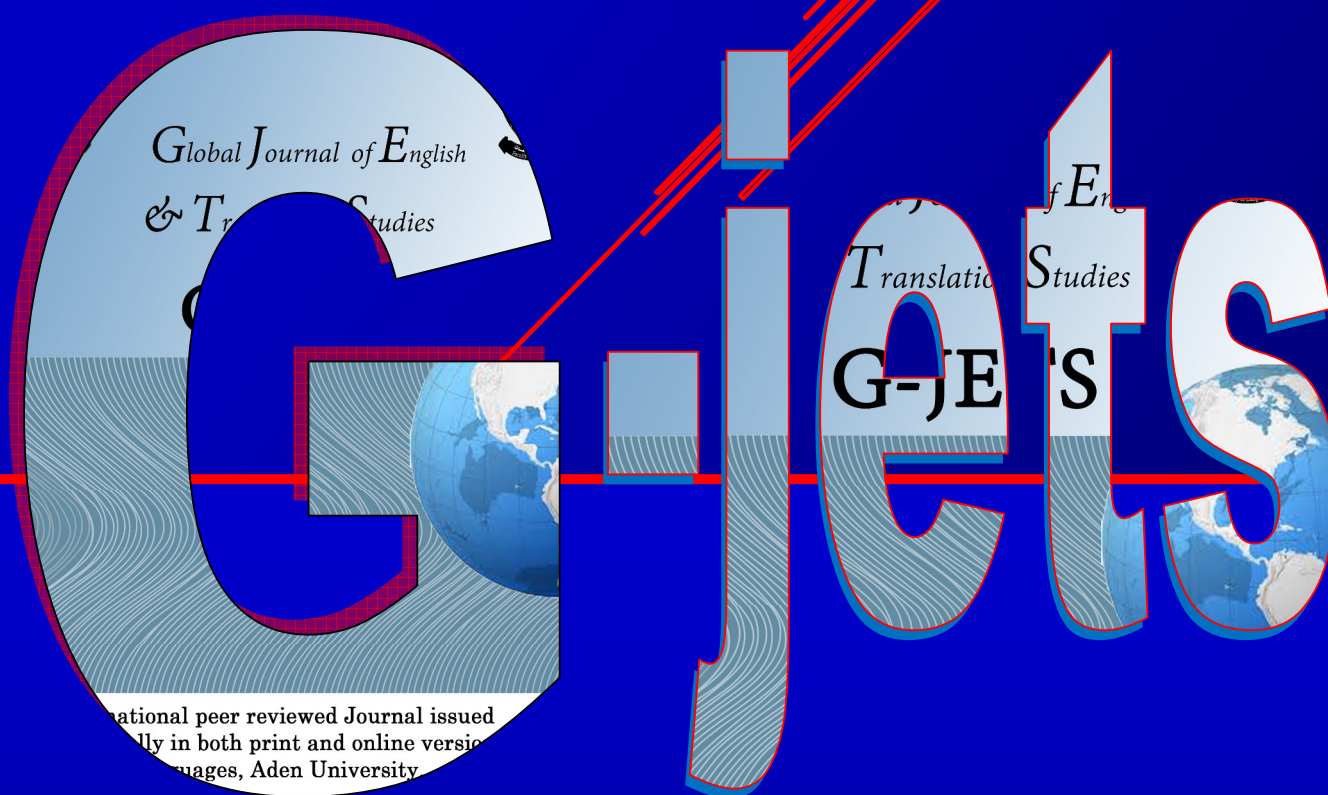


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The Global Journal of English and Translation Studies (G-JETS) is a high quality open access peer reviewed research journal published by the Faculty of Languages- Aden University. It is a brainchild of a group of academicians and research scholars in the field of English language and translation studies. It aims to provide a platform for the researchers, academicians, professionals, practitioners and students to impart and share knowledge in the form of high quality empirical and theoretical research papers, case studies, literature reviews and books reviews to make them available to scholars of English language studies and translation. It is a biannual publication (January & June). The journal publishes in both print and online versions. The G-JETS was founded in 2014 by Prof. Dr. Gamal Mohammed Ahmed Abdullah, dean of the Faculty of Languages- University of Aden.

Editorial

As promised previously, the Global Journal of English and Translation studies (G-JETS) continues in presenting new additions to its new issues. This time, we are pleased to introduce the third issue of the journal with both print and online versions. Each version has its own ISSN No. Though the current and difficult situation in which the country goes through, the G-JETS proves its commitment towards its subscribers, readers and followers and appears this time in its prints and online versions. The online version is a new and wonderful addition to our print version which appeared in the previous two issues. We are issuing this issue with an online version hopefully that it will facilitate access to the G-JETS globally. Here, we seize this opportunity to express our thanks to our subscribers, readers and publishers for their continuous support and participation. We promise you that the G-JETS will continue presenting its best in every issue it appears in.

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2. Margins should be 2.5 cm on four sides.
3. The soft copy of the paper should be in MSW 2007 OR any latest MSW version. Or log to our website to get a template.
4. A PDF format copy should also be included.
5. Contributors should follow APA referencing system.
6. The paper should not exceed 5000 words.
7. The paper should be acknowledged with a declaration that it is an original work and has not been published anywhere else.
8. Abstract should not be more than 200 words.
9. A short bio-note of the author should include name, institutional affiliation and brief career history.

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Highlighting EFL Instructors' Methods of Assessing Students and Providing Feedback at the University of Aden

Asst. Prof. Dr. Shafiq Anwar Fakir

University of Aden

Abstract

The present study used interviews as a research instrument to investigate a group of 25 EFL college instructors' assessment practices at the University of Aden. The results showed that instructors had an understanding of what encompassed assessment and why they assessed students. It was also found that tests were the prevalent form of assessment and a huge chunk of students' overall score was based on tests and a final exam. Some other forms of assessment such as observations and group assignments were also used to assess students. However, these forms of assessment needed some more careful planning. When it came to feedback, teachers did not provide any individualized constructive feedback because of the large number of students in the class. Most of the teachers seemed dissatisfied with their assessment methods. Moreover, teachers' lack of training in EFL assessment may seem to be a reason as to why most of them were not familiar with other forms of assessment such as portfolio, self- and peer assessment. In its conclusion, this study suggested a reconsideration of score distribution, control over the number of students in a class, and a training in EFL assessment for the instructors at the University of Aden.

Keywords: Aden University, assessment, feedback, EFL, testing

Introduction

Assessment is more than just grading and deciding whether students should pass or fail (Spratt, Pulverness, and Williams, 2014). It is the process of collecting information about students' learning by means of multiple sources such as observations of students' behavior during classroom lessons, the comments they make in class, their journal entries, the work they produce, and tests (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). Classroom assessment sends a "clear message to students about what is worth learning, how it should be learned, and how well we expect them to perform," (ETS, 2002, p. 1). Informative assessment requires that instructors set learning goals, consider assessment strategies, and determine the evidence that will reflect that students have achieved those goals (ETS, 2002).

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A test, on the other hand, is like an audit or a snapshot (Wiggins, 2002) that measure “a person’s ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain” (Brown, 2004, p. 3). Tests provide instructors with information about students’ learning and “Ideally, [test results] should lead to more effective instruction, learner success, and enhanced academic motivation” (Tombari & Borich, 1999, p. 31). Tests help teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and diagnose their students’ efforts (Madsen, 1983). However, though useful tools, tests need to be combined with other forms of assessment for a more comprehensive view of students’ learning progress.

Assessment, apparently, plays an important role in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, in the field of ESL/EFL, the study of classroom assessment practices of instructors has been somewhat limited (Cheng 2013). Shohamy, Inbar-Lourie, & Poehner (2008) explains that over the past years, large-scale standardized tests had occupied immense attention due to the fact that testing institutions and researchers consider large-scale tests to be more significant for the major impact they have on the lives of test-takers and institutions. Shohamy et al add that “In most situations, classroom-based language assessment practices are perceived as less high-stakes than standardized language tests, though this is a view that is being increasingly challenged,” (p. 7). Recently, however, attention has shifted from large-scale standardized tests to what teachers actually do in the classroom to assess their students’ learning in both ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts.

The purpose of the present study is to shed light on a group of 25 EFL college instructors’ classroom assessment practices. More specifically, it tries to find out the instructors’ understanding of assessment, the reasons why they assess students, the types of assessment they use, the kind of feedback they provide their students, their awareness of portfolio, self--, and peer assessment, their level of satisfaction with their assessment method(s), and whether or not they have had formal training in EFL assessment. All the instructors involved in this study are either full or part time employees at the University of Aden and teach English courses at different English departments of colleges affiliated with Aden University. Findings from this study can better inform the assessment practices of EFL instructors in this context.

Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to shed light on a group of EFL college instructors' assessment practices. The research questions formulated are:

1. What are instructors' understanding of assessment?
2. Why do they assess their students?
3. What types of assessment methods teachers use?
4. What kind of feedback are students provided?
5. To what extent teachers are familiar with portfolio assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment?
6. How satisfied teachers appear to be with their assessment methods?
7. Did the instructors have any formal training in EFL assessment?

Literature Review

Testing/Assessment in the EFL Context

Language testing and assessment is a relatively new area that is rooted within the broad context of applied linguistics because it deals with English language learners and test-takers. Those involved in this field are test designers, publishers, teachers, and researchers who have a strong interest in and influence on the teaching and learning of English around the world (Cheng, 2013). The field of language testing and assessment is influenced by the theoretical framework of educational measurement which is based on classical and modern test theory (see, for example, Bachman, 1990) and theories from applied linguistics (see, for example, Canale and Swain, 1980).

Testing is one of the various assessment methods available that instructors can use and is an inevitable form of assessment in many educational contexts around the world, including Yemen. Tests include placement tests, diagnostic tests, progress tests, achievement or summative test, and proficiency tests. They all are formal forms of testing as they require an exam like setting, where students work silently to complete the tasks within a limited time. The tests are scored, and administered by a teacher or an official. Normally, tests are administered during identifiable times in a curriculum and it is expected that learners

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demonstrate their best performance as they know beforehand that their responses are being measured (Brown, 2004).

Although tests on their own help teachers collect information about their students' learning, they provide a limited picture of their progress. The content of a test represents a small sample of the skills, knowledge, or subject matter being assessed; test takers' proficiency is inferred based on their performance on the test (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). Moreover, tests, for many students, may be a source of anxiety for fear that they may not do well. Despite their shortcomings, tests offer advantages when:

1. testing is seen as an opportunity for interaction between teacher and student,
2. students are judged on the basis of the knowledge they have,
3. the tests are intended to help students improve their skills,
4. the criteria for success on the test are clear to students,
5. students receive a grade for their performance on a set of tests representing different testing methods (not just one),
6. the test takers are trained in how to take tests—especially those involving unfamiliar formats,
7. the tests are returned promptly,
8. and the results are discussed (Shohamy 1985, in Cohen 2001, p. 515).

Tests, then, are a subset of assessment and certainly not the only form of assessment that teachers can use. Assessment is a much wider domain that provides information about what students know and can do. Assessment can be both formal and/or informal. Informal forms of assessment include methods that are not done for the purpose of grading but rather to find out more about their students' level, attitude, or learner characteristics or to provide learners with feedback on how to improve such as observing them while performing a certain task. Other forms of informal assessment include self and peer assessment. Self-assessment helps develop learners' intrinsic motivation, encourages them to monitor their own growth, and fosters the desire to succeed in a given set of skills. Similarly, peer assessment promotes cooperative learning among learners and helps them become more involved and responsible. Both self and peer assessment build learners' self-autonomy which is considered as one of the primary stones of successful learning (Brown, 2004).

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Another example of assessment is portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment reflects specific learning goals and contains a selective collection of students' work, students' self-assessment, and teacher assessment that is used to demonstrate students' progress and/or achievements over time. (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996).

Formal assessment is more planned and systematic in its design and meant to measure students' skills and/or knowledge. Formal assessment is not the same as tests. Brown (2004) clarifies this with the following example:

[An instructor] might use a student's journal or portfolio of materials as a formal assessment of the attainment of certain course objectives, but it is problematic to call those two procedures "tests". A systematic set of observations of a student's frequency of oral participation in class is certainly a formal assessment, but it too is hardly what anyone would call a test. (p. 6)

These various types of assessment (including tests) provide rich evidence of students' abilities or lack of them, and are often followed by instructors providing students feedback on their strengths and areas that need improvement (Spratt et al, 2014). Informed instructional decisions can then be made about different aspects of teaching and learning. (Hart, 1994; Genesee & Upshur, 1998).

Beneficial Washback/Feedback

It is a challenge for instructors to design tests that serve as learning devices that provide students with positive washback. For beneficial washback, one way is that teachers give generous and specific feedback to students on their test performance. Many instructors who are underworked and perhaps underpaid suffice by returning students papers with a letter grade or numerical score. In Brown's (2004) words, "Grades and scores reduce a mountain of linguistic and cognitive performance data to an absurd molehill" (p. 29). Brown suggests that instructors add to the grade or score on students' written test or data sheet from an oral performance some feedback that tell students about their strengths and potential areas for improvement. By doing so, teachers can provide students with positive washback.

Grading

The role of scores in education cannot be ignored as it indicates their accomplishment. For instance, students who receive 70% may mean that they need improvement whereas a

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90% may indicate what the learner has accomplished (Tombari & Borich, 1999). Walvoord and Anderson (2010) define grading not simply as a letter "A" or "C" placed on students' work but rather a process that encompasses

- tailoring the test or assignment to the learning goals of the course
- establishing criteria and standards,
- helping students acquire the skills and knowledge they need,
- assessing student learning over time
- shaping student motivation,
- planning course context and teaching methods,
- using in-class and out-of-class time,
- offering feedback so students can develop as thinkers and writers,
- communicative about students' learning to appropriate audiences,
- using results to plan improvements in the classroom, department, and institution (p. 1).

Madsen (1983) recommends that when recording students' scores, teachers ask themselves questions such as:

Are my lessons on the right level? Or, am I aiming my instruction too low or too high? Am I teaching some skills effectively but others less effectively? What areas do we need more work on? Which points need reviewing? Should I spend more (or less) time on this material with next year's students? (p. 5)

Furthermore, Madsen states that tests can provide insights into ways that instructors can improve evaluation process itself by reflecting on whether students could finish tests on time, if the test caused any unnecessary anxiety, and if there was consistency between tests results and the students' responses in class.

To sum up, to enhance students' learning, teachers need to be competent not only in teaching but also in assessing their students, providing them with effective feedback for improvement, and assigning scores that fairly reflect their accomplishment in a course.

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Method

Context/Participants

The 25 participants involved in this study are all EFL instructors at different English departments at Aden University colleges namely College of Education (Aden), College of Education (Saber), College of Education (Zinjubar), College of Education (Radfan), and College of Languages (Aden). As part of their grading system, in the different departments of College of Education instructors are required to provide the college administration an overall score out of 100% by the end of the semester, where 40% is based on in class assessment and 60% on a final exam; in the College of Languages, however, in class assessment is based on 30% and the final exam weighs 70%.

Twenty-Five EFL full and part time EFL instructors in different English departments at Aden University were interviewed to explore their perception of classroom assessment practices. Many instructors were requested for an interview; most of those who responded were interviewed in person and some others were interviewed over the phone.

This study uses a purposive sampling method meaning that it involves selection of participants based on an important characteristic, in this case all the participants were EFL instructors who had received their BA in English from colleges affiliated with Aden University and were currently teaching in different colleges at Aden University. Those instructors who had MA had also earned it from University of Aden. Table 1 provides background information of instructors' institution, years of teaching, and highest degree attained. Pseudonyms were used.

Table 1: Teachers' Details			
Instructor	Teaching Context	Years of Teaching	Degree
1. GA	College of Education - Aden	18 years	MA
2. HK	College of Education - Aden	18 years	MA
3. MD	College of Education - Aden	3 years	BA
4. KO	College of Education - Aden	7 years	BA
5. SI	College of Education – Aden	6 years	BA

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6. SA	College of Education – Aden	3 years	BA
7. WI	College of Education-Aden	3 years	BA
8. AM	College of Education – Aden	4 years	BA
9. AL	College of Languages—Aden	2 years	MA
10.AR	College of Languages—Aden	17 years	MA
11.SU	College of Languages—Aden	6 years	BA
12.NU	College of Languages—Aden	15 years	MA
13.SA	College of Languages—Aden	19 years	BA
14.MR	College of Languages—Aden	7 years	MA
15.AL	College of Languages—Aden	3 years	BA
16.IN	College of Languages—Aden	16 years	MA
17.AI	College of Languages—Aden	15 years	MA
18.AS	College of Education-Zinjubar	5 years	BA
19.AW	College of Education-Zinjubar	3 Years	BA
20.AN	College of Education-Saber	5 years	BA
21.WE	College of Education-Saber	7 Yeas	BA
22.AU	College of Education-Saber	5 years	MA
23.WL	College of Education-Radfan	8 years	MA
24.LT	College of Dentistry—Aden	12 years	MA
25.ZU	College of Engineering-Aden	8 Years	BA

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study were collected through a qualitative method that is structured interviews, which seemed an appropriate procedure for providing answers to the questions posed in this research. A pre-determined set of questions was finalized (Appendix A). The

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advantage of a structured interview is that it makes analyzing, coding, and comparing of data easier. The data obtained were first transcribed and then analyzed by means of coding that is identifying, categorizing, and labelling patterns and themes pertinent to the research questions. Each interview lasted between 10 to 15 minutes.

Results and Discussion

When the instructors were asked to state what assessment meant to them, their responses indicated a general understanding of assessment: ability to know students' level, collecting information, evaluating understanding, knowing what students have learned during the semester, knowing individual differences among students, and finding whether their course objectives have been achieved.

Regarding why the instructors assessed their students, their responses reiterated the points mentioned earlier: they want to find out whether their students understood the course content (6 responses), to know the general level of their students (9), and whether the course objectives is being achieved (6). A few other teachers indicated that assessing is simply an administrative requirement:

To give them marks

You have to evaluate; it is a must

To move to the next level

The types of assessment tasks teachers used to get an idea of their students' progress:

Tests: All 25 instructors

Exams: All 25 instructors

(Group) Assignments: 10 instructors

Oral Discussions/In-Class Interaction/Participation: 6 Instructors

Group Presentations: 2 instructors

Although some instructors mentioned using group assignments, presentations, and participation as part of their assessment, tests seemed a common practice among the instructors and weighed more than 80% of students' overall score. Moreover, it was found that most of the teachers administered only one test mainly because of the large number of

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students (70-100 students) per class, and they had to teach at least three classes, which tripled the number of students. Therefore, to curtail down the load of correction, it seemed more convenience to give students one test. Most of the instructors also mentioned that the type of questions on the tests were mostly objective; some others said that there was a blend of both objective and subjective questions.

Given the drawbacks of tests, namely their limitations as an assessment method, it is doubtful whether the test results fairly reflected students' actual performance, especially when some teachers also pointed out that in large classes, cheating can be an issue. Also, as some instructors in this study pointed that they wanted to know whether their course objectives had been met, obviously, tests administered once during a semester may not be adequate enough to provide them a valid insight into this matter.

Regarding what feedback teachers provided students on their performance on the tests, teachers' responses can be divided into three groups:

First Group (15 responses)

Teachers provided feedback in the form of a score on the test papers and went through the answers in class. For example, one teacher said that she wrote sample questions on the board and discussed the answers with the class. Two of the instructors preferred grouping their students into those who did well and those who did not do well and provided them with general feedback, separately. Providing individualized feedback was not possible in their context because of the large number of students per class (70-100 students).

Second Group (7 Responses)

Some of the teachers said that they sometimes went through the test papers because they lacked time to do so. For instance, one of the instructors explained "*I know I have to give feedback but due to time limit, I don't. I do sometimes address the common mistakes.*"

Third Group (3 Responses)

A few teachers indicated that mostly due to time constraints, they scored the test papers and returned them. One instructor, however, said that she did not return the papers because the test was going to be reused the following semester, so she merely gave the students their scores. According to the teacher, the students felt disappointed.

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In addition, as an administrative requirement, final exams administered at the end of the semester is scored by the instructors and directly returned to the registration office. Students do not get to see their final exam papers and their scores are posted later. Those who fail will have to retake the exam. Students can dispute their scores and reopen their files but that involves a set of procedures.

As feedback provide students with positive washback, results from this research show that constructive feedback on improvement either orally or in the form of notes on their test papers or assignments seemed to be lacking. Instructors indicated that providing students with individualized feedback was near to impossible due to the large number of students per class (70 to 100 students multiplied by 3). One instructor pointed out *“unfortunately there is such a big number of students that it is impossible to assess them individually”*. Hence, the instructors sufficed by going through the test papers in class and addressing general issues as they come up, as noted by a second instructor, *“I make notes about the common concerns students have, and go through them in class.”* In fact, one of the instructors put it directly, *“I just put scores on the papers. I get the impression that they are good enough or not and return their papers.”*

Giving feedback to students is necessary; otherwise students will feel discouraged. A score alone does not give adequate information about students' performance nor does assessment that is not well planned. To improve learning, students need to know what they did correctly and incorrectly, what they can do to improve their performance next time (ETS). Concordia Online (2012) provides some suggestions on providing feedback in large classes, such as collecting a small written assignment from students, then using a rotation system to provide 4-5 students with feedback in the class until the entire class receives at least one assignment with feedback on it. Instructors need to explain the rotation system to prevent students who do not receive feedback from feeling neglected. Written commentaries on large projects with advice for future improvement can also help students. Some other quick and effective feedback the article suggests is as follows:

- Returning student's work with personalized comments or suggestions and an invitation to review the work during the instructor's office hours.
- Have students write a “minute paper” in response to a question about assigned reading for that day; respond quickly.

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- Ask questions during lectures that require a show of hands, and then respond individually to students who raised their hands.
- Break the class into small groups to study the daily lesson; visit each group and respond to student questions and concerns.

Furthermore, assessing students based on observing their performance in class, as some instructors stated they did, seemed fuzzy, keeping in mind the large number of students in a class. Teachers who used observation did not provide a clear plan on how they observed their students. In fact, one teacher had expressed how daunting observation can be said, *"There are those who stand out. I can memorize their name. The rest is a sea of students."* Similarly, instructors who used group assignments stated it was convenient as it reduced the load of correction; they also pointed out that, it does not reflect individual performances of students, especially there are chances that stronger students tend to do most of the work. Just like tests, group assignments were also returned to students with a numerical score. Group assignments can be an effective assessment method but they need to be well planned to help students know their strengths and areas of improvement as mentioned in the suggestions above.

Moreover, by utilizing other forms of assessment namely portfolio assessment, self-, and peer-assessment instructors can enrich their students' learning experience. However, when asked whether they were familiar with these forms of assessment, most of the instructors acknowledged either they were vaguely familiar or not familiar at all. Some instructors seemed skeptical about the successful implementation of these forms of assessment in their context. Regarding portfolios, one instructor who taught writing said, *"This won't be applicable with this huge number of students. Imagine when you teach 300-400 students? How can you keep track of their portfolios?"*

Teachers who were familiar with self-assessment did it quite casually and a few teachers like the following were skeptical about its implementation, *"Self-assessment is not in our educational culture; so I don't think this can be applicable at college level. In fact, instructors themselves do not have this technique of self-assessment, so how can it be expected from students to self-assess."* Like self-assessment, peer-assessment was also done casually. Some instructors said they asked students to assess each other but it was not introduced in an organized manner.

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For more reliable results, students need to be trained first to self and peer assess and instructors can introduce students to checklists and guide them on how to use them.

When expressing their satisfaction with their assessment methods, the majority of the instructors (20 responses) involved in this study indicated their dissatisfaction. One instructor said, *"I need new ways of assessing my students. I heard about alternative assessment and would like to try it."* Another teacher stated that her dissatisfaction results from the fact that since she has a large number of students, her current assessment methods give her a mere overview of her students' progress but not a detailed view. One teacher said, *"I know I need to have more tests, I know I need to provide feedback, I know I have to find different ways of assessing my students, but the classroom reality does not encourage the implementation of all this."* Some instructors mentioned that the one test they conducted was not enough and they would like to administer more tests but the class size and correction hindered them. A few instructors (5 responses), however, said that the tests provided them with adequate information about their students, and that they were satisfied.

Finally, it was also found that most of the instructors lacked any formal training in assessing students' English language skills. Some instructors had training in general assessment as part of their university requirement when they got appointed as instructors at Aden University and that helped them to some extent. Lack of training, therefore, may affect teachers' effective use of various assessment methods as well as may also be the reason why they were not familiar with alternative forms of assessment.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Despite their limitations, tests continue to remain an inevitable part of education among instructors teaching EFL students at the University of Aden. Given the large number of students in the class, tests seemed to be more convenient to administer and score. Some instructors also used other forms of assessment such as observations and group assignments; however, for effective results, this form of assessment required better planning. Generally, most of the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with their assessment methods and stated that they had not had any training in EFL assessment.

When it came to providing students feedback, it was also found that instructors rarely provided any individualized feedback to their students. Apparently, communicating to

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students on their progress can be extremely challenging in a large class. Therefore, due to the importance of feedback in improving learning, some suggestions were provided for instructors to take into consideration when assessing students in a large class.

Finally, some important implications of this study are: first, the need to rethink assessment at the university level that places a huge weight on the final exam (60% or 70%) of the overall score. This needs to be broken down further and the 100% stretched over a range of different tasks that students produce during the semester. Second, to ensure effective learning and assessment some sort of control is required over the number of students in a class. Neglecting this issue means graduation of generations of students with scores which do not fairly reflect their learning outcomes. Third, there is an urgent need of in-service training course or a workshop for instructors that exclusively addresses EFL assessment. The more teachers become knowledgeable about assessment, the more they are likely to consider alternative assessment tools and use them effectively.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of assessment?
2. Why do you assess your students?
3. How do you normally assess (i.e. *collect information about your students' learning progress, their strengths and weaknesses*) your students' learning? Could you give me a specific example of a course you taught and the types of assessment methods you used?
4. How do you break your 100% score?
5. After you finish scoring the students' tests, what do you do with the results? What do the results mean to you?
6. Do you think your tests give you a clear picture of your students' progress? Are you satisfied with the way(s) you use to assess your students' learning? If no, why? What changes would you like to make to how you assess your students?
7. Are you familiar with any of the following methods of assessment? Have you used any of them?
 - Portfolio assessment
 - Peer assessment
 - Self-assessment
8. What kind of formal training in assessment have you had? Was it useful? Why or why not? If not, would you like to take such a course? Why?

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A Corpus Based Study of the Secondary School Crescent Course Book Vocabulary in Comparison with British National Corpus (BNC)

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Abstract

Corpus linguistics has opened a new window for course books evaluation especially in word counts, word repetition, word frequency, readability and many other statistics. The present study undertook the analysis of the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) in terms of word counts, word repetition and word frequency in comparison with the most frequent words in the British National Corpus (BNC). The AntConc 3.2.4w software and the website "Compleat Lexical Tutor, v.4" (<http://www.lextutor.ca>) were used as the main tools for corpus analysis. The results of the analysis showed that Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) books 4, 5 and 6 do not cover the most frequent words found in the BNC. The percentage was less than 60%. In terms of word count, the analysis showed that the course book No.4 contains 1333 word families in a 2208-word type, course book No.5 contains 1388 word families in a 2237-word type course book No.6 contains 1450 word families in a 2354-word type and regarding all course books together, the analysis clearly revealed that course books No.4, 5 and 6 contains 2262 word families in a 4193-word type. The analysis also demonstrated that one timer frequent words is the highest. It is counted as 47.34%, 46.21% and 47.92 % in the three course books respectively. It showed that 41.5% is the percentage of one timers frequent words in the three course books together. The percentage decreased gradually in two timers, three timers and on. The proportion of the six timers and more is only 14.4 %, 18.48% and 16.74% respectively. The study concluded with recommendations and implications for further research.

Key words: Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY), frequency, BNC, type, token and word family, course book.

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Introduction

It has been widely accepted that vocabulary knowledge represents the backbone for language proficiency. Laufer (1986) advocates that "without adequate lexis there is no proper language competence or performance" (p.70). Course books in EFL classrooms represent the main source for learner's vocabularies especially in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Consequently, course books vocabulary and frequency should be evaluated carefully. The Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) used in Yemeni secondary schools started in the school year 1993/1994 in the 7th class and continued to be introduced gradually, and now there is a need to have accurate statistics about it in terms of total number of words in each level, common words between these levels, different words, and frequencies and whether the words are among the most common words according to the BNC. In other words, there might be few number of empirical studies related to CECY in terms of vocabulary statistics or corpus based studies.

Currently computer technology has become the corner stone of most sciences and disciplines. It has revolutionized and sped up the steps of developments of most disciplines. Applied Linguistics is not a way of such impact. This impact started in the mid 1960s by the appearance of corpus linguistics. The advancements in corpus linguistics tools have permitted greater analysis of textual data especially word frequencies. The Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) used in Yemeni secondary schools' coverage of the most frequent words found in the BNC is inadequate and limited leading to low outcomes of English language learning in Yemen. This study uses the AntConc toolkit and the Compleat Lexical Tutor website to evaluate the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) in terms of frequencies and compare it with the most frequent words in a famous corpus in the field of corpus linguistics, The British National Corpus (BNC).

Objectives of the study

This study aims at analyzing the Crescent English Course for Yemen (course books 4, 5 and 6) in terms of word frequency compared to the most frequent words in the BNC, size of words and how they are distributed in the three levels and lexical variation.

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Statement of the research problem

The number of words as well as the frequency of the words in any EFL textbook represents a very important aspect in terms of teaching, textbook selection and learning. EFL literature emphasizes the importance of size and frequency aspect in textbooks. Kirsner (1994) showed that there are strong effects of word frequency on the speed and accuracy of lexical recognition processes (speech perception, reading, object naming, and sign perception) and lexical production processes (speaking, typing, writing, and signing), in children and adults as well as in L1 and L2. In the Yemeni context, Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) is used in teaching English in Yemeni elementary and secondary schools since 1994. Many studies have been conducted to this course but no one has evaluated it in terms of frequencies of words, chunks and collocations in comparison to the frequencies in famous corpora such as BNC to identify its strengths and weaknesses in terms of preparing Yemeni students to use English language. This study will try to identify the size and the most frequent words in the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) in comparison to the frequencies in BNC.

Research Questions

This research paper tries to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does the Crescent English Course for Yemen used in Yemeni Secondary Schools cover the most frequent words of English in comparison to the most frequent words found in BNC?
2. How many words are included in the Crescent English Course for Yemen? And how are they distributed in the different levels?
3. What are lexical variety and lexical density of the course books of the CECY?

Significance of the study

This study tries to present a better understanding of the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) used in secondary schools in the light of words frequencies and word statistics. The significance can be materialized in the following points:

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1. In evaluating the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY), the study helps Yemeni English teachers to have a clear picture of the course in terms of vocabularies and their frequencies. Ellis (1997) declares that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. Also Sheldon (1988) shows the importance of course books by saying that they represent "the visible heart" of any ELT program (p.237). Rahimpour (2013) also suggests that " [i]n order to use the textbooks effectively, it is essential for the practitioners to evaluate the materials since evaluation plays a key role in education and can provide valuable information" (p.766).
2. Course books evaluation helps in better decision making regarding the course books under use in terms of continuing using them or choosing new ones. This study might present insights and statistics on the vocabulary content of the course books under use that would help in decision making regarding the use of this course book.
3. The statistics of this study might serve as a reference to the designers of the course book to reconsider this course book or any new course books.
4. Teachers and learners will know how many words are included in the course and the difference between a level and the next to help them make clear vision regarding teaching and learning. Teachers will know what words should be taught and even what words should be used in tests and examinations and what pedagogical practices are suitable or what activities level can be used to consolidate learning. Teachers and learners will know the size of words that should be taught or learned a day. Knowing the low frequent words in the course book will help teachers to pay much attention and focus to those words in their teaching.
5. It might help in decisions regarding designing examinations and tests.
6. It might help teachers and learners to focus on the most frequent words in their teaching.

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7. Evaluate the suitability of words in the course books for Yemeni learners in terms of adequacy for preparing students to use English and for undergraduate studies.

Methodology

In what follows a detailed description of the methodology of the study will be given. This will include preparation of the corpus (CECY), the software and the BNC.

Preparing the corpus and procedures

The corpus of this study consists of 6793 words which is the total number of words in the pupils' books of the secondary schools in Yemen (Crescent English Course for Yemen, CECY, 4, 5 and 6). The text books of all these levels were downloaded as a pdf format files from the website of the ministry of education <http://www.yemenmoe.net> and firstly converted into word document file then converted into text file format in order to be compatible with the software (AntConc) and the website Compleat Lexical Tutor, v.4 (<http://www.lextutor.ca>) used in the study. For the purpose of processing, only the actual words in lessons, the words in the introductory sections and appendices were removed and only lessons were processed. Some words are presented in a picture form in the course books that cannot be converted into word document file. These words are retyped manually and included in the corpus. Figures are replaced by the word number, contractions are replaced by full words, single letters are removed except 'a' and 'I' from the texts before the analysis process is implemented.

The Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY)

The Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) was prepared by two British authors, Terry O'Neill and Peter Snow and was published by Garner Publishing Limited Oxford University Press for Arab World. It consists of six levels. The Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 for the grades 7th, 8th and 9th in the elementary school and 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades or 10th, 11th and 12th grades of the secondary school. Each level text book consists of pupils' book and workbook. Pupils' books of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades or the 10th, 11th and 12th grades of the secondary school are only the main concern of this study.

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The software

This study has used the free corpus analysis software AntConc 3.2.4w. This free toolkit software was first released by Laurence Anthony in 2002. It can run on any computer using Microsoft Windows, Macintosh OS X and Linux. It is available in different versions in the following <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc>. This toolkit software processes txt, html, htm and xml file format and performs word frequency (wordlist, word cluster, word collocations, concordance, concordance plot, and key word list). This software is used to find out frequencies of types, types and word families of the corpus under study.

The Compleat Lexical Tutor, v.4

The Compleat Lexical Tutor, v.4 (<http://www.lex tutor.ca>) is a free website designed by Tom Cobb to create concordancers, word profile, frequencies, comparing texts, making exercises and reading text and many other corpus analysis services and tools. It presents resources for learning, teaching and researching in the three main sections, learners, researchers and teachers. This website is used to draw the comparison between the corpus under study and the BNC and COCA. This website is used for drawing the comparison with the most frequent words of the BNC. This website is used on the 20th of January 2016.

The BNC

The British National Corpus (BNC) is a synchronic, monolingual, general and sample corpus containing 100 million of written and spoken words from different disciplines used in natural language use. The collection of the corpus began in 1991 and finished in 1994. The latest version of the BNC was released in 2007. It is an online free corpus available for learners, teachers and researchers.

Limitation of the study

This study is limited to evaluating only word frequency of the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) used in secondary schools in comparison to the frequencies of the most frequent words in BNC. The study excluded the supplementary readers (science and literary readers).

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Literature review

A review of the related literature is given below. This includes word frequency and research, previous studies related to the research topic.

Word frequency and research

Word frequency means the times a word appears in a text or a corpus. This occurrence or repetition in a text shows its importance and centrality in the text. In another simpler way, high frequency words are those words that most people use them frequently in their language. The words "the" and "and" are examples of high frequent words that appear in most English conversations or written texts. Frequency depends on the discipline or topic. A frequent word in a discipline might be a low frequent in another but there are words that are very frequent in most disciplines. The British National Corpus (BNC) and The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) present the high frequent words in English among millions of words used in English. The table below shows the top ten frequent words in English among 450 million words in BNC and COCA.

<i>Table No.1: The top 10 frequent words in BNC and COCA (20.04.2015).</i>										
<i>Rank</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>BNC</i>	<i>The</i>	<i>Of</i>	<i>And</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>In</i>	<i>That</i>	<i>It</i>	<i>Is</i>	<i>Was</i>
<i>COCA</i>	<i>The</i>	<i>And</i>	<i>Of</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>In</i>	<i>That</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>It</i>	<i>Is</i>

Course books, teachers and even learners should pay much attention to this high frequency words because they are almost found in most texts and form a basis for language use and understanding. Nation (2014) explains the value of the top frequent words:

The ten most frequent words of English typically cover 25% of the words in any text and the 100 most frequent words cover around 50%. Have a look at a page and see how often the word occurs (It occurs in almost every line in this paragraph!). By itself, that word covers 7% of any written English text. The

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most frequent 1,000 words cover around 80% of the words in most texts. In some languages the coverage figures are even higher than this. (p.13)

Many studies show the importance of high frequent words for language learning. For example, Schonell et al (1956) found that the most frequent 1,000 words in spoken English provide coverage of 94% of the running words in informal conversation. Similarly, Carroll et al. (1971) found that the first 1,000 words of English cover 74% of written text. (Nation, 2007, Nation & Waring, 1997) found that the most frequent 2,000 word families (all the forms of a given word) enable readers to comprehend approximately 80% of the average novel or approximately 83% of the average newspaper article. Nation (2001a) refers to the size of high frequent words needed for secondary school learners to move to the university level by saying that "[t]he role of words in second language learning evidence that counting the 2,000 most frequent words of English as the high frequency words is still the best decision for learners going on to academic study"(p.15). However, Nation (2001b, p.11) distinguishes four types of words in a text: high-frequency words, academic words, technical words, and low-frequency words. (Nation, 2001a, p.17) presents a distribution of commonly used words in different text types:

Table No.2: distribution of commonly used words in different text types				
levels	conversation	fiction	Newspaper	Academic text
1st 1000	84.3%	82.3%	75.6%	73.7%
2nd 1000	6.0%	5.1%	4.7%	4.6%
AWL	1.9%	1.7%	3.9%	8.5%
Other	7.3%	10.9%	15.7%	13.3%

Other studies that show the importance of high frequency words in learning and acquisition are (Balota & Chumbly, 1984; Forster & Chambers, 1973). These studies found that high- frequency words are learned more rapidly than low-frequency ones. Barry and Seymour, (1988) found that high frequency words are spelled more accurately. Luce, (1986)

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and Savin, (1963) also found that high frequency words are better for auditory word recognition. Similarly, Kirsner (1994) showed that there are strong effects of word frequency on the speed and accuracy of lexical recognition processes (speech perception, reading, object naming, and sign perception) and lexical production processes (speaking, typing, writing, and signing), in children and adults as well as in L1 and L2.

Regarding language pedagogy, word frequency comes in the heart of course books selection, course books evaluation, teaching materials and language testing. For example, Biber and Reppen (2002) concluded that frequency information should not be excluded in designing teaching materials:

Given its importance in acquisition, we would argue that frequency should also play a key role in the development of materials and in the choices that teachers make in language classrooms. With the recent availability of comprehensive frequency-based grammatical descriptions, such integration of pedagogy and research has become feasible. (p. 207-208)

Based on the theories and findings, White (1998, pp.48-50) proposed seven elements in deciding the words taught or introduced first or earlier: (1) frequency, (2) coverage, (3) range, (4) availability, (5) learnability, (6) opportunism, (7) center of interest. Research in second language learning shows the value of high frequency words. Lotto and De Groot (1998) study manifested that high-frequency words are easier to learn and retrieve than low-frequency words.

Considering the number of words that L2 learners need to learn, it is better to know how many words a native speaker knows. Zechmeister et al. (1995) and Nation and Waring, (1997) point out that an educated native speaker's words range between 17,000 and 20,000 word families. Similarly, Goulden et al. (1990) speaking about English native speakers contend that "well-educated adult native speakers of English have a vocabulary of around 17,000 base words" (p.341). Regarding children, Nation and Waring (1997, p7) indicate that native speakers five years-old children start school with an amount of 4,000-5,000 words and increase this amount by 1000 words a year and graduate from university with about 20,000 word families. Regarding L2 learner amount of words, Francis and Kucera (1982) refer that

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L2 needs 2,000 word families to produce and understand L2. Laufer (1992) and Nation (2001) estimate the amount to 3,000 word families. In an aspect Sánchez (2009). assumed that "the most frequent 800-1,000 words were to be learnt by elementary level students, while intermediate and advanced students would be presented the next 800-1,000 or 2,000 words in the frequency list"(p.865). Laufer (1998) contends that knowing less than 3000 word families results in weak reading ability.

Several studies were done regarding vocabulary analysis in terms of frequencies and repetition. Davis and Face (2006) who studied the words frequency in Spanish textbooks in relation to the most frequent 1000 words. They found that only 10-50% of the words in textbooks are among the most frequent 2000 lemma in the language. Jimenez and Macebo (2008) studied the EFL textbooks words for secondary and elementary schools in relation to the most frequent fifty words. Ito and Bauman (1995) studied the rate of words learned by learners in Japan. They found that learners learn only one word per hour. Another similar study is by Waring and Takaki (2003) who found that students learn the average of 3.6 words per class hour in a three-month period.

Data analysis and discussion

In what follows are the analysis and discussion of the results found in the corpus understudy. The following tables show the results of the analysis and a discussion of the results will be given below the table.

Table No.3: Course Book No.4			
Freq. level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)
K-1 Word	685 (51.39)	1196 (54.17)	9332(81.63)
K-2 Words	291 (21.83)	387 (17.53)	802(7.02)
K-3 Words	129 (9.68)	155 (7.02)	303(2.65)
K-4-K-20	228 (17.25)	255 (11.36)	464 (3.88)

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Off-List:	??	215 (9.74)	531 (4.64)
Total	1333+?	2208 (100)	11432 (100)

Table No.4: Course Book No.5			
Freq. level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)
K-1 Words:	737 (53.10)	1292 (57.76)	11763(84.66)
K-2 Words:	294 (21.18)	397 (17.75)	901(6.48)
K-3 Words:	130 (9.37)	149 (6.66)	264(1.90)
K-4-K-20	591 (10.36)	255 (11.84)	535 (3.85)
Off-List:	??	134 (5.99)	432 (3.11)
Total	1388+?	2237 (100)	13895 (100)

Table No.5: Course Book No.6			
Freq. level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)
K-1 Words:	742 (51.17)	1315 (55.86)	11979(83.63)
K-2 Words:	342 (23.59)	467 (19.84)	1033(7.21)
K-3 Words:	148 (10.21)	183 (7.77)	352(2.46)
K-4-K-20	218 (15.3)	262 (11.13)	662 (3.9)
Off-List:	??	127 (5.40)	298 (2.08)
Total	1450+?	2354 (100)	14324 (100)

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Table No.6: Course Books No.4,5 and 6			
Freq. level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)
K-1 Words:	882 (38.99)	1908 (45.50)	33074 (83.41)
K-2 Words:	545 (24.9)	817 (20.20)	2736 (6.90)
K-3 Words:	290 (12.82)	375 (8.94)	919 (2.32)
K-4-K-20	545 (23.29)	1063 (25.36)	2921 (7.37)
Off-List:	??	413 (9.85)	1260 (3.18)
Total	2262+?	4193 (100)	39650 (100)

Table No.7: Frequency distribution						
Course book	1 Timers %	2 timers %	3 Timers %	4 timers %	5 timers %	6 and more Timers %
Book 4	47.34	17.56	10.02	6.29	3.85	14.4
Book 5	46.21	16.26	9.15	5.92	3.88	18.48
Book 6	47.92	16.96	9.14	5.87	3.37	16.74
Books 4,5,6	41.5	16.61	8.28	6.47	4.57	22.57

The results shown in the tables above, show in column one the frequency level (K-1, K-2, K-3 and K-4-K20) meaning the first most frequent 1000 words, the second most frequent 1000 words, the third most frequent 1000 words, the fourth–twentieth most frequent 1000

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words in the BNC. Column two shows the word family percentage in the course book in relation to the BNC. Column two shows the word family percentage. Word family is the word and its inflected and derived forms. Column three shows the percentage of types. Type is a word that is counted only once even if repeated many times in the corpus. The forth column shows the percentage of tokens. Token is the word that is counted every time it appears in the corpus. *It means what it means but I mean my meaning.* This sentence has one-word family which is *mean* and seven-word type (it, mean, what, but, I, my, meaning) and ten tokens (all words).

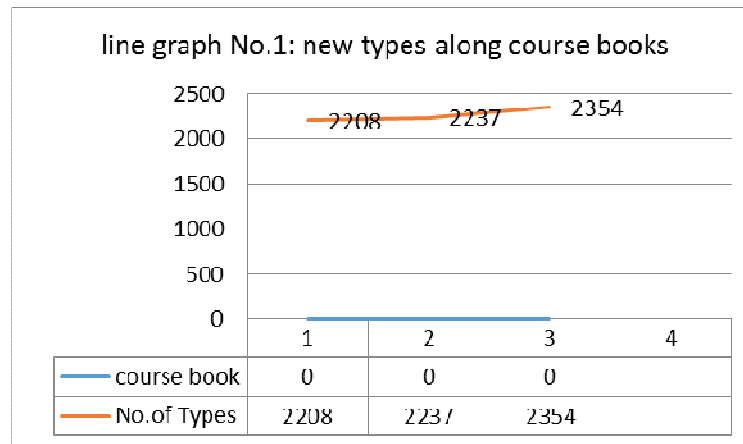
Regarding the frequency in comparison to the BNC, the analysis of the course books shows that almost half of the word family is only appeared among the most frequent 1000 words in the BNC. This is counted as 51.39%, 53.10% and 51.17% in the course books 4, 5 and 6 respectively. The percentage decreased gradually regarding the second 1000 and on. The percentage of the types of the course books corpus does not exceed 60% of the most frequent 1000 words in the BNC. This result is surprising because it is likely to be insufficient for reading improvement and proficiency. The first most frequent 1000 words is very essential for reading comprehension and conversation as well. Studies such as Schonell et al. (1956) found that the most frequent 1,000 words in spoken English provide coverage of 94% of the running words in informal conversation. Other studies such as Carroll et al. (1971) and (Nation, 2001) and (Balota & Chumbly, 1984; Forster & Chambers, 1973) have similar results. This leads that students will not be able to pass the “all-or-nothing” threshold (80% of known words in a certain text) suggested by Nation (2001) while reading or speaking. Hiebert (2005) refers that the 100 most frequent words account for about 50% of the words in a typical text; the 1,000 most frequent words for about 70%; and the 5,000 most frequent words for about 80%. This clarifies that the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) does not fully equip students with familiar words needed for daily life usage.

In respect of frequency distribution shown in table No.7, one timer frequent words is the highest. It is counted as 47.34%, 46.21% and 47.92 % in the three course books respectively. It also shows that 41.5% is the percentage of one timers frequent words in the three course books together. The percentage decreased gradually in two timers, three timers and on. The

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proportion of the six timers and more is only 14.4 %, 18.48% and 16.74% respectively. And only 22.57% of the six timers and more in the three course books together. This is another surprising results. This shows that the course books lack high frequent words. This indicates that the frequency of exposure is too low to be learned easily and not sufficient for quick and smooth learning. Humans learn through exposure to input (Krashen Input Theory) and frequency is an important element of exposure in foreign language learning. Low frequent words cause reading difficulty, reading comprehension and inadequate learning because of lack of commonness and familiarity. A word is learned faster and effortlessly if it is repeated many times in the course books. Studies found that high- frequency words are learned more rapidly than low-frequency ones. A word should appear at least 7-8 times (extreme opinions require 5-16 occurrences) for students to remember them, (Oxford and Scarcella 1994.). Barry and Seymour, (1988) found that high frequency words are spelled more accurately. Similarly, Luce (1986) and Savin, (1963) found that high frequency words are better for auditory word recognition. Also, Kirsner (1994) has shown that there are strong effects of word frequency on the speed and accuracy of lexical recognition processes (speech perception, reading, object naming, and sign perception) and lexical production processes (speaking, typing, writing, and signing), in children and adults as well as in L1 and L2. Nakata (2006) acknowledged that vocabulary acquisition requires continual repetition in order for effective vocabulary learning (p. 19). Also Freebody and Anderson (1983) in an experiment found that low frequency produces negative effect on comprehension. Research in second language learning shows the value of high frequency words. Lotto and DeGroot's (1998) study manifested that high-frequency words are easier to learn and retrieve than low-frequency words.

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The line graph above, clearly shows a very slight increase of new types or words from course book 4 to course book 5 and to course book 6. Only 29 new types were added to course book 5 which is considered very low. In turn, 146 new types were the difference between course book 5 and 6. This is considered a reasonable increase of new types. A total of 175 new types is the difference among the three course books which represent a very low amount regarding three years of study difference. This indicates an unbalance of word increase among the three course books which negatively affects the size of words needed for communicative potential of learned words. Students finishing course books 6 should go to university level which requires a larger stock of vocabulary. Studies show that 3000-word family is necessary for starting academic study in the university level. Laufer (1998) contends that knowing less than 3000 word families results in weak reading ability. Some other studies talk about a bigger number of 3000-word family that is needed for graduate study. The three course books all together don't reach the 3000-word family. The analysis clearly shows that course book No.4 contains 1333 word families in a 2208-word type, course book No.5 contains 1388 word families in a 2237-word type course book No.6 contains 1450 word families in a 2354-word type and regarding all course books together, the analysis clearly shows that course books No.4, 5 and 6 contains 2262 word families in a 4193-word type. This word size in the three course books seems not enough to prepare students for university study.

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Lexical variation or lexical density is the ratio between the number of types and the number of tokens in a corpus. Considering the lexical variation of the course books, the following formula is used:

$$LV = \frac{\text{total number of types} \times 100}{\text{total number of tokens}}$$

Applying the formula to course book No.4: $LV = \frac{2208 \times 100}{11432} = 19.31\%$. Book No.5:

$LV = \frac{2237 \times 100}{13895} = 16.09\%$. book No.6: $LV = \frac{2354 \times 100}{14324} = 16.43\%$. And considering all course

books (4,5 & 6) together as one corpus: $LV = \frac{4193 \times 100}{39650} = 10.57\%$. This indicates that the type

–token ratio is ranges between 16% to 19.31% in the three course books separately and the proportion decreases to 10.57% in the three course books together. Which is not a higher one. This shows a high repetition because the number of word families and types is low in relation to three course books for three years of study. Further, the repetition is found high in function words rather than content words. Another reason for this is the analysis processed the course books as whole book not as a text. This leads that students will not be able to pass the “all-or-nothing” threshold (80% of known words in a certain text) suggested by Nation (2001).

Conclusions and recommendations

To conclude in respect to the research objectives, the analysis has shown that the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) (books 4,5 & 6) used in Yemeni secondary schools provides inadequate frequent words since only almost half of the word family is only appeared among the most frequent 1000 words in the BNC. The proportion is counted as 51.39%, 53.10% and 51.17% in the course books 4,5 and 6 respectively. The percentage decreased gradually regarding the second 1000 and on. The percentage of the types of the course books corpus does not exceed 60% of the most frequent 1000 words in the BNC. The proportion of the types in the (CECY) does not exceed 60% of the most frequent types in the

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BNC. This result represents a defect of the (CECY) because it fails to provide the most frequent words used by native speakers.

With respect to frequency distribution in the course books, the analysis has shown that one timers frequent words is the highest and the proportion decreased gradually in tow timers and on reaching only less than 20% in the six timers frequent words. This is another defect of the (CECY) because it demonstrates little repetition or recycling of the words in the course books.

Considering the number of words added from one level to another, the analysis also has shown that is not high resulting in a small vocabulary size. It showed that the vocabulary size is only 4193 which is not enough to prepare students to undergraduate studies.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded to the authorities in charge of teaching English in Yemeni secondary schools in particular the ministry of education.

- ✓ Updating or substituting the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) with another course that presents the most frequent words in English that help in improving Yemeni secondary schools students' proficiency of English.
- ✓ Including corpus linguistics specialists in committees responsible of selecting English course books.
- ✓ Doing more research on the Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY).
- ✓ Holding an evaluation workshop on The Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) including different relevant specialists.
- ✓ Teaching English should start from an earlier stage in order to increase the number of words of Yemeni secondary school student that might help and prepare them for undergraduate studies.

Implications for further studies

Corpus based studies open up many future research. The corpus analyzed in this study should be focused upon in a more quantitative or qualitative fashion. A study might be

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undertaken to know the most frequent collocations, grammatical structures. Subsequent research could analyze the course books with their supplementary sections and work books. A comparison and contrast of the corpus under study with other course books in any other country. In terms of course book evaluation, many other aspects can be undertaken such as design and layout and language type.

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Investigating Gender Bias in Crescent English Course for Yemen- Pupil's Book 2

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Abstract

Many researchers emphasized that textbooks are the stronger tool to transmit and transform values and beliefs of society to the learner. This research is a critical study which aims at investigating gender bias in Crescent English Course for Yemen-Pupil's Book 2 to determine how gender is represented, there are four different categories:1) occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts, 2) leisure time activities and family activities and responsibilities, 3) occupations 4) analysis of a text. The selected textbook is Pupil's Book 2 that is designed to pupils in adolescence period. The simple frequency count method was used for analyzing the data. The findings of the study have revealed that:1) there is gender bias in the occurrence of female and male characters in illustrations(pictures) and texts. 2)there is gender bias in not only in the active roles of males but also their dominance over females in leisure time activities, family activities and responsibilities, occupations and analysis of a text.

Key words

Gender bias, gender roles, gender representations and gender stereotypes.

Introduction

Stereotypes of a society play an important role in perception of the social gender roles of both males and females. Accordingly, a gender stereotype can be considered as the possible explanation of " the society constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.". (Craeynest, 2015, p. 9). However, both developed countries and developing countries may suffer from gender inequality where masculinity keeps the dominance over the femininity. Educationally, textbooks play a significant role in a society "by directly or indirectly transmitting models of social behavior, norms and values."(Craeynest, 2015, p.7). Consequently, the gender bias in textbooks may

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refer to the gender inequality in the society. This study attempts to investigate gender bias in Crescent English Course for Yemen- pupil's Book 2. It tries to see into the gender representation in: 1) occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts, 2) leisure time activities and family activities and responsibilities, 3) occupations and analysis of a text.

Statement of the Problem

Yemeni government as well as Yemeni Ministry of Education emphasize the equal opportunities of both male and female in not only learning but also in the different fields of our real life like the opportunity of getting jobs that the males get. As a female teacher of English language as well as a user of *Crescent English course for Yemen*, gender issue encouraged the researcher to think seriously and pose two main questions for further investigation.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate gender bias in Crescent English Course for Yemen-Pupil's Book 2. It investigates the extent to which the selected textbook has gender bias in the illustrations and texts as well as reflection of gender stereotypes in the different activities and responsibilities (gender roles), occupations and analysis of a text. There is unequal treatment of individuals (i.e. men and women) that comes from the differences in constructed gender roles socially and culturally. *Gender equality in Yemen* from www.wikipedia.com (2013) states that the gender inequality index score is 0.769 placing the country (Yemen at 146 out of 146 countries with data). Yemen is ranked in the 135th (last) place in the 2011 global gender gap index with a score of 0.4873.

Apparently, inequality is a result of the dominance of the males in the society. So, it is hypothesized that since there is a clear dominance of the males as social and cultural aspect of Yemeni society, gender bias is represented on the occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts in the textbooks being used (i.e. Pupil's Book2). Also, gender bias is represented in the leisure time activities and family activities and responsibilities, occupations and analysis of a text in the used textbook (Pupil's Book2).

Research Questions

1. To what extent the occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts reveal gender bias in Pupil's Book 2?
2. To what extent leisure time activities, family activities and responsibilities, occupations and analysis of a text reveal gender bias in Pupil's Book 2?

Importance of the Study

The value of this study can be embraced through two dimensions. First, the study would draw attention to presentations of gender in teaching materials being used and the negative influence on pupil's minds that could easily be shaped by what they see in the illustrations used in textbooks as well as by what they learn in the selected activities and texts. Second, writers, illustrators (i.e. artists) and publishers can benefit from this study in that they can place more attention to ensure that illustrations in the textbooks they produce are gender balanced not bias.

Literature Review

Gender issues one of the argumentative topics that have been discussed not only by Yemeni researchers but also by other researchers from other societies. That is, there are many studies that argued this issue from educational perspective. Oyebola (no date), argued that all selected textbooks contain illustrations that were not gender balanced. Also, Diktas (2011) argued the presence of gender bias in illustrations, amount of talk, domestic roles and household responsibilities, family roles and activities, occupations and content analysis of pictures. Diktas's study (2011) confirmed, "while the national curriculum stresses the importance of providing equal learning opportunities for both boys and girls, research shows that this is not always the case in the classroom or in the teaching materials being used in the classroom".

Before proceeding any further, the two terms '*gender*' and '*sex*' are needed to be defined. For Ellece (2011, p.50), there is a difference between the two terms. *Gender* means "the differences that are used to denote male and female behavior in particular societies". "Whereas *sex* refers to the biological distinction between males and females". UNESCO (1998) cited in Oyebola (n.d.) defined gender as "socially determined characteristics of men and women". As understood from the above-mentioned definitions, *gender* concerns the

social and cultural differences between males and males. While *sex* concerns genetic and biological differences between women and men.

Textbooks are not only the tool by which language knowledge is presented but also it is a tool by which values and beliefs of society can be transmitted. Mirza (2006, p.26) described the cultural information that textbooks transmit as a hidden curriculum. That is to say, values and beliefs of the society cannot be explicitly seen but it can be understood implicitly. He (2006, p.26) pointed out that textbooks have a profound impact on children's images of female and male that is portrayed in textbooks and reflect the concept of gender unconsciously when children enter school environment. Similarly, Craeynest (2015, p.7) asserted that a textbook is the means by which models of social norms and values are transmitted directly or indirectly. Accordingly, language learners' attitudes and orientation can be influenced by what is presented in textbooks (Craeynest 2015, p.7). While Jabeen et.al. (2014, p. 57) stated, " the textbooks authors construct a new world for students based on the social experiences which greatly affects students' self-images". The above-mentioned words of Jabeen et.al., reflect not only the significant role of textbooks on transfer the values of a society but also the great influence of textbooks on students' images.

In addition, Jabeen et.al. (2014, p. 57) and Peksen (n.d.) argued that gender role can be acquired from the society where children live. Accordingly, "children learn gender stereotypes from adults. Socializing agents pass on gender stereotypes from one generation to the next through these adults." (Jabeen et.al. 2014, p. 57). Consequently, one could say that textbooks as well as classrooms are one of the most significant tools that build stereotypical thinking of learners towards others in the society.

Moreover, Peksen (n.d, p.152) emphasized the acquisition of gender roles identities from external sources such as parents, textbooks, friends and media. These external stimuli help children or learners by a way or another to construct gender stereotypes and behave in a way appropriate to their gender. Textbook is one of the external source of gender identity. Consequently, what learners see or read reflect learners' images negatively or positively.

From the angle of gender roles representation in textbooks, there is a clear dominance of males over females. Otłowski (2003, p. 4) asserted that some textbooks depicted the stereotypical roles of women as a mother and homemaker. Similarly, Ansary and Badii (2003) cited in Otłowski (2003, p. 4) confirmed that women are more visible in indoor

passive activities. All in all, a textbook is the principal element in the educational process that not only presents knowledge but also cultural and social values of society where gender issue is the focal concept of it.

Research Methodology

Pupil's Book 2 is designed by the Yemeni Ministry of Education and taught in the 8th class. So, the pupils are in adolescence period. According to American Academy of Pediatrics (2017) the early adolescence ranges from 11 to 14 years. This stage can be considered a critical period for the pupils of 8th class because they develop from children into adolescents. Consequently, what is presented in the textbooks may have negative or positive effect on children's images. The previous studies that have been mentioned earlier in the scope of gender issues helped the researcher to determine the four categories of the study. Singh (1989, p.19) suggested that there is gender bias in the representations of characters in ELT course books as they appear in illustrations, texts and activities. Diktas (2011) conducted category of occupations. Analysis of a text is determined by the researcher. So, the categories that used in this study are derived from: Singh (1989), Diktas (2011) and the research of this study as follows:

1. Occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts.
2. Activities that are divided into:
 - leisure time activities
 - family activities and responsibilities
3. Occupations
4. Analysis of text

The above-mentioned fourth categories have been used for counting the frequencies and the percentages (i.e. the simple frequency count method). Quantitative data analysis has been applied to the findings and the frequencies are analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussions

Occurrence of Female and Male Characters in Pictures and Texts

Occurrence of Female and Male in Pictures

<i>Table (1): Frequency of Gender Occurrence in Pictures</i>						
<i>Females</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Females& Males</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Total</i>
60	2.5%	190	71%	16	6%	266

The figures in Table (1) above reveal that masculinity keeps the dominance over the femininity in Pupil's Book 2. Females characters have appeared 60 times (22.5%). While male's characters have appeared 190 times (71%). As it is obvious from the table, males hold dominance in the visuals. Finding like this may encourage not only the researcher but also writers, publishers and artists to think seriously about the negative effects of gender bias in the textbook. Singh (1989, p.2) referred to this. He pointed out that lack of girls' characters in textbooks may limit the opportunity for them to identify their gender and validate their place in society.

Occurrence of Females and Males in Texts

<i>Table (2): Frequency of Gender Occurrence in Texts</i>						
<i>Females</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Females Males</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Total</i>
36	26%	98	71%	4	2.8%	138

Table (2), above, shows that males (98times 71%) hold dominance over females (36 times 26%). In other words, there is gender bias in Pupil's Book2 in the occurrence of females and males in texts. This finding reveals the passive role of females and promotes the active role of males.

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Leisure Time Activities, Family Activities and Responsibilities

Leisure Time Activities

<i>Table (3): Frequency of Gender in Leisure Time Activities</i>		
<i>Leisure Time Activities</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
Driving a car	.....	9
swimming	.....	4
Playing football	.....	3
Watching T. V	.....	2
<i>Leisure Time Activities</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
Listening to cassettes	1	2
Flying a kite	.....	4
walking	.....	1
fishing	1	4
cooking	2	1
camping	.....	2
climbing	.....	1
Riding horse	.....	1
reading	1	1
Painting a picture	2	.....
Feeding animals	1	2
Total (45)	8(22%)	37(82%)

As noticed, the times of activities carried out by males (37 82%) more than the

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activities carried out by females (8 22%). Moreover, kinds of activities that carried out by males different from the activities that carried out by females. Driving a car, swimming, playing football, watching T.V, camping, climbing, flying a kite are leisure time activities that are carried out only by males. That is to say, there seems to be masculine activities that only depict males as active and strong beings while females appear to be passive and weak beings. To put it another way, males look to be more actively involved while females look to be excluded from the above-mentioned activities. However, activities like cooking and painting a picture are carried only by females. Other activities like listening cassettes, fishing, reading and feeding animals are carried out by both females and males. Numbers of times of carrying out activities by males more than that are carried out by females. All in all, males hold dominance in leisure time activities. Pupil's Book 2 may need to reflect equal opportunities for doing leisure time activities for both females and males.

Family Activities and Responsibilities

<i>Table (4): Frequency of Gender in Family Activities and Responsibilities</i>			
<i>Family Activities and Responsibilities</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
shopping	5	3	8
cooking	6	1	7
Taking care of children	1	.....	1
Cleaning the house	.....	2	2
Total	12(66%)	6(33%)	18

The results shown in Table (4) above demonstrate that out of 18 activities related to house, female's characters are responsible for 12, which constitute the 66% of the total. Whereas males look to be less involved in house works 33%. As the table shows, the main family responsibilities such as shopping, cooking and taking care of children are assigned to females. While cleaning the house activity is carried out by males two times. One time is to clean the shop and the other is to help an elder woman. This finding supports the concept of gender roles in which there are some family activities and responsibilities that can be carried

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out by females and some others that can be carried out by males as a part of their roles in the society. These social roles of females and males seem to be ingrained in the society where they live (gender schema).

In addition, one could say that gender roles develop during childhood from birth. Parents interact with their children depending on their sex. For example, a careful look at the kinds of toys that parents give to their children, it can be seen that feminine toys such as dolls may reinforce interaction and nurturing while masculine toys such as cars or guns may reinforce competitiveness and aggression. Parents as well as society may help in way or another in the formation of gender stereotypes where there are fixed roles females and males have towards family and society.

Besides, children in their first stage of their life try to imitate their parents. For learning social behaviors, girls try to imitate their mothers while boys try to imitate their fathers. Bandura's social learning theory (1977) cited in Sammons (2008) pointed out that parent's behavior can be models for their children when they try to imitate them. Consequently, girls learn to behave as girls from imitating their mothers (feminine behavior) whereas boys learn to behave as boys from imitating their fathers (masculine behavior). This might explain why some activities are carried out by females while other activities are carried out by males.

Occupations

<i>Table (5): Gender's Frequency in Occupations</i>	
<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Teacher (1)	Taxi-driver (1)
House wife (2)	Sports teacher (3)
Secretary (1)	Farmer (1)
Dressmaker (1)	Policeman (1)
Doctor (1)	Zookeeper (1)
Nurse (2)	Builder (1)

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Air hostess (1)	Painter (1)
	Shop keeper (5)
	Potter (1)
	Baker (1)
	Dentist (1)
	Pilot (1)
	Fisher man (1)
	Bus-driver (1)
	Carpenter (1)
	Engineer (1)
Total: 9 (29%)	Total: 22 (70.9%) 31

A careful look at Table (5), one could say that since males' stereotypes portray them as strong and active characters, most of the jobs, above, concern males rather than females. A total of 31 occupations have been identified. Males appeared as involved in occupations with the percentages of 70.9% while females with the percentage 29%. As the table shows that jobs like teacher, secretary, doctor and nurse concern females. The same results Stanley (2001) confirmed, "a check of occupations showed that when females were mentioned, they were usually put into a very small set of occupations like teacher, nurse and secretary.". This finding may reveal the stereotypes of occupations for females and males in not only Yemen society but also in other societies.

Moreover, housewife is the job that concerns females as a part of social stereotype of Yemeni gender roles. On the other hand, most of the above-mentioned jobs concern males. This, perhaps, because of gender stereotypes that portray males as strong and active beings in the society. Although the world has changes around us, Yemeni society is still believing in

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traditional jobs where females can be involved as teachers and nurses. All in all, “it is also important to keep in mind that rethinking gender roles cannot be achieved in a day but is an ongoing process.” (Singh 1989, p.5).

Analysis of a Text

3.14 Read and write. WB Page 43

What did they do last Tuesday?

Read Khalid's diary.

Tuesday

I phoned Taha in the morning and we went fishing in his father's boat. We fished all day. We didn't catch anything in the morning. In the afternoon we caught one small fish when we came back in the evening, we were very tired and very hungry. We bought some fish in the market and had them for dinner.

Read Amal's diary

Tuesday

Today I visited Nadia on her father's farm. We helped her mother in the kitchen. Then we went for a walk. We saw a big black snake next to the wall. I was very hot in the afternoon, so we went back to the farm. We made some cakes and had them for lunch.

The page above is extracted from Pupil's Book2. The title of the lesson *what did they do last Tuesday*. Two characters Khalid and Amal write their diaries. From a text, above, it can be said that this text reveals gender stereotypes in that males go out home for doing daily activities. In the text, fishing is outside an activity that is carried out by Khalid who goes out home in the morning till evening. While Amal (female) carries out inside activity like cooking that is considered as females' gender roles. In addition, as noticed, from the text above the

word (frightened). This word reveals gender stereotypes in that men rarely described emotions like fear. This may not only limit their freedom to express themselves (i.e. males) but also pressure them to behave in the ways that are appropriate to their gender (i.e. Yemeni gender schema, a male should be strong and brave).

Findings and Recommendations

This section intends to discuss the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and hypotheses. One of the findings of the study will be discussed in relation to one of the research questions as follows:

1. The first question of the research was that:

To what extent the occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts reveal gender bias in Pupil's Book2?

So it is that gender bias is represented in the occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts in Pupil's Book 2.

The data confirmed that there is a clear gender bias in the occurrence of female and male characters in pictures and texts. The statistics reveal that masculinity keeps the dominance over the feminine in Pupil's Book2. Male characters have appeared more times than female characters in pictures and texts.

The second question of the research was that:

To what extent leisure time activities, family activities and responsibilities, occupations and analysis of a text reveal gender bias in Pupil's Book 2?

So, it is that gender bias is represented in leisure time activities, family activities and responsibilities, occupations and analysis of a text in Pupil's Book2. The results of the analysis of the data by using simple frequency count method confirmed the presence of gender bias that reveals not only the active role of males but also their dominance over females in leisure time activities, family activities and responsibilities, occupations and analysis of a text.

Recommendations

- 1) Designers of English language teaching materials are called to draw their attention to the selected activities and texts from gender perspective. The target learners are in a critical period where they develop from children into adolescents (i.e. their ages 12-14). So, gender bias may lead to negative effects on their thinking towards gender.
- 2) Illustrators (i.e. artists) and publishers are called to place more attention to the illustrations (pictures) in the textbooks they produce (gender balanced)

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Suggestions for Further Studies

1. A study is needed to investigate the gender bias in Pupil's Books 3,4,5 and 6.
2. It would be useful if the study further investigated taking turns in conversations.

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