

Studying gendered representation and gender stereotypes in Modern Greek Language textbook: examples from secondary education

Μελετώντας τις αναπαραστάσεις των φύλων και των έμφυλων στερεοτύπων στο σχολικό εγχειρίδιο της Νέας ελληνικής γλώσσας: παραδείγματα από τη δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση

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Abstract: Textbooks have ideological implications and are a basic vehicle of socialization, conveying knowledge and values. In Greece have made many efforts to change current social norms and gender stereotypes through the education system. Education develops critical thinking, helping to reduce inequality, promoting gender equality, fosters tolerance among people. However, issues of gender-stereotypes often arise because of the ignorance of the legal framework or of different strong stereotypes. Numerous studies have been devoted to textbook content. Lessons like Modern Greek Language presents characters with gendered identities and convey many representations of society. This study presents the results of blended of qualitative and quantitative research in textbook of Modern Greek Language in Secondary Education in Greece. This approach uses a quantitative method to study and compare large amounts of material with a view to studying gendered identities and gendered social roles as a whole versus simply identifying sexism or discrimination against one sex. The findings presented below relate to individual characters counted in the texts and images of textbook.

Keywords: textbooks, stereotypes, gender equality

Introduction

Education for gender equality needs both reflective practitioners and a reflective school culture. The qualities we need to contribute to an equality school culture are not something you learn once, but something which constantly needs to be developed, maintained and adjusted in new situations and contexts. Democratic attitudes, democratic skills and democratic values as outlined in the model of the Council of Europe’s Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) play an essential role in the development of a professional teacher ethos, which builds on the values of human rights. Carr and Kemmis

(Carr, Kemnis 1986, 2005) underline, that democratic change can only be reached through continuous and collaborative reflection on practice.

Attitudes are overall mental orientation which an individual adopt towards someone or something (for example a person, a group, an institution, an issue, an event, a symbol) and usually consist of four components: a belief or opinion about the object of the attitude, an emotion or feeling towards the object, an evaluation (either positive or negative) of the object, and a tendency to behave in a particular way towards that object.

The language depicts cultural perceptions and affects the way in which we think and sort our social experiences (Gumperz& Levinson, 1996). According to the Definitions of UNESCO, (2005): “The core learning medium composed of text and/or images designed to bring about a specific set of educational outcomes; traditionally a printed and bound book including illustrations and instructions for facilitating sequences of learning activities” and “Learning materials: Any form of media used to support a programme of learning, often as supplements to the core text. Examples include workbooks, charts, educational games, audio and video tapes, posters and supplementary readers”.

Furthermore, according to the Programme of Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC) of the Conference of Ministers of Education in countries sharing the French language (CONFEMEN), other educational measures have had a moderate effect in comparison with the provision of textbooks, although combined measures can strengthen the role of the textbook (use of teachers who speak the language of the region, feminization of the teaching profession, and others) (CONFEMEN, 1999).

In school textbooks various elements can be used to paint a portrait of a male or female character (Brugeilles, 2009). Texts and illustrations may be redundant or conflicting; they may reinforce or, conversely, weaken each other’s messages. Reading between the lines, the descriptions of women reveal that less importance is attached to the academic performance of girls (Deligianni–Kouimtzi, 1994). This can have an impact on girls’ motivation to study, on their self-confidence and on the legitimacy and value ascribed to girls’ education by boys, teachers and parents (Fox, 1993; Couch, 1995).

Numerous studies have been devoted to textbook content. The majority of these studies have methodological features in common: They are intended mainly to expose gender stereotyping, such as simplified, simplistic or hidebound; representations of certain characteristics ascribed to an individual or group on the basis of gender (e.g. “women are talkative”; “men take no interest in their appearance”); Information is often collected, and sometimes analysed, on the basis of pre-established categories such as “traditional/non-traditional role” or “high-status/low-status role”; The studies are based on passages from textbooks deemed to contain the type of sexism and/or stereotyping that should be exposed; The studies are often qualitative or quantitative to a limited extent, counting only the number of male individuals or female individuals, for example (UNESCO, 2009).

During the first decade of this century (2000-2008) four European innovating programs were held in Greek secondary education with three major goals :a) the training and sensitization of teachers, so that they can identify gender inequality in the wider social environment and individual educational context, b) the creation and use of educational structures aimed at cross-sectional and longitudinal emergence of a new vision of equality and the promotion of gender relations at individual and collective, educational and professional level and c) the encouragement of female pupils to attend initial vocational training in areas where females are underrepresented (positive actions) (Gappa, Ziogou Karastergiou, 2011).

The aim of this study is to reveal a textbook’s gender system. This method is based on an understanding of how representations of male and female are developed in a textbook. The methodology that was applied to study Modern Greek Language textbooks used in Secondary Education (High School). The findings presented below relate to individual characters counted in the texts and images of textbook from Greece (both texts and illustrations and the connection between them).

1. The term “Gender stereotypes”

Gender stereotypes are schematic representations that characterize women and men and define what is and what is not "by nature" women and men. It is essentially beliefs that have been adopted beforehand about the characteristics of the male and female, without taking into account the individual characteristics. The perpetuation of a socio-cultural phenomenon reproduces the stereotyped social perceptions of both sexes through the process of socializing individuals (Κοσμίδου-Hardy & Κρίβας, 2000, 15-16).

Gender stereotypes are simplifications of social origin, persistent, subjective, which are passed down from generation to generation (Research Centre for Gender Equality “KETHI”, 2008). Sexism implies a hierarchy-based system that claims that one sex is superior to the other, and always means favoring one group against another. Sexism is the activity or behavior that discriminates against people solely on the basis of their gender.

Sexism is the activity or behavior that discriminates against people solely on the basis of their gender. It is a set of negative generalizations, false beliefs, as well as stereotyped perceptions, attitudes and practices that normalize gender inequality, discriminate against it and thus exclude it socially (Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies, 2018) and also found as a language sexism with a negative color for women (Mills, 2008).

2. Methodology and research hypothesis

Numerous studies have been devoted to textbook content in the past (Brugeilles, 2009). The methodology in this study based on UNESCO methodology of *Methodological guide*, (2009) and development process rests on two basic principles: a) Gendered representations are embodied in characters, and it is therefore through these that gender equality must be

promoted b) Inclusion of a character in a textbook contributes to the development of gendered representations. The internal structure and purpose of the aid should therefore be considered. The research hypothesis of this study was based on the following acceptances:

- a) The elimination of stereotypes and the sexism in text book of Modern Greek Language is insufficient;
- b) They are intended mainly to expose gender stereotyping in text book;
- c) All characters form part of the gender system presented in a textbook, but the system is not present in the same way throughout the textbook;
- d) a character’s characteristics will be expressed differently in words than in images;
- e) texts and illustrations do not represent male and female in the same way;

3. Gendered representation in Modern Greek Language textbook in secondary education

Based on the analysis of the research hypothesis, and the variables set in the beginning, the main attempt was to formulate some conclusions that summarized the parameters to the small sample in a few lines. Gender discrimination is mainly tied to the difference in the number of boys and girls represented in the textbooks. The corpus that has studied was the textbook of Neolliniki-Glossa_A-Gym, Secondary Education. Categories that used as axes for the analysis are the following, on the basis of a questionnaire:

- a) Count the characters according to sex and age { (men; women; boys; girls; ungendered (pupil, child, etc.); unspecified (characters not defined by sex or age)) (Table 1 below):

Table 1. Counting characters. Number of individual characters by sex and age in texts and illustrations and by position in chapter in textbook of Neolliniki-Glossa_A-Gym_BM

Text				Illustration
Individual characters Lesson Exercise Total	Lesson/text	Exercise	Total	
Women	7	9	16	5
Men	45	27	72	4
Girls	26	15	41	13
Boys	37	24	61	19
Female, age unspecified	18	2	20	3

Male, age unspecified	25	6	31	3
Ungendered or sex unspecified	39	24	63	5

The count shows where the characters feature in the textbook (whether in the text, pictures, lessons or exercises). Almost all the characters are male or female: there are very few ungendered designations, such as “child” or “pupil”, or characters whose sex cannot be determined (owing to the use of a unisex first name, for example). There are also relatively few characters of unknown age. Male characters are substantially overrepresented and there is also a glaring lack of female characters.

According to the above results texts and illustrations do not represent male and female in the same way. A character may appear in texts or illustrations. This distinction is important because a character’s characteristics will be expressed differently in words than in images and illustrations have a higher profile; being few in number and taking up more space on the page, they are easier to monitor. Texts and illustrations have different educational purposes. It is therefore necessary to understand how the knowledge is organized. When textbook has a “lesson” section and an “exercise” section, a character appearing in the lesson section, studied by the whole class with the teacher and will have a higher profile than one included in the exercise section (Brugeilles, 2009).

b) Children’s activities in texts and images (Table 2):

- Social activity
- Leisure activity
- Domestic activity
- Purchasing
- Informal occupational activity
- Formal occupational activity

Table 2. Number of characters (girls and boys)by activities in texts and by activities and position in chapter

Activities	Girls			Boys		
	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total
School activity	18	11	29	10	12	22
Occupational activity	3	5	8	14	2	16
Domestic	-	1	1		-	-

activity						
Buying activity	-	-	-	-	-	-
Care or caring activity		1	1	2	2	4
Leisure activity	7	3	10	5	3	8
Social activity	-	6	6	-	18	18
Routine personal activity	1	1	2	4	4	8
Negative activity	1	-	1	1	1	2
Successful activity	1	1	2	2	5	7
Other activity	1	5	6	3	10	13

According to the above table school activities predominate in texts. There is little difference between girls and boys, but school activities are slightly more frequent among boys. Domestic activities are carried out rarely but are still more frequent among girls. Characters are used even in short texts such as textbook exercises, which constitute miniature stories. They have skills, roles, statuses, ways of acting and attributes; they move in certain settings or territories and are caught in a network of interactions with other characters. It is through all of these characteristics taken together that one discovers what it means to be a man, woman, girl or boy in a given society.

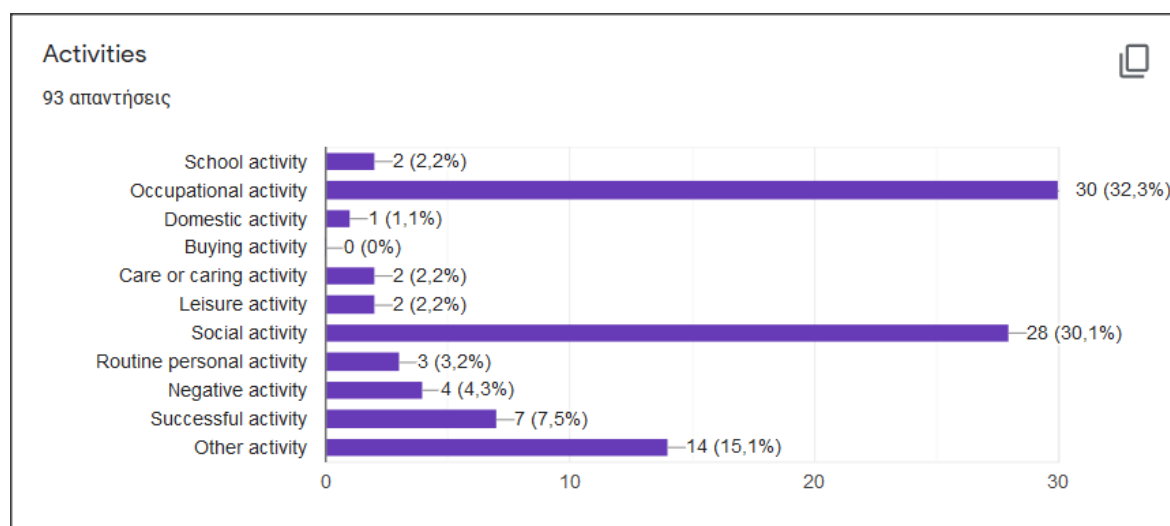
c) Adults’ activities in textbooks: Social activity, Leisure activity, Domestic activity, Purchasing, Informal occupational activity, Formal occupational activity (Table 3):

Table 3. Number of characters (women and men) by activities in texts and by position in chapter

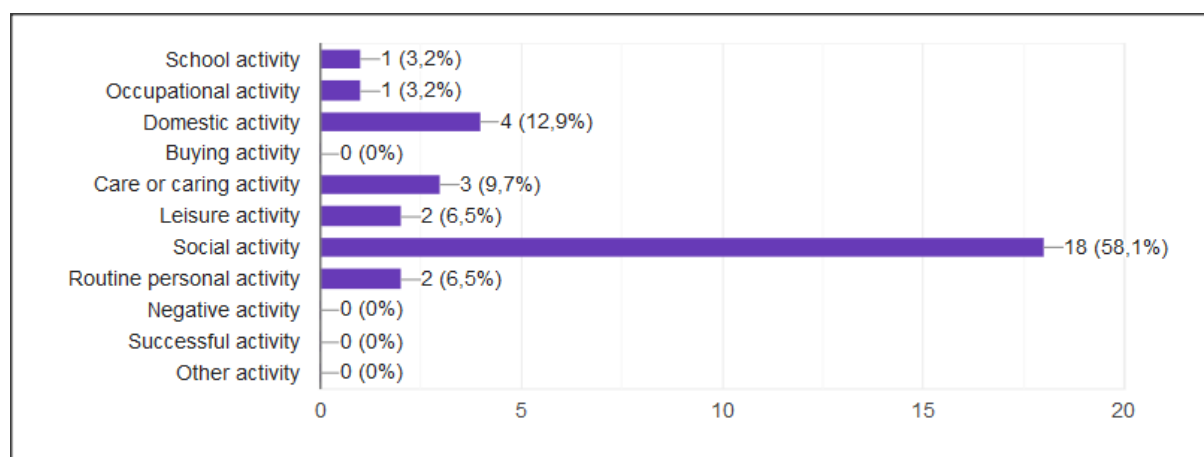
Activities	Women			Men		
	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total
School activity	1	-	1	2	-	2
Occupational activity	-	1	1	28	2	30
Domestic activity	1	3	4	1	-	1
Buying activity	-	-	-	-	-	-
Care or caring activity	3	-	3	1	1	2
Leisure activity	1	1	2	2	-	2
Social activity	14	4	18	24	4	28
Routine personal activity	2	-	2	3	-	3
Negative activity	-	-	-	2	2	4

Successful activity	-	-	-	-	7	7
Other activity	-	-	-	1	14	15

Two activities dominate: occupational activities and social activities for men (Graph 1.)
 and occupational and social activities for women (Graph 2).



Graph 1. Number of activities of men in texts



Graph 2. Number of activities of women in texts

As with designations, distribution varies according to the character’s sex. Men are engaged in occupational activities – usually formal, but not always. Women form part of the domestic sphere and their most common activity is social activity and domestic activities. They are excluded from occupational activity (only once as a teacher). Consequently, occupational activity does not make them an integral part of the public sphere.

In conclusion for adult characters descriptions of adults differ considerably. The two sexes have neither the same role nor the same place in society. Moreover, as there are few women characters, there are few female adult role models. Role models for girls are women in the

domestic and family spheres, while for boys, they are independent men relieved of domestic tasks (teachers, scientist, journalist, athletes etc). These few findings show that textbooks convey unequal gendered representations constructed on the basis of the characters’ characteristics; even those subjects that seem most gender-neutral contribute to the learning of gendered roles; all school years are affected. The learning of gendered roles begins very early.

They also reveal a dual imbalance, namely an imbalance between the discourse on girls’ education – the subject of broad international consensus – and the messages conveyed by textbooks; an imbalance between contemporary social realities and those contained in textbooks. These textbooks lag behind social and economic changes and changes in the role of women in various spheres, especially public life. Thus the textbook is not so much a reflection as a structuring of a legitimized social representation.

By presenting this kind of gender system, textbooks standardize, reinforce and legitimize gender inequality. They convey the idea that girls’ education is not as important as boys’ education. This idea is likely to be assimilated not only by the pupils but also by the teaching profession and parents, who will not necessarily view it critically. Requirements, demands and incentives for girls will be fewer. In order to achieve the goal of Education for All, it is essential to alter these representations and design textbooks that promote gender equality. (Brugeilles, 2009).

In conclusion

Female role models are less than male in Modern Greek Language textbook in Secondary Education in Greece. Girl pupils have little foundation for identification and projection, and boys have no role models from the opposite sex, which is barely visible.

Consequently, pupils of both sexes, together with their parents and teachers, perceive that knowledge is legitimate for the male sex rather than the female sex. The textbooks are thus unlikely to make girls interested in learning Modern Greek Language. The gender system changes as the curriculum progresses. In many countries where there are few publishers, the same textbook series is used for every school year (Brugeilles, 2009).

The increasing scarcity of child characters as the curriculum progresses encourages pupils to project themselves into adulthood. This process is possible for boys as they are able to identify with numerous male child character, but less likely for girls who have had insufficient opportunity to identify with girl child characters. The “disappearance” of girls from textbooks as the curriculum progresses goes in hand with the high drop-out rate for female pupils observed in many countries, a seemingly complicit endorsement (UNESCO, 2007).

Teacher education institutions are encouraged to review existing courses and identify which competences are already addressed, either through the contents, through the teaching methods or through student activities and assignments and also point out which elements are missing.

In a second step, content can be added, teaching methods changed or assignments included, in order to address additional competence elements and envisage the whole range of competences in the gender equality.

Parity must be ensured between men, women, girls and boys in both text and illustrations; in all the different parts of the textbook, such as, the lessons, passages of text and exercises; in the position and size of characters in illustrations; in the distribution of educational functions; in presenting or referring to well-known figures in the fields of politics, science, literature, sport, the arts and economics according to the Brugeilles (2009). Teachers should become aware and take an active approach in spotting and avoiding the unintentional lessons that are taught in their setting. The selection of resources used in teaching and the types of tasks given to learners may reinforce social inequalities or cultural domination as well as stereotypes and discrimination. (UNESCO, 2007).

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