, had been objected to by various women's organizations because of its sexist content. Girls were portrayed as stupid, dependent, whining, and fearful, while boys played active, aggressive roles. An unpublished study by Jenkins (see Nilsen 1977) of three classes of students who had used these materials found a direct correlation between the length of time spent in the program and the degree to which the children's attitudes toward "male" and "female" activities matched those displayed in the *Alpha One* materials.

Most other studies of the consequences of sex bias focus on the use of the masculine generic. Nilsen (1977) found that particularly in the lower grades and up to grade 7, girls were significantly more likely to use female pronouns in conjunction with a neutral noun than boys were. In view of the fact that masculine pronouns are used in school between three and five times as often as feminine pronouns, Nilsen concluded that boys grow up simply enlarging their sphere of reference for male pronouns, which they learn *naturally* in connection with themselves, while girls must learn *artificially* to refer to themselves using masculine pronouns and to use them in a much greater proportion to female pronouns. Yet, she argues, neither men nor women have completed this transition, for it is evident, from the ambiguity and confusion surrounding masculine generic terms discussed in the recent literature, that men do not mentally include

women in their masculine generic constructions and women do not feel altogether comfortable about a gender system which does not clearly include them.

Martyna (1978) provides additional support for this view. In a study in which subjects were asked to complete statements, each of which contained a generic noun, women were significantly more likely to complete the sentences using alternatives to masculine generic pronouns. Martyna further discovered, through subsequent questioning of her subjects, that 60 percent of the men who used *he* as a generic pronoun had actually visualized *specific* males, including themselves, in response to the neutral sentences. By contrast, only 10 percent of the women who used *he* as a generic pronoun had visualized anyone at all, and this rare occurrence of imagery was also of specific males. The other 90 percent of women who used *he* said they did it "automatically" because they had been "trained" to use male pronouns. Martyna concluded that because of the very different semantic perception of masculine generics by females and males, the generic *he* is neither clear nor equitable, since one can never be sure whether one's usage will be understood in a generic sense. She recommends that *he* "live out its days doing only what it has always done best—referring to 'he' and not 'she' " (138).

Silveira (1980) interprets Martyna's data to mean that women have less "people=self" bias than men do because, in conjunction with neutral nouns, the majority of men often visualized males, quite often themselves, while women rarely visualized anything. She points out that this is true for other studies as well (e.g., DeStefano, Kuhner, and Pepinsky 1978, Moulton, Robinson, and Elias 1978) in which people had a tendency to illustrate a sentence with pictures of their own sex or to give a same-sex identity to a character in a sentence; in every case, masculine generics increased men's, but not women's, self-bias. She speculates that since "creative thinking is the ability to integrate the abstract with personal experience" (175), women, having less people=self bias than men, tend to feel more alienated than men from "people concepts" and assign less value to their own personal experiences in making evaluations of statements about people.

Another consequence of the use of masculine generics is its effect on recall. Crawford and English (1981) had subjects study an essay for 8 minutes, then take a recall and recognition test 48 hours later. There were two versions of the essay—one written with masculine generic forms, the other with female-inclusive forms. The results showed that males had higher recall scores with the masculine generic form, while females had higher scores with the female-inclusive form. These findings suggest that females are at a disadvantage

in our educational system, in which many materials containing masculine generic constructions are still being used and produced.

Finally, Bem and Bem (1973) tested the hypothesis that sex bias in advertising serves to discourage potential applicants from applying for jobs. High school seniors were given a brochure containing 12 job descriptions. Three types of brochures were used. One brochure used 4 sex-biased descriptions of jobs available at a telephone company (e.g., telephone operators were women, linemen were men); a second variation included the same 4 jobs written in neutral, female-inclusive language; and a third brochure contained the 4 jobs described in reversed-role language (e.g., operators were described as men, linemen were described as women). The students' task was to decide which jobs interested them. The results indicated that when jobs for linemen and framemen were described in masculine generic terms, only 5 percent of women were interested in applying. When they were advertised using female-inclusive language, 25 percent of the women were interested; and when the same 2 jobs were presented in female-biased terms, fully 45 percent of the women were interested in applying for either the linemen or framemen positions. The results for men followed a similar pattern in relation to the traditionally female jobs. This suggests that the wording of a job description does indeed affect an individual's interest in applying for the job as well as the perception that the job is within the realm of possibility. Sex bias and occupational stereo-typing of women and men in textbooks, too, might be expected to produce similar discrepancies in male and female perceptions of their future job possibilities.

How relevant is this problem of sexism to currently popular ESL textbooks? To this author's knowledge, the only study of sexism in ESL textbooks is Hartman and Judd's (1978) "Sexism and TESOL Materials." This review of several then-current TESOL textbooks (published within the previous 12 years) examined the same aspects of sexism discussed above, as well as stereotyped roles and behavior for women and men. For each feature, evidence was found that the ESL materials reflected sexist attitudes and values. With few excep-tions, women were underrepresented in the textbooks; the worst ratio of males to females was 73 percent to 27 percent. Hartman and Judd's analysis of the use of firstness in the textbooks revealed that with only one exception—the noun pair *ladies/gentlemen*—every female/male noun pair had been ordered with the male counterpart first. Occupational roles for women were traditional and limited, with a very limited number of token professionals; on the other hand, those for men were quite varied. Illustrations reflected and reinforced this pattern, although photographs tended to portray

females more realistically than drawings did. Hartman and Judd also identified problems with nouns and other terminology used to refer to men and women. For example, use of the term *girl* for an adult woman (where *boy* would not be the parallel form) was common. They also discussed the problem of masculine generic constructions in general but failed to relate the issue to the textbooks that they examined. Their primary focus was on "images of the sexes," the extent of stereotyping of females and males in the textbooks. In general, throughout the textbooks, stereotyped sex roles were rampant, including the over-emotional female; house-work and child care as female-exclusive domains; passive, weak female children; and active, bold male children. Women were generally portrayed as selfish and superficial, while men were cast as helpful and patronizing.

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CURRENT ESL TEXTBOOKS

The purpose of the present study was to determine the status of sexism in current ESL textbooks, five years after the Hartman and Judd study. This study differs from that earlier study in two important ways. First, in contrast to the Hartman and Judd study, which analyzed an apparently arbitrary sample of ESL textbooks then in use, the 15 textbooks analyzed in the present study were selected on the basis of a compilation of current booklists from 27 different ESL centers. Those chosen were the ones which had been bought in the largest quantities by all the ESL centers combined (see Figure 1, page 720). Second, the procedures employed in the present study were designed to make possible a systematic, quantitative analysis of sexism in ESL materials.

Procedures

Several different aspects of sexism were examined in the analysis. First, the number of occurrences of males and females in the books, in both text and illustrations, was counted. Second, instances of firstness—the number of times that males or females were presented first in exercises, examples, or sentences—were tallied. Next, the total number of occasions in which women and men were portrayed in occupational roles in both the text and illustrations was tabulated, as was the total number of different occupations for women and men. In addition, the total number of occurrences of every noun designating a male or a female was recorded. Each noun was then paired with its opposite-sex counterpart, in the event that both occurred (for example, *woman/man*); in this way, nouns which

occurred most often for men and for women were noted. The number of masculine generic constructions was also recorded. Finally, in an attempt to document the stereotyped images of females and males with concrete data, adjectives used with females and males in the books were recorded along with their frequencies. These adjectives were then categorized under the following 11 headings: Physical Appearance (e.g., *tall, beautiful*); Intellect/Education (e.g., *bright, stupid*); Emotionality/State of Mind (e.g., *sad, calm*); Physical State/Condition (e.g., *strong, tired*); Personality Traits (e.g., *friendly, disagreeable*); Age (e.g., *old, young*); Environmentally Descriptive (e.g., *rich, poor*); Rapport/Reputation (e.g., *great, unpopular*); Normality/Deviance (e.g., *normal, strange*); Ability (e.g., *capable, incapable*); and Environmentally Induced (e.g., *lucky, restricted*).

Findings

Omission. The ratio of females to males in the text was determined both before and after subtracting the apparent number of occurrences of masculine generic constructions. In a few books which rely extensively on the masculine generic, this made a substantial difference. The high concentration of masculine generics creates a very distinct masculine "presence" in these particular books. The average ratio of females to males, including apparent masculine generic constructions, is 1:2.06. After subtracting the apparent number of masculine generic constructions occurring in each book, the average ratio of females to males in the text is 1:1.77.

These ratios, however, do not give the complete picture. Many of the textbooks include a section dealing exclusively with general women's issues, such as "Women around the World: The Soviet Union" (*Developing Reading Skills: Advanced*) and "Women's Liberation: The Search for Equality" (*Advanced Listening Comprehension*), rather than integrating women fully throughout the text. *Paragraph Development*, for example, includes one sample paragraph in which almost a third of all the females in the entire book are presented. This results in a lowering of the overall proportion of females to males throughout the rest of the book. One notable exception is *React/Interact*, which, in 4 out of its 21 chapters, centers on specific women, rather than women in general, and succeeds in maintaining a balanced proportion of females to males throughout the text instead of confining females to a single chapter of the book.

Simple ratios reveal only quantities and cannot reveal the way in which males and females are presented. In *Improving Aural Comprehension*, for example, Lesson 16, Unit 5, deals with 14 "Famous

Men of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." There are no women in this chapter, nor is there a corresponding "Famous Women" chapter.

The most consistent exclusion of women is found in *English Sentence Structure*. Here, repetitive pattern drills are the rule, and the subject is often the same person throughout an exercise. The most common subject is "John," and this type of all-male exercise (with five or more sentences) occurs 54 times throughout the book. The number of instances of similar all-female exercises is 6. Since an entire exercise of this type was counted as only one male or one female (because of the repetition of the same name), the visibility of females compared with that of males in this textbook could be considered even lower than the ratio indicates. It is also interesting to note that one of the all-female exercises in *English Sentence Structure* instructs the student to "make negative statements about Mary" (Krohn 1971:112). Individual exercises in *English Sentence Structure* contain strangely disproportionate ratios of females to males as well. In one exercise on question formation based on sentences containing *is going to*, the first nine statements begin, "George is going to . . ."; only the last sentence starts with "Mary is going to . . ." (46).

The mean proportion of females to males in illustrations is 1:1.97. Two of the textbooks, *Paragraph Development* and *ESL Grammar Workbook 2*, have no illustrations at all and were thus excluded.

Firstness. The average ratio of female to male firstness is 1:2.96. *Side by Side* has the worst ratio, 1:8.82. Several of the textbooks, such as *Developing Reading Skills: Advanced* and *ESL Grammar Workbook 2*, have fairly balanced ratios (1:0.86 and 1:1.25, respectively). In some cases, however, firstness may not be an accurate gauge. Often, for example, when a question is posed to the reader about his or her "girlfriend/boyfriend," the female firstness of *girlfriend* may occur only because the questioner (author) is thinking first and foremost of a male audience.

Occupations. The ratio of total occupations for females to total occupations for males in the text is 1:5.87 for the 15 textbooks; this is the most unbalanced mean ratio in the study. Among the ratios for individual books, that of *Advanced Listening Comprehension*, 1:1.2, is the least unequal. However, a closer look reveals that all the occupations in which women are portrayed appear in a single chapter, "Women's Liberation: The Search for Equality." One half of the occupations for women are mentioned in a single sentence: "They are now working as corporate executives, officers in the armed forces, as politicians, lawyers, and even as construction

workers, plumbers, policewomen, and, yes, even as astronauts" (Dunkel and Pialorsi 1982:171). The other 14 chapters have virtually no females portrayed in occupational capacities. If *Advanced Listening Comprehension* is discounted, *Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced* has the least unequal ratio (1:1.78) of total female occupations to total male occupations in the text. The textbook with the greatest imbalance is *Improving Aural Comprehension*, with a ratio of 1:20.

The results for the diversity of occupations in which women and men are portrayed in the text are similar to those for total occupations. Again, *Advanced Listening Comprehension* has the most balanced ratio (1:0.87), but again, this is only because of the chapter on women's liberation. *Paragraph Development* takes a similar approach to women's occupations: Five of the seven different occupations for women portrayed in this book occur in one paragraph about job discrimination.

Although many of the textbooks have attempted to include a variety of occupations for women, most of these attempts must be considered limited. However, four books are noteworthy for their extremely limited variety of occupations for women. The two worst are *English Sentence Structure*, for which the total list of female occupations consists of secretary (four times), teacher (five times), and landlady (as well as "not a lawyer" and "not a doctor"), and *Improving Aural Comprehension*, which includes only babysitter, registered nurse, and secretary. A refreshing exception is *React/ Interact*, which includes men in a chapter on secretaries and women in a chapter on assembly-line workers.

The most frequently mentioned occupation for males is president, which occurs 111 times. Second is writer, with 59 occurrences; third is teacher, mentioned 43 times. Policeman and explorer are fourth, occurring 41 times each. For females, the most common occupation is teacher, which occurs 28 times. Actress is second, occurring 22 times. Doctor, usually of a nationality other than American, is mentioned 16 times, putting it in third place, and the fourth most common occupation for women is secretary, which occurs 13 times.

Only nine of the textbooks portray people in occupational roles in their illustrations. Of those nine, the average ratio of the total illustrated female occupations to those of males is 1:5.12. The diversity of illustrated occupations for females relative to those of males is slightly better, with the average ratio 1:3.87.

Nouns. For both males and females, the most frequently occurring nouns are those which designate a person's sex and family relationship. However, when paired nouns, such as *man/woman* or *sister/ brother*, are compared, the male noun is found to occur more

frequently in every case, except for nouns related to marital or premarital status, motherhood, and the noun pair *lady/gentleman*. Given the fact that the overall average ratio of females to males in the text is 1:2.06, including apparent masculine generic constructions, and 1:1.77, excluding apparent masculine generics, it is especially significant that in certain of these noun pairs, females exceed males.

But numbers, rankings, and ratios do not convey the entire situation. The ways in which the nouns are used are also quite relevant. In some cases the majority of the nouns for women from the entire book are confined to a single chapter, as in *Advanced Listening Comprehension*, or to a single paragraph, as in *Paragraph Development*.

With respect to individual words, it is evident that the 10:1 ratio of the word *mother-in-law* to the word *father-in-law* is no coincidence. In the majority of occurrences of *mother-in-law*, a distinct negative connotation is attached to the word. For example:

> I think his mother-in-law poisoned him (Azar 1981:16).

> Caroline thinks she should get a divorce, but her mother-in-law disagrees with her (McPartland 1981:194).

> In week eight, disaster strikes: the marriages are strained to the breaking point by such calamities as a mother-in-law's moving in, death, or imprisonment (Baudoin, Bober, Clarke, Dobson, and Silberstein 1977:86).

Other words for women are also laden with stereotypes and sexual innuendos:

> The party was boring until one girl started to do a belly dance. That livened things up (McPartland 1981:131).

> Then there are the subtle provocative leg gestures that women use, consciously and unconsciously (Hirasawa and Markstein 1974:105).

> His wife is jealous of his beautiful secretary (Griffin and Dennis 1979:169).

> My sister's only goal is to find a husband (Griffin and Dennis 1979:169).

Masculine generic constructions. The confusion surrounding masculine generic constructions often makes it difficult to say definitively whether a masculine generic construction is intended to be a true generic (including both males and females) or exclusively a male referent. Yet, it is possible to make assumptions, based on the content, about most occurrences of these constructions. A total of 383 instances of masculine generic usage was found, averaging 25 instances per textbook. *Reader's Choice* and *Developing Reading Sk'lls: Advanced* have the highest number of masculine generic occurrences—97 and 95, respectively. *React/Interact* uses masculine

generic constructions only 3 times, *Side by Side* only 2 times, and the *Oxford Picture Dictionary of American English* contains no occurrences at all of the masculine generic.

The majority of the textbooks attempt to avoid the masculine generic to some extent by using *him or her*, *s/he*, and *his(her)* constructions. Often these attempts go awry, though, creating a confusing mismash of pronouns. Perhaps the most confused mixture of pronouns occurs in "New Babies Are Smarter than You Think" from *Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced* (Markstein and Hirasawa 1977:133):

> From the moment of birth, a baby has a great deal to say to *his* parents, and they to *him*. But a decade or so ago, these experts were describing the newborn as a primitive creature who reacted only by reflex, a helpless victim of *its* environment without a capacity to influence it . . .
>
> As a result, psychologists now describe the new baby as perceptive, with remarkable learning abilities and an even more remarkable capacity to shape *his or her* environment—including the attitudes and actions of *his* parents [all italics added].

Some writers considered it important to add *woman* to a professional title to differentiate its referent from the norm—a male. This occurs even when the sex of the person will become known later in the text. From *The English Connection* (Fingado, Freeman, Jerome, and Summers 1981:289) comes this example:

> A T.V. host is interviewing a famous *woman* author who is eighty-five years old. He is asking *her* about the changes *she* has seen in *her* lifetime [all italics added].

The sex of the author is no more relevant than the sex of the television host, yet it was not considered appropriate or necessary to write "a male T.V. host." (*Host* does, after all, designate both males and females when used generically.)

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the masculine generic problem is the occurrence of what seems to be a referent for all people, but which later turns out to refer to males only. For example, in *American Idioms—Take It Easy* is the sentence, "Here are some tips from students of different nationalities" (McPartland 1981:129). Here, the addressees are understood to be *all* readers. A woman reading this sentence prepares herself psychologically to receive a tip from an international student, but the tip from the French student reads, "Take an American girl out and forget the language barrier" (129), which is clearly addressed to a male audience. Only females are required to cope with this subtle shift in address.

The most obvious example of this type of false generic comes

from *Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced.* "Mexican Masks" is a chapter which begins with the sentence, "The Mexican, whether young or old, criollo or mestizo, general or laborer or lawyer, seems to me to be a person who shuts himself away to protect himself: his face is a mask and so is his smile" (Markstein and Hirasawa 1977:25). Because of, or perhaps in spite of, the masculine generic construction, one may assume that this reading is about Mexican people, since the author wrote, "The Mexican . . . seems to me to be a person . . ." The first paragraph continues in this way with further use of what one assumes to be masculine generic, and the second begins in a similar fashion: "The speech of our people reflects the extent to which we protect ourselves from the outside world . . ." (26). But upon reading the next sentence, one suddenly realizes that the last ten sentences did not in fact include Mexican women at all: ". . . the ideal of *manliness* [italics added] is never to 'crack,' never to back down" (26). Such false generics occur 16 times in the 15 textbooks analyzed.

Adjectives. The adjective categories which contain proportionately more adjectives for females than for males are Emotionality or State of Mind, Physical Appearance, Environmentally Descriptive, and Physical State/Condition. There is no significant difference in the kinds of adjectives used for females and for males in the Emotionality or State of Mind category. However, the adjectives for women in the category of Physical Appearance seem to suggest a preoccupation with attractiveness. *Beautiful, pretty,* and *sexy* modify female nouns in 9 of the 15 textbooks a total of 34 times. *Handsome* and *good-looking* for males, by contrast, appear in only 5 books a total of only 10 times. The category of Environmentally Descriptive adjectives contains words relating to marriage, and this is probably the reason that it is proportionately female-dominated. The Physical State/Condition category includes the word *woman* as an adjective. The use of this word with occupational titles as a way of distinguishing a female worker from a male is perhaps the most important factor in causing this category to be female-dominated. The categories of Rapport/Reputation and Intellect/Education are dominated, proportionately and in actual numbers, by adjectives for males. Adjectives such as *famous, well-known,* and *intelligent* are particularly representative of these two categories.

DISCUSSION

In every category of this study, there is evidence that five years after the Hartman and Judd study, sexism continues to flourish in ESL materials. Although females comprise slightly over half the

population of the United States, they are depicted or mentioned only half as often as males in both text and illustrations. Male firstness is three times as prevalent as female firstness—a ratio which does not reveal the tendency in these textbooks to address a male audience, which thereby raises the number of instances of female firstness and creates the *appearance* of balance. Women are far less visible than men in occupational roles. For each working woman appearing in the text, there are six male workers. For every woman worker shown in an illustration, five more illustrations depict men at their jobs. Occupations for women are often restricted to the traditional service and entertainment jobs, such as waitress, nurse, secretary, and actress, occasionally including a token professional job such as teacher or doctor. Interestingly, the latter is often a doctor of another nationality. In both text and illustrations, the overall diversity of occupations for women is one quarter that of occupations for men.

Among nouns expressing sex and family relationships, which occur more frequently than other nouns, those designating mother-hood or marital status and the noun *lady* occur far more frequently for females than do their male counterparts in both proportion and actual numbers. All other nouns occur more frequently for males than for females. This can be explained by the apparent refusal of many writers to relinquish the traditional female role requirements of marriage and motherhood and by the fact that *lady*, a word which stresses manners, has long been employed as a euphemism for *woman*, which has a slight sexual connotation.

Although studies have shown that people rarely visualize both males and females when hearing the words *man* or *he*, and despite the fact that growing numbers of women find them offensive and exclusive of women, masculine generic constructions are used extensively. Attempts to avoid the masculine generic are often incomplete and confused, even in passages or sentences where the masculine generic could be easily avoided.

Finally, the adjective categories which are proportionately domi-nated by females reveal that adjectives used to describe females focus on emotions, physical attractiveness, marriage, and gender itself. The adjective categories dominated by males stress renown, intellect, and education. These results reflect traditional stereotyped sex roles for men and women in our society, which growing numbers of people in recent years are rejecting as too restrictive.

Two of the fifteen textbooks analyzed in this study (see Table 1) were judged to be far superior to the others in avoiding sexist usage. Both *React/Interact* and *Understanding and Using English Grammar* are exceptional for their inclusion and presentation of women. *React/*

FIGURE 1

The 15 Most Widely Used ESL Textbooks (Listed Alphabetically by Author)

PD*	Arnaudet, Martin L., and Mary Ellen Barrett. 1981. *Paragraph development: a guide for students of English as a second language.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
UUEG	Azar, Betty S. 1981. *Understanding and using English grammar.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
RC	Baudoin, E. Margaret, Ellen S. Bober, Mark A. Clarke, Barbara K. Dobson, and Sandra Silberstein. 1977. *Reader's choice: a reading skills textbook for students of English as a second language.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
R/I	Byrd, Donald R.H., and Isis Clemente-Cabetas. *React/interact: situations for communication.* 1980. New York: Regents Publishing Co., Inc.
EGW	Dart, Allan Kent. 1978. *ESL grammar workbook 2 for intermediate speakers and writers of English as a second language.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
ALC	Dunkel, Patricia, and Frank Pialorsi. 1982. *Advanced listening comprehension: developing aural and note-taking skills.* Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
EC	Fingado, Gail, Leslie J. Freeman, Mary Reinbold Jerome, and Catherine Vaden Summers. 1981. *The English connection: a text for speakers of English as a second language.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co.
R:IR	Griffin, Suzanne, and John Dennis. 1979. *Reflections: an intermediate reader.* Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
DRS:A	Hirasawa, Louise, and Linda Markstein. 1974. *Developing reading skills: advanced.* Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
ESS	Krohn, Robert. 1971. *English sentence structure.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
ERS:A	Markstein, Linda, and Louise Hirasawa. 1977. *Expanding reading skills: advanced.* Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
AI	McPartland, Pamela. 1981. *American idioms—take it easy.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
SBS	Molinsky, Steven J., and Bill Bliss. 1981. *Side by side: English grammar through guided conversations, Book Two.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
IAC	Morley, Joan. 1972. *Improving aural comprehension: student's workbook; teacher's book of readings.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
OPD	Parnell, E.C. 1978. *Oxford picture dictionary of American English: monolingual English edition.* New York: Oxford University Press.

* These abbreviations are used in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Ranking of the 15 Textbooks on Scales from 1 to 15, Least to Most Sexist[1]

Text-book[2]	Females:males in text (including masculine generics)	Masculine generic constructions	Females:males in text (excluding masculine generics)	Females:males in illustrations	Female:male firstness	Ratio of total occupations for females and males (text)	Ratio of different occupations for females and males (text)	Ratio of total occupations for females and males (illus.)	Ratio of different occupations for females and males (illus.)	OVERALL RANK
ALC	13	4	15	5	15	1	1	8	8	9
AI	5	4	7	3	3	7	8	—	—	4
DRS:A	8	14	2	10	1	5	5	2	1	5
EC	7	10	8	13	7	13	13	9	9	12
ESS	11	6	12	9	11	14	14	—	—	13
EGW	4	8	6	—	2	9	6	—	—	6
ERS:A	9	12	9	1	10	2	2	—	—	7
IAC	12	9	11	4	12	15	14	—	—	13
OPD	10	1	10	6	6	8	9	5	4	8
PD	15	13	13	—	14	12	11	—	—	15
R/I	1	3	1	11	5	4	4	4	3	1
RC	14	15	14	8	9	10	12	1	1	11
R:IR	6	11	4	12	8	11	9	7	7	10
SBS	3	2	4	7	13	3	7	3	5	3
UUEG	2	6	3	2	3	6	3	6	6	2

[1] This table does not include rankings of the noun and adjective categories because the data from those categories could not be converted to ranks in the same fashion as data from the other categories. If the data from these categories were taken into account, the final ranking would change to some degree. For example, *Advanced Listening Comprehension* was one of the two most sexist textbooks in both the noun and adjective categories. Had it been feasible to rank these two categories, this textbook would have had a much lower overall ranking.

[2] These textbook abbreviations are given with the full titles in Figure 1.

Interact, the better of the two, is among the best five textbooks in every category except for the proportion of females to males in illustrations (and this is due in part to the fact that one photograph pictured many men inside a factory). *Understanding and Using English Grammar* ranks in the top half in all of the categories and is among the top three textbooks in five of the categories. Both books have enough redeeming qualities to make up for their minor deficiencies and have so few stereotypes that they can easily be considered the two least sexist of the fifteen textbooks.

All others are sexist in at least one, and usually in more than one, major area. *Paragraph Development, Reader's Choice, Advanced Listening Comprehension, Improving Aural Comprehension, English Sentence Structure*, and *Oxford Picture Dictionary* are weak in their ratios of females to males in the text, including apparent masculine generic constructions. *Reader's Choice* and *Paragraph Development* also rely frequently on masculine generics, as do *Developing Reading Skills: Advanced, Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced, Reflections, The English Connection*, and *ESL Grammar Workbook 2*. When apparent masculine generic constructions are excluded, *Advanced Listening Comprehension, Reader's Choice, Paragraph Development, English Sentence Structure, Improving Aural Comprehension*, and *Oxford Picture Dictionary* still have unbalanced proportions of females and males in the text. In the illustrations, females are not very visible in *The English Connection, Reflections*, and *Developing Reading Skills: Advanced*.

The following nine textbooks all have a very low number and/or diversity of occupations for women in the text: *Improving Aural Comprehension, English Sentence Structure, The English Connection, Paragraph Development, Reflections, Reader's Choice, ESL Grammar Workbook 2, Oxford Picture Dictionary*, and *Side by Side*. In the illustrations, each of the following four textbooks has an unbalanced ratio of the quantity and/or diversity of female to male occupations: *The English Connection, Advanced Listening Comprehension, Oxford Picture Dictionary*, and *Side by Side*.

Male firstness is excessive in *Advanced Listening Comprehension, Paragraph Development, Improving Aural Comprehension, English Sentence Structure*, and *Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced*. Finally, *English Sentence Structure, Paragraph Development*, and *Advanced Listening Comprehension* all have a very unbalanced noun ratio; the latter also has a relatively low quantity and diversity of female adjectives, as does *Improving Aural Comprehension*.

It should be evident that there is room for improvement in every area. Perhaps the most severe inequality in the textbooks is in the

area of occupations. In the United States today, women comprise 44.2 percent of the work force, and many women have highly skilled, professional jobs (United Press International 1983). This situation has simply not been realistically depicted in most of the currently popular ESL textbooks. This and the other features—general visibility, firstness, and so on—have resulted in textbooks which present students with an unrealistic and unfair picture of women in the United States. Many of these students may not have lived here long and may not yet be able to judge for themselves whether these portrayals of women are accurate.

However serious the consequences of such textbook bias may be for college ESL students, they must be infinitely more so for younger ESL learners, whose limited experience gives them little basis for questioning what they read and who generally tend to trust the printed word more than adults do. There is evidence now from studies of children and their textbooks (e.g., Graham 1975, Jenkins [see Nilsen 1977], Nilsen 1977, and Arnold-Gerrity 1978) that children's textbooks are in no way devoid of sexism and that children exposed to such sex biases can very quickly and easily integrate them into their own value systems. Thus, additional research into this problem would ideally include studies of sexism in currently popular ESL materials for children and young adults, as well as for adult learners.

It is remarkable that it has taken more than five years since the Hartman and Judd (1978) study of sexism for a follow-up study to appear. This suggests that the issue has been viewed as no longer relevant or has been considered at most a very minor problem which would rapidly disappear as people became aware of the problem. As this study has shown, however, this assumption has no basis in fact. Once they gain a greater awareness of sexism in the English language and its manifestations in ESL textbooks, ESL teachers have a clear and challenging choice to make. They can continue to teach—and use materials which convey—the outdated language of a male-dominated society, or they can teach instead a more egalitarian use of the language.

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