

# Androcentrism in Arabic Educational Materials: A Linguistic Analysis of GCC Countries' Selected School Textbooks

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**Abstract**—This study seeks to investigate the existence of androcentrism in school textbooks used in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It attempts to unveil potential implicit biases ingrained in the language of these textbooks. The data for this study is derived from a corpus comprising six textbooks, encompassing a variety of courses representing the GCC secondary level education systems. The employed methodological approach entailed content analysis, wherein categories were discerned directly from the textual data during a comprehensive examination of the textbooks. The established framework facilitated the classification of gendered linguistic references into three distinct categories: nouns, verbs, and pronouns. The principal findings highlight preferential representation of male students and, consequently, underrepresentation of female students, permeating almost the entire research corpus. Contrary to assumptions suggesting an intrinsic gender bias within the Arabic language, this investigation argues that the locus of androcentrism seems to be rooted in the authors of the scrutinized textbooks. This discernment contributes valuable insights challenging prevailing notions and accentuates the role of textbook authors in shaping linguistic biases.

**Index Terms**—androcentrism, gender representation, Arabic school textbooks, GCC countries

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language, functioning as a channel for the transmission of cultural and intellectual content, assumes a pivotal role in shaping the cognitive frameworks and attitudes of individuals. Within the specific context of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (henceforth GCC) countries – (alphabetically arranged as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) – instructional materials, particularly school textbooks, emerge as fundamental tools for the diffusion of knowledge and the cultivation of future generations' intellectual perspectives. Nevertheless, potential sexist language in school textbooks, characterized by the preferential representation of male students and, consequently, the underrepresentation of female students, can have serious consequences. It has given rise to apprehensions regarding the balanced representation of both genders in educational discourse.

The present study attempts to examine the presence of androcentrism within Arab GCC educational materials, employing a meticulous linguistic analysis to uncover potential implicit biases embedded in the language. Arabic is the official language of the GCC countries and the medium of instruction and educational communication; therefore, understanding its nuances is crucial for unearthing possible imbalances in the representation of gender roles in school textbooks. The term 'androcentrism' refers to the tendency to foreground male involvement, experiences, perspectives, and contributions, often at the expense of female voices, thereby perpetuating gender inequalities. According to Bailey et al. (2019, p. 308), “Androcentrism refers to a social system organized around men and evident in both individual biases and institutional policies”.

This study argues that female students are not adequately represented in the Arab GCC secondary school textbooks. By investigating this assumption, the study aspires to contribute to a broader conversation on gender inclusivity within educational frameworks in the Arabic context, advocating for linguistic practices that foster a more balanced representation of male and female audiences. The findings of this research may have implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers striving to create an educational environment that consolidates equality, challenges stereotypes, and nurtures a generation capable of tackling gender-based biases. As the present study engages in the linguistic analysis, the ultimate goal is to foster awareness and inspire positive changes in the construction of educational narratives within the Arab GCC region.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social movements during the 1960s and 1970s sparked widespread initiatives across the globe to resist racism and sexism in educational textbooks. Consequently, there has been a growing focus in textbook research on examining how race, class, and gender are represented in these materials (Chisholm, 2018).

School textbooks are not only sources of information related to different disciplines and fields of knowledge. They are also sources of ideas about social realities and agents of change (Torres & Hutchinson, 1994; Vu & Pham, 2023). They contribute to the development of students' attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about their identities, social roles, and social involvements. This function of school textbooks is enacted through different types of representations including gender representation techniques. Several studies in the Arab context have examined how gender is represented in different contexts including the situation in the Arab world education. The findings of such research have highlighted the imbalances in the representation of both male and female students in terms of illustrations, roles, and themes. However, no study has thoroughly examined how both male and female students, who are the primary target and readers of Arabic school textbooks, are linguistically addressed and referenced by book writers given the fact that Arabic language has a rich grammatical gender system (Aljadani, 2019), i.e., Arabic is heavily gendered and “differentiates between males and females in the noun, [pronoun], verb, and adjective forms of words” (Wafa, 2021, p. 382; Alkohlani, 2016, p. 19). This linguistic feature of Arabic can possibly contribute to the reinforcement of or challenge to traditional gender roles. According to the UNESCO guidelines, textbooks should possibly avoid gendered representations by using gender inclusive language in order to avoid the promotion of relevant stereotypes (Edres, 2022).

Wafa (2021) explores the “reinforced” stereotypical gender roles as represented in the Egyptian primary school textbooks. This observation underscores the need for a critical examination of educational materials to mitigate the perpetuation of such limiting stereotypes. A similar study conducted by Bataineh and Keyode (2018) found that first-grade school textbooks in Oman exhibit bias and imbalanced representation of gender. The study reached this conclusion after investigating gender illustrations, roles, and firstness in the Omani public schools' textbooks. In the same vein, Alkhadra et al. (2022) report sexist language and sexist content in Arabic Language and Social/Civic Education Jordanian textbooks. The findings illuminate a systematic portrayal of women as either absent, marginalized, or passive, relegating them to restricted societal roles. In stark contrast, men are consistently depicted as having complete ownership of resources and spaces. This critical analysis underscores the urgent need for a re-evaluation of educational materials to address and rectify the perpetuation of such biased representations. Aoumeur (2014) used the feminist critical discourse analysis framework to analyze male and female representations in three Algerian primary school textbooks. The results of this study suggest that gender roles reflect traditional, stereotypical, and binary male/female division. Moreover, the findings indicate that patriarchal assumptions about gender are still dominant in these textbooks. In the Jordanian context, Edres (2022) employed a qualitative methodology to analyze gender representation in three volumes of three mathematics textbooks. The findings demonstrate the “legitimatization of some unbalanced gendered representations” which are likely to affect female students' ability to project themselves into the labor market (Edres, 2022, p. 18). The situation in Indonesia where Arabic is taught as a foreign or a second language is not different. Kuraedah et al. (2023) examined gender representation in three Arabic textbooks by using thematic analysis methodology. The study found that gender representation in government-endorsed Arabic textbooks is verbally and visually dominated by men and conventionally stereotyped. Similarly, Muassomah et al. (2023) examined the representation of gender in *Al-'Arabiyyatu baina Yadaika* (ABY) Arabic language textbook tailored for non-native Arabic speakers and revealed significant imbalance in the representation of male and female textually and visually. The research contends that this series wields considerable influence in shaping students' views, beliefs, and cultural ideologies. The study by Izzuddin et al. (2021) reported similar findings after investigating gender representation in *Al-'Arabiyyah li al-Jamī* series in Indonesia. The findings claim a high degree of bias in women portrayal, order of mention, and male-to-female ratios.

While numerous inquiries have scrutinized the portrayal of gender and associated biases within Arabic school textbooks across diverse contexts, a discernible gap exists in the exploration of the linguistic methodologies employed by textbook authors to communicate with their primary audience—male and female students. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the linguistic strategies deployed by authors of Arabic school textbooks with the specific aim of promoting gender equality within educational materials. Central to the inquiry are the following research questions:

- 1) How do the authors of Arabic school textbooks address male and female students given the fact that Arabic verbs, nouns, and pronouns are inherently gendered?
- 2) Do the linguistic strategies employed in the school textbooks promote gender equality among the target students?
- 3) Do different Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Arab contexts exhibit variation in the use of gendered terms in school educational materials?

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To answer the present research questions, this study utilizes qualitative content analysis research method which “uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text” (Krippendorff & Weber, 1987, p. 9). The inferences provide valuable insights about the reality of gender discourse in Arabic school textbooks and can be used to identify patterns, trends, and possible disparities. The content analysis methodology is informed by feminist stylistics (Mills, 1995) which “aims to account for the way in which gender concerns are linguistically encoded in texts” (Montoro, 2014, p. 346). Feminist stylistics has explored the grammatical and lexical elements of both literary and non-literary texts, as well as supra-sentential and discursal devices. The present study utilizes the investigation of lexical elements and how they contribute to gender representation.

#### A. Materials

The data for this study originates from a selection of secondary school textbooks employed in public schools across various subjects within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This educational stage was targeted in this research because it is crucial in shaping students' characters and their future social and professional roles. The Bahraini context is represented by the textbook "Education for Citizenship and Human Rights (301)", published in 2021 and was designed for secondary school students. In Kuwait, the chosen textbook is "Dealing with Institutions", an elective course that was published in 2021 and intended for secondary school students. The Omani context is reflected in the textbook "Your Career Path", instructed to Grade eleven students and was published in 2020. In the Qatari educational setting, the selected book is the "Arabic Language Course", taught to tenth-grade students and published in 2022. The Saudi material involves the textbook "Decision-making in Business 1-1", published in 2022 and utilized in the second grade of secondary school. The UAE is represented by the textbook "Social Studies and National Education", taught to tenth-grade students, and published in 2017. All the textbooks used in this research are published by the respective ministries of education in the GCC countries, and they are readily accessible online at no cost. It is noteworthy that the educational policies of GCC countries are harmonized through the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), an intergovernmental regional organization headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and can be accessed at this website (<https://www.abegs.org/home>).

### B. Data Collection

The data collection process involved an examination of the aforementioned textbooks, wherein distinct lexical choices employed by the textbook authors to reference or communicate with the target student audience were identified. The address forms utilized in each textbook were initially compiled individually, followed by a comparative analysis to discern variations across the different GCC countries.

### C. Sampling and Semantic Validity Checks

Sampling validity is integral to the methodological framework of this research, as it scrutinizes the extent to which the chosen sample accurately represents the broader population under investigation. The selection of textbooks in this study deliberately encompasses a diverse range of sources, each hailing from a distinct Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country and spanning various academic subjects.

Semantic validity, a crucial facet of this study's methodological approach, is employed to ascertain the coherence in meaning among diverse address forms used within the selected textbooks. This meticulous analysis serves the dual purpose of ensuring semantic consistency and categorically establishing that these forms pertain to the same conceptual domain. The corpus of this study, delineated by the assortment of textbooks, employs a spectrum of nouns to denote the recipients of educational material. These include terms such as *'aṭṭāleb*, *'almut'alleṃ*, *'aṭṭullāb*, *'aṭṭālibah*, *'aṭṭallibāt*, *zīl*, *'almut'allimīn*, *alqare'*, *'aṭṭalabah*, *'almut'allimūn*, and *'aṭṭalabah*. These nouns, in conjunction with their associated verbs and pronouns, collectively designate the students, who constitute the primary beneficiaries of the educational content encapsulated within school textbooks.

### D. Data Analysis

To ascertain the potential existence or lack of gender bias or asymmetry in the address forms directed towards the readers i.e., the targeted students within the designated collection of school textbooks, a methodological approach employing content analysis was adopted. The examination of qualitative data derived from the textual content necessitated the formulation of the coding frame, designed to concentrate on elements directly pertinent to the research questions (Schreier, 2012). Inductive categorizing was used, i.e., the categories were derived directly from the data upon reading the textbooks. The framework divided the gendered linguistic references into three categories, namely nouns, verbs and pronouns. The first category encompasses the various gendered nominal strategies used in the introductions of the textbooks that represent the corpus of this study. The nouns that refer to students comprise both singular and plural words. The verbal category classifies the occurrences into two types: gendered and gender inclusive verbs. The gendered pronouns are divided into second person and third person pronouns while the use of first-person pronouns in Arabic makes the verb gender inclusive.

## IV. RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study in relation to the research questions. The careful reading of the sample textbooks that represent the different GCC secondary education systems classified the gendered words into nouns, verbs, and pronouns. The primary scanning of the texts indicated that the gendered vocabulary noticeably occurs in the books' prefaces and the activities and exercises at the end of each lesson. Book prefaces usually introduce the goals, the book structure, and the target audience. The data relevant to the analysis is located in the texts that refer to or engage the book readers. The activities at the end of the lessons employ instructional verbs to directly ask the students to practice certain tasks and evaluate their learning. These verbs are usually gendered in Arabic grammar. The data is presented in the following sub-sections.

### A. Nouns

As Table 1 below shows, all nouns that refer to the Bahraini textbook readers are exclusively masculine. The most frequently used word is *'aṭṭāleb* (the student). The lexical item *'aṭṭullāb* (the students) occurred once. In two occurrences, the word *'almut'allem* (the learner) is used.

TABLE 1  
GENDERED NOUNS REFERRING TO STUDENTS IN THE BAHRAINI TEXTBOOK INTRODUCTION

English transliteration of the Arabic utterance	English Translation
iḥtiyāzāt 'aṭṭāleb (*sg-masc)	student's needs
alab'ād al sulūkiyyah liṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	student's behavioral dimensions
tamkīn 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	enabling the student
istaṭmaraha 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	invested by the student
yuhadded 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	the student decides
'adā' 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	student performance
yumakken 'almut'allem (sg-masc)	enables the learner
yu'alež 'almut'allem (sg-masc)	the student tackles ...
yatamakkan 'aṭṭullāb (*pl-masc)	the students are able

\*sg-masc stands for singular masculine and \*pl-masc stands for plural masculine

The introduction of the Kuwaiti textbook addresses mainly *'aṭṭāleb*, i.e., 'the male student' as demonstrated in Table 2 below. In nine out of ten occurrences, masculine nouns are used. The noun *'aṭṭāleb* (male student) and its derivatives appear six times; *'almut'allem* (male learner) appears three times, and the noun phrase *'abnā'ina wa banātina* (our sons and daughters) is used once. The last example contains the word *banātina* (our daughters) which is the only occurrence in the introduction to mention female students.

TABLE 2  
GENDERED NOUNS REFERRING TO STUDENTS IN THE KUWAITI TEXTBOOK INTRODUCTION

English transliteration of the Arabic utterance	English Translation
mawad tarbet 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	courses that connect the student
ta'wīd 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	getting the student used to
ṭāleb (sg-masc) al-marḥalah al-ṭhāniyyah	the secondary school student
ṭālebun (sg-masc) žād	a serious student
'azīzi 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	my dear student
'ism 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	student name
šaṣsiyyat 'almut'allem (sg-masc)	the learner character
'asasiyyah lilmut'allem (sg-masc)	essential for the learner
'ila almut'allem (sg-masc)	to the learner
ḥāḍa alkitāb 'allaḍi nuqaddimuhu li 'abnā'ina wa banātina (pl-masc& pl-fem)	this book that we introduce to our sons and daughters

As illustrated in Table 3 below, the Omani textbook introduction contains ten examples of gendered nouns that refer to the book audience, i.e., the students. Six of these nouns address male students (*'aṭṭāleb*); one example refers to female students (*'aṭṭālibah*), and one occurrence addresses both male and female students in the plural form (*'aṭṭullāb wa 'aṭṭallibāt*). Two nouns in the data represent neutral gender, namely *žil* which means 'generation' and *alfard* which means 'the individual'.

TABLE 3  
GENDERED NOUNS REFERRING TO STUDENTS IN THE OMANI TEXTBOOK INTRODUCTION

English transliteration of the Arabic utterance	English Translation
'anšīṭah tu'īn 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	activities that help the student
la ġina liṭṭālibi 'anha (sg-masc)	it is indispensable to the student
xairu mu'īn liṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	the best help for the student
'azīzi 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	dear student (male)
'azīzati 'aṭṭālibah (sg-fem)	dear student (female)
mutāh'amam 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc)	available to student
'alxiyarāt liṭṭālabah (pl-masc)	options for students
'ilaikum 'abnā'ī 'aṭṭullāb wa 'aṭṭallibāt ḥāḍa 'alkitāb (pl-masc&pl-fem)	this book is for you my sons and daughters: the students
'ižād žil wa'ī (sg-masc)	creating an informed generation
binā' aššaṣsiyyah almutakamilah lilfard (sg-masc)	developing a holistic character of individuals

Table 4 demonstrates that, in the introduction of the Qatari textbook, only three gendered nouns are found that refer to the book readers, the students, and all are masculine. These nouns are *'almut'allimīn*, *'almut'allem*, *'aṭṭāleb*. The last example occurs as the head of the noun phrase *'azīzi 'aṭṭāleb* (dear student) which appears once in the beginning of each unit throughout the book.

TABLE 4  
GENDERED NOUNS REFERRING TO STUDENTS IN THE QATARI TEXTBOOK INTRODUCTION

English transliteration of the Arabic utterance	English Translation
tuqaddem lil mut' allimīn (pl-masc)	to introduce to the learners
āfāq 'almut' allem (sg-masc)	learners' horizons
'azīzi 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc) (Once in the beginning of every unit).	Dear student

The introduction of the Saudi textbook uses a variety of words to refer to students: the audience of the book. The plural masculine noun *'aṭṭalabah* (the male students) occurs twenty-one times; another form of plural masculine nouns *'aṭṭullāb* (the male students) is used six times, and the singular masculine noun *'aṭṭāleb* (the male student) occurs eight times in the book introduction text. In addition to these three nouns that are derived from the same root *ṭalaba* (sought knowledge), two other nouns *'almut' allem* (the male learner) and *alqare'* (the male reader) are used once each as a reference to the book audience. It is obvious that no example of any reference to the feminine noun exists in the introduction part of the book.

TABLE 5  
GENDERED NOUNS REFERRING TO STUDENTS IN THE SAUDI TEXTBOOK INTRODUCTION

English transliteration of the Arabic utterance	English Translation
ta' hīl 'aṭṭalabah, tamkīn 'aṭṭalabah, damz 'aṭṭalabah, naql 'aṭṭalabah, tazweed aṭṭalabah, 'abna' ina wa banātina 'aṭṭalabah (21 occurrences) (pl-masc) except the last phrase where banātina is pl-fem)	Qualifying students, enabling students, integrating students, transferring students, providing students, our sons and daughters the students
'al' afḍal liṭṭullāb, muṣammam liṭṭullāb, tumnah liṭṭullāb (pl-masc) (6 occurrences)	The best for students, designed for students, granted to students
'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc) (8 occurrences)	the student
dōr 'almut' allem (sg-masc)	the role of the learner
jashul 'ala al qare' (sg-masc)	easy for the reader

Table 6 shows a variety of nouns that refer to student audience in the UAE textbook. All example nouns identified in the introduction part are masculine. Majority of them are derived from the root *ṭalaba* (sought knowledge), such as *tullāb* (pl-masc), *'aṭṭāleb* (sg-masc), *ṭullāban* (pl-masc), *'aṭṭullāb* (pl-masc), *'aṭṭalabah* (pl-masc). The other nouns found are *'almut' allem* (the male learner), *'almut' allimūn* (the male learners), and *'alqare'* (the male reader). The noun phrase *azzumalā' al' afādel* (Dear colleagues) is used once to address the teachers who are expected to teach the book. The phrase head and the adjective qualifying it are both masculine nouns.

TABLE 6  
GENDERED NOUNS REFERRING TO STUDENTS IN THE UAE TEXTBOOK INTRODUCTION

English transliteration of the Arabic utterance	English Translation
abnā' anā' 'ala' izzā' ṭullāb aṣṣaf al' āṣer (pl-masc), 'aṭṭāleb al' imarati (sg-masc), ṭullāban (pl-masc) ladaihim fahm, liṭṭāleb min xilāl (sg-masc), qudurāt 'aṭṭāleb (sg-masc), yuṣāẓẓe' 'aṭṭullāb (pl-masc), žil' žadīd min 'aṭṭalabah (pl-masc), 'aṭṭullāb (8 occurrences) (pl-masc)	dear sons: the students of the tenth grade, the Emirati student, students who have good understanding, to the student through, student's abilities, encourage the students, a new generation of students
almut' allem (6 occurrences), (sg-masc)	the learner
jaxtalifu almut' allimūn (pl-masc)	Learners are diversified.
lada alqare' (sg-masc)	for the reader
takūna mustami' an (sg-masc)	to be a listener
jakūna 'lqari' ū (sg-masc)	The reader should be
azzumalā' alafādel (pl-masc).	Dear colleagues

## B. Verbs

Arabic is a highly inflected language. The Arabic verb conjugates according to the gender of the utterance subject. In school textbooks, the authors are expected to address both audiences of male and female students, and this is performed by both gendered nouns and relevant verb conjugations. Careful analysis of the textbooks under study shows the following.

### (a). Bahraini Textbook

The book selected to analyze the Bahraini educational material demonstrates that all lessons' objectives commence with verbs that refer to a third person singular masculine. For example, *yata' rraf* 'He identifies', *judrek* 'He realizes', *juṭammen* 'He appreciates', *jumaiyyez* 'He differentiates', *jastakšef* 'He explores', etc. No reference to feminine audience exists in all lessons' statements throughout the book.

### (b). Kuwaiti Textbook

The selected book seems to follow the inductive approach to make the learning experience student-centered. To present the lesson and assess outcomes achievement, the book utilizes imperative verbs to involve students in various tasks and activities. In Arabic, the imperative verbs conjugate to express gender. However, all the examples found in the Kuwaiti textbook engaging activities use directives that exclusively address second person singular male students. For instance, *'uḥkur* 'mention', *'uktub* 'write', *'istakmel* 'complete', *t'allam* 'learn', *t'arraf* 'identify', *fakker* 'think' *naqeš* 'discuss', *hāwel* 'try'.

## (c). Omani Textbook

The Omani textbook verb usage resembles the Kuwaiti linguistic strategy, i.e., addressing generically second person singular male students. Directive verbs like *'iqra* 'read', *naqəš* 'discuss', *'ibhaθ* 'search', *'istantež* 'infer' etc. In addition to the use of directives, second person masculine verbs in the present simple tense are also frequent. Examples include clauses like *wa anta tašīlu*-masc. *'ila ha ḏhi almarḥalah* 'While you reach this stage', *tastantež*-mas.c 'you infer', *targhab*-masc. 'you want', *tahtadzuha*-masc. 'you need', *tabhaθ*-masc. 'you search', etc.

## (d). Qatari and Saudi Textbooks

The Qatari and Saudi textbooks are also similar to the Bahraini, Kuwaiti, and Omani ones in using masculine present tense verbs and directives. The introduction parts of both textbooks use present simple verbs that indicate the expected course outcomes such as *sataṭ'arraḥu* 'ala 'You will identify', *sataḍrus* 'You will study', *sataṭakashaḥu laka* 'It will be made clear to you', *sataṭ'arraḥ wa taḍrus* 'You will know and study', *satakun qadīran* 'You will be able to', *satuwāḍzeh* 'You will face', etc. All these future verbs are masculine, and all can be feminine forms. However, the feminine forms are not represented in the current data. The activities and tasks to be performed by students are expressed in masculine imperative verbs across both textbooks which are similar to the examples found in the Bahraini, Kuwaiti, and Omani textbooks. The figure below from page four of the Saudi textbook illustrates this strategy in a lesson on problem solving. All highlighted verbs in this activity are in the positive and negative imperative form. An imperative verb that addresses female students in Arabic appends the morpheme 'ī' at the end of the verb. For example, *ḥadded* 'specify', *lā tastaslem* 'don't surrender' addressing male students will be *ḥaddidī* and *lā tastaslimī* to address female students.

**الجدول 1-1: حل المشكلات: ما يجب فعله، وما لا يجب فعله**

إرشادات	ما يجب فعله	ما لا يجب فعله
ثق في قدرتك على حل المشكلات	• كن واثقاً من قدرتك على حل المشكلة.	• لا تستسلم بسهولة إذا لم تنجح إحدى الأفكار.
تعرف على المشكلات	• أنظر في المشاكل كفرص لإيجاد حلول مبتكرة.	• لا تتجاهل المشاكل فقد تتفاهم ويصعب حلها. • لا تلتزم بفكرتك المبدئية عن المشكلة، إذا كنت تواجه مشكلة في إيجاد حل.
حدد طريقة	• اتبع حدسك لحل المشكلات البسيطة. • اتبع طرائق منهجية للمشكلات المعقدة. • راجع المشكلة وأعد النظر فيها، وكذلك أهدافك والحلول الممكنة. • أنظر في المشكلة من زوايا مختلفة.	• لا تعقد الحلول، فقد يسبب ذلك عرقلة حل المشكلة، أو تكرارها. • لا تسع إلى الاستنتاجات.
اتخذ القرارات	• ضع في اعتبارك جميع البدائل قبل اختيار أحدها. • ثق بحدسك، لكن تأكد من أن الحقائق تدعم قرارك.	• لا تتخذ قرارات متهورية. • لا تشكك في قدراتك إذا شعرت أنك اتخذت القرار الصحيح.

Figure 1. Sample of Exclusively Masculine Instructional Verbs in a Lesson From the Saudi textbook

## (e). UAE Textbook

The UAE textbook employs a variety of linguistic strategies of verbs usage, mainly third person singular masculine verbs to express lessons' outcomes, first person singular neutral gender verbs to express the activities and tasks students do inside or outside the class, and sporadic imperatives. Instances of third person singular masculine verbs appear frequently under the heading "learning outcomes" in the beginning of every lesson. Interestingly, all outcomes' statements have no openly pronounced subjects in Arabic, and all sentences start with action verbs. All these verbs have masculine conjugations. Below is an image of page 22, unit 1 in the Emirati school textbook Social Sciences and National Education. The verbs are highlighted, and they appear at the beginning of each unit to present the unit objectives and outcomes. In all examples, the first verbal clause consists of 'He + the verb' such as *junāqəš* 'He discusses', *juqadder* 'He appreciates', *jaṭraḥ*, 'He puts forward', *jubarhen* 'He proves', *jata'arraḥ* 'He identifies', *juwaḍḍeh* 'He clarifies', *jubajjen* 'He clarifies', *jubdi ra'jan* 'He puts forward an opinion'.



Figure 2. Sample of Exclusively Masculine Action Verbs in the Learning Outcomes of a Lesson From the UAE Textbook

Using the first person singular neutral gender verbs for students' activities and assessment tasks is unique to the Emirati and Bahraini materials. Obviously, this linguistic strategy is utilized for the purpose of being gender inclusive. The first-person singular pronoun 'I' in Arabic is grammatically and naturally generic. The verbal clauses *aqra'u wa astantižu* 'I read and infer', *'u'arriřu mafhūm* 'I define a concept', *ubayyinu atfaul* 'I clarify the interaction', *uħaallilu wa ufakkiru* 'I analyze and think', *uřannifu* 'I classify', *ufassiru* 'I interpret'. This strategy occurs frequently in the activity section towards the end of each lesson.

### C. Pronouns

The primary concern of this section is to link the findings on verbs to pronouns with the aim of identifying whether it is the masculine or the feminine gender that is commonly represented in the textbooks under discussion. Because Arabic verbs agree with their subject and object pronouns in number and gender, the data analysis reveals that similar to verb behavior, associated pronouns exclusively refer to masculine addressees both singular and plural. For example, in the introduction of the Kuwaiti textbook, there is the sentence *ta'wīd atṭaleb 'ala atfaķīr wa albaħθ 'an alma'lūmah li musa'adatīhi* 'getting the student (masc.) used to thinking and searching for the information to help him'. In addition, all imperative verbs mentioned in the previous sections as frequently occurring in the Kuwaiti, Qatari, and Saudi textbooks activities and tasks assume the implied subjects that immediately follow are masculine. For example, the verb *'uktub* has the deep structure *'uktub anta* 'write-you-masc.'. The concluding statement of the Omani textbook introduction calls the readers of the book to take care of the book by saying: *wanaď'ūk liħmuħafaďaħ 'alaħi liħ'umma alfa'idah 'alaħk wa ala zumalā'ik min ba'dik* 'We call on you to preserve [the book] so that you and other students after you can utilize it.' The Arabic counterpart of the English pronoun 'you' is expressed through the utilization of the morpheme *kaaf alħitāb* which is appended as a suffix to the verb *wanaď'ūk*, the genitive *'alaħk*, and the noun *zumalā'ik*. Notably, advanced-level textbooks commonly avoid using diacritic markers, thereby leaving a degree of ambiguity regarding the gender of the addressee in the words *wanaď'ūk* and *'alaħk*. The word *zumalā'ika* 'your classmates-masc' serves as a clarifying element, dispelling any potential ambiguity arising from the absence of explicit gender markers in the aforementioned words. Therefore, it is obvious that the statement under discussion addresses male students.

Despite the learning outcomes in the Omani textbook, page 29 (See Figure 3 below) commencing with the salutation "Dear male student/Dear female student" and expressing the expectation that, "by the end of this activity, you are expected to....," it is noteworthy that the highlighted action verbs initiating each outcome exclusively feature a latent masculine subject pronoun.



Figure 3. Sample of Exclusively Masculine Verbs and Latent Masculine Subject Pronouns in the Learning Outcomes of a Lesson From the Omani Textbook

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate the utilization of gendered nouns, verbs, and pronouns by Arabic school textbook authors in reference to the readers: the concerned students. This is interpreted in the light of the fact that Arabic has extensive inflectional morphology (Alhafni et al., 2022) and “cannot be easily neutralized in terms of gender bias” (Pavlos & Terry, 1994, p. 6). Notably, the linguistic representation of both male and female students is usually located in specific segments of the textbooks, namely, the introductions, classroom activities, and assessment tasks. These three parts of any textbook are significant because they set goals and expectations and engage the students in task-oriented activities. Addressing the second research question concerning the maintenance of gender representation balance, the data reveals a pervasive androcentric tendency across all textbooks constituting the research corpus. The conspicuous manifestation of androcentrism should not be construed as indicative of an inherent male bias within the Arabic language as posited by Sidiqi (2006, p. 133). The language possesses a robust inflectional system and a requisite lexicon that enables the expression of both male and female genders across diverse contexts. It is imperative to recognize that the locus of androcentrism lies not within the language per se but rather within the purview of those who employ it. Specifically, in the contextual domain of this investigation, it is the authors of educational textbooks who contribute to the perception of an androcentric educational discourse, thereby attributing the semblance of gender bias to the language itself. As the data has clearly shown, nouns designating the readership across the six textbooks are exclusively masculine although there is a possibility of making the style gender-inclusive by referring to both male and female students. The Omani textbook reveals that majority of gendered references pertain to male and plural students ‘*aṭṭāleb* and ‘*aṭṭullāb*’. The frequent usage of ‘*aṭṭullāb* and ‘*aṭṭalabah* both referring to ‘the male students’ accords with what Wafa (2021, p. 383) critically implies: ‘when speaking in the plural, the default is male.’ The Saudi textbook, upon scrutiny, conspicuously lacks any instance of reference to a feminine reader in its introduction section, with all identified nouns being masculine. This pronounced androcentrism may be ascribed to the overarching theme of the book encapsulated in its title: Decision Making in Business. Although the textbook was published in 2022, the discourse within the textbook does not align with the empowerment initiatives outlined in the Saudi 2030 vision (Almathami et al., 2021). Despite slight variations observed across the six GCC textbooks, a discernible pattern emerges, indicating that the Bahraini and Saudi textbooks exhibit a higher degree of androcentrism compared to their GCC counterparts.

Minimal reference is accorded to female students within the purview of the six examined textbooks. Limited efforts are expended by the authors to engender a linguistically equitable representation of male and female students. This conspicuous bias in gender portrayal carries potential ramifications for female students, fostering a sense of invisibility and insignificance. Moreover, it has the propensity to reinforce entrenched gender stereotypes pervasive in Arab societies (Muassomah et al., 2023). The attitude of female students towards this evidenced androcentrism provides a prospective avenue for future research.

In seeking to unravel the underlying causes of this asymmetry in gender representation, a plausible hypothesis emerges: the textbook authors may either lack awareness of the inherent bias within their writing, or, alternatively, they may think



they purposefully employ a gender-inclusive style. Should the latter hypothesis prove accurate, the resultant imbalance may be construed as indicative of a sexist orientation, a perspective substantiated by Aleasa (1996).

Turning attention to verbs, it is worth noting that the UAE textbook partially adopts a gender-inclusive approach, employing neutral gender verbs with first person pronouns in classroom tasks and assessment activities; a strategy that was also reported in the Jordanian textbooks (Edres, 2022). This practice should be encouraged by concerned authorities in the GCC ministries of education. It has been noticed that this inclusive linguistic strategy is notably absent in the other GCC textbooks except for the two nominal examples in the Omani textbook as illustrated in the results section. This observation underscores a noteworthy distinction in the linguistic treatment of gender across the examined GCC educational materials.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This research endeavors to scrutinize androcentrism within the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) school textbooks by means of thorough linguistic analysis. It aspires to broaden the focus of language and gender scholars of education beyond primarily emphasizing imbalances in the portrayal of male and female students concerning illustrations, roles, and themes, as identified in the existing literature. Instead, it directs attention to the examination of biased language employed in addressing students, who constitute the principal recipients of school textbooks. The discerned findings underscore a pervasive androcentric inclination saturating the entirety of the research corpus. In contrast to presumptions positing an inherent bias within the Arabic language, the study elucidates that the focal point of androcentrism appears to reside with the authors of the examined textbooks. Otlowski (2003) advocates that it is imperative for educators and curriculum developers to cultivate a heightened awareness of gender-biased language usage and to discern and rectify instances of sexist biases within the educational materials tailored for classroom instruction.

Despite the contemporary publication of the selected textbooks, a misalignment with women empowerment initiatives in the six GCC countries becomes evident. Remarkably limited endeavors are dedicated to realizing linguistic gender equity within the educational materials of the six countries. This skewed representation holds potential repercussions for female students, reinforcing entrenched gender stereotypes within Arab societies. Consequently, the study propounds further research to reflect on the underlying causes of this gender asymmetry, investigating its ramifications on female students and probing the prospect that authors may lack awareness of the observed gender representation disparities.

A noteworthy recommendation emanating from this study advocates the cultivation of a more inclusive linguistic approach, thereby fostering neutral educational discourse. An actionable initiative that could be readily implemented by the GCC countries, given their economic potential, involves the development of digitally interactive versions of school textbooks. Such versions would facilitate personalized addressing of students based on their gender; a concept exemplified by the implementation of a comparable initiative by X (formerly known as Twitter). This platform allows individuals to customize settings to receive communications according to their gender, exemplifying linguistic adaptability. For instance, the default Arabic verb *استكشف* 'Explore' (addressing men), could be electronically transformed to *استكشفي* (addressing a female student), thereby catering to a more gender-inclusive educational discourse and environment.

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