Gender Portrayal in the Algerian English Textbook
"My Book of English" for Third Year Primary School

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ABSTRACT

Gender stereotyping is prevalent in many textbooks, especially EFL textbooks. This study analysed gender portrayal in the Algerian English textbook "My Book of English" for primary school year three. It aimed to identify gender stereotypes in this primary-level English textbook. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the analysis confirmed the presence of gender bias. The illustrations predominantly feature males, and the depicted occupations for men and women are often traditional and outdated. Men's activities are frequently shown outdoors, while women's activities are mostly indoors, reflecting negative gender stereotypes. The study aims to offer teachers and textbook authors insights into gender representations, encouraging them to recognize and reduce gender bias.

Keywords: gender representation, English textbook, visual analysis, gender stereotypes, gender bias, gender equity.

تمثيل النوع الاجتماعي في كتاب اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائري "كتابي للغة الإنجليزية" للسنة الثالثة ابتدائي

الملخص:

تنتشر الصور النمطية القائمة على النوع الاجتماعي في العديد من الكتب المدرسية ، وخاصة كتب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل تصوير النوع الاجتماعي في الكتاب المدرسي الإنجليزي "My book of English " للسنة الثالثة من التعليم الابتدائي (3PS) ، وذلك لتحديد الصور النمطية المرتبطة بالنوع الاجتماعي. باستخدام كل من الأساليب الكمية والنوعية ، أكد التحليل وجود تحيز واضح بين الجنسين. تظهر الرسوم التوضيحية في الغالب ذكورا ، وغالبا ما تكون المهن المصورة للرجال والنساء تقليدية وقديمة. وكثيرا ما تظهر أنشطة الرجال خارج المنزل، في حين أن أنشطة النساء تكون في الغالب داخل المنزل، مما يعكس صورا نمطية سلبية بين الجنسين. تهدف الدراسة إلى تزويد المعلمين ومؤلفي الكتب المدرسية والمفتشين برؤى حول تمثيلات النوع الاجتماعي، وتشجيعهم على التعرف على التحيز بين الجنسين والحد منه أو تقليصه.

كلمات مفتاحية: التحيز القائم على النوع الاجتماعي –المساواة بين الجنسين – تمثيل النوع الاجتماعي – كتاب اللغة الانجليزية– التحليل البصري.

La représentation du genre dans le manuel scolaire d'anglais algérien « My Book of English » pour la troisième année de l'école primaire

Résumé:

Les stéréotypes de genre sont répandus dans de nombreux manuels, en particulier dans les manuels d'Anglais comme Langue Etrangère. Cette étude a analysé la représentation du genre dans le manuel d'anglais algérien « My Book of English » pour la troisième année (3 AP) de l'école primaire. Elle vise à identifier les stéréotypes de genre dans ce manuel d'anglais de niveau primaire. Utilisant à la fois des méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives, l'analyse a confirmé la présence de préjugés sexistes. Les illustrations représentent principalement des hommes, et les métiers décrits pour les hommes et les femmes sont souvent traditionnels et dépassés. Les activités des hommes le plus souvent sont souvent représentées à l'extérieur, tandis que celles des femmes se déroulent principalement à l'intérieur, ce qui reflète les stéréotypes négatifs liés au genre. L'étude vise à donner aux enseignants et aux auteurs de manuels scolaires un aperçu des représentations de genre, en les encourageant à reconnaître et à réduire les préjugés sexistes.

*Mots clés***:** Biais de genre - Équité entre les sexes- Représentation du genre- Manuel d'anglais- Analyse visuelle.

Introduction

Textbooks are multifaceted resources, serving as commodities, political tools, and cultural representations. Many educators value them for providing a structured and comprehensive introduction to various subjects. They often include explanations, illustrations, examples, and exercises, which help students grasp and apply the material. However, textbooks also play a significant role in shaping ideologies and stereotypes in society. Despite efforts to combat gender inequality, issues of gender discrimination in education, particularly in textbooks, persist. This study focuses on examining gender representation in a primary school EFL textbook. Understanding gender representation in these textbooks is crucial, as they can considerably influence students' perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes.

Gender stereotyping in EFL textbooks often is manifested through the portrayal of characters, roles, and language. Typically, male characters may dominate leadership or expert roles; however, females are depicted in caregiving or domestic settings. This imbalance can perpetuate traditional gender roles and limit children's perceptions of what individuals can achieve based on their gender. Language use also plays a crucial role; for example, defaulting to male pronouns can reinforce the idea that male is the norm. The absence of diverse representations can further marginalize certain identities. Addressing these issues is vital for creating more inclusive and fair learning environments.

The primary aim of this paper is to investigate gender stereotyping in a primary-level textbook to address any gender bias that might affect students' perceptions of gender and their gender identity. The researcher aimed to determine whether or not the gender representation in 3PS English textbook is neutral or biased. This study explores how gender is addressed in textbooks, focusing on analyzing the depiction of gender stereotypes through examining males and females portrayal in an Algerian textbook with the use of a mixed- method approach to achieve this aim.

One of the fundamental strategies in education is to promote gender equity by ensuring gender fairness in all educational policies and practices. This approach helps create an inclusive learning environment where all students can thrive equally. It is quite urgent to make the revisions to textbooks to avoid gender stereotypes and prejudices.

In Algeria, where cultural and social norms significantly influence gender roles, understanding how gender is represented in educational resources is essential for promoting gender equality in education. Considering the educational reform

undertaken in Algeria, the present research is an attempt to examine and describe whether the second-generation textbooks of English have a strong impact on teaching patriarchal, discriminatory, and sexist norms.

1. Background

Gender portrayal in educational materials, particularly language textbooks, plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. English language textbooks are often the primary sources of information and cultural representation for young learners. Understanding how these materials construct gender identity can reveal implicit biases and influence students' worldviews.

1.1 Gender Stereotyping

According to Abolaji and Mills (2014), "stereotypes are ideological constructs that are conveyed to the reader as information or common sense that seems to come naturally or without questions" (p3). In addition, Bobolas (2015) asserts that gender stereotypes have evolved into new viewpoints in human civilization. According to the study, this is due to societal norms around gender roles that vary globally. Bobolas (2015) argued that many gender preconceptions could shift. She uses gendered colors as an example to show how gender stereotypes may change. The gender-specific colors of pink for girls and blue for boys are novel ideas. She says that between 1918 and 1940, pink was associated with men while blue was associated with women. This shows that features associated with traditional gender notions were different only a few centuries ago, and hence they cannot be taken for granted as solid foundations for defining roles in the modern world.

There are four types of gender stereotypes. The first type pertains to personality traits, with women typically expected to be attractive, emotional, and passive, while men are expected to be strong, active, and assertive. Second, preconceptions of household behaviors, according to which men handle money, work outside the home, and earn a living, while women are in charge of procreation, child rearing, and maintaining the home. The third type of gender stereotype pertains to occupations. Some people believe women should primarily be nurses and teachers, while roles such as pilots, doctors, and engineers are considered being for men. Fourthly, prejudices regarding physical appearance: men are supposed to be tall and muscular, and women should be graceful and

slender.

Regarding clothing, women are often expected to wear long dresses and makeup, while men are expected to wear pants and have short hairstyles. Many feminist theorists criticize these representations as outdated, conservative, and stereotypical, advocating for gender equity and the prevention of gender bias. In summary, stereotyping involves making collective judgments or biases about individuals or groups. Gender stereotypes, in particular, can lead to unequal and unfair treatment based on a person's gender, which constitutes sexism.

1.2 Gender Stereotypes in Educational Texts

Textbooks used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts serve not just as instruments for teaching the English language but also as sources of knowledge regarding contexts of culture, including gender stereotypes. Researchers and educators worldwide have conducted many studies on sexism in EFL textbooks. The goal is to ensure that educational materials are free from gender bias and promote gender equality. Most of relevant studies showed substantiation of the prevalence of gender bias. They have shown that instructional materials frequently reflect cultural norms and stereotypes surrounding gender.

Sunderland's (2000) analytical study of sexism in textbooks revealed that in textbooks, female characters are stereotyped as being more involved in domestic and passive tasks, while male characters are shown as more active and doing more prominent occupations. Masoumeh and Ali (2010) investigated gender bias in the representation of women and men in three volumes of English textbooks used in Iranian high schools. According to the results, these textbooks portray males and females unfairly. The representation of men was more prominent than that of women.

Similarly, Anja & Vlasta (2015) studies have showed that textbooks for young learners frequently contain gender stereotypes, with male characters appearing more often than female characters. This disparity can perpetuate traditional gender roles and restrict the opportunities and ambitions of both boys and girls. Indeed, many researchers have investigated gender bias in EFL textbooks, focusing on how males and females are represented in both written and visual content. Mohammed and Hanadi (2015) examined gender representation in one of the English language textbooks 'Action Park 10' investigating the areas of male and female depiction in social settings and domestic settings and the ratio of female to male characters. The results demonstrate that male characters are

disproportionately depicted in texts and images in terms of language, visuals, and social interactions, according to the data. 'Action Park 10' has failed to mirror the modern Jordanian society where the Jordanian woman enjoys excellent positions and is highly admired'' (Mohammed & Hanadi, 2015). Plenty of other case studies of gender in language textbooks highlighted similar findings where male characters are predominantly depicted in assertive and dominant roles, while female characters often embody nurturing and passive attributes.

A critical analysis of various language textbooks used globally has revealed striking patterns in gender representation. For instance, Kolbe et al. (2021) which reported that many Western English language textbooks reflect and reinforce patriarchal structures through their content. Textbooks often present a binary view of gender roles, where males are depicted as assertive and dominant, w h i l e f e m a l e s are portrayed as nurturing and passive. This dichotomous representation can promote traditional gender norms among young learners (Baker, 2009).

In short, the aforementioned studies are only a small sample of what is available in the literature on textbook gender bias. Nevertheless, it is important to note that all of these studies share a common goal: the elimination of gender bias and inequality as they relate to students' gender identity formation.

1.3. The Impact of Gender Portrayal in Textbooks

Gender portrayal in educational materials, particularly in textbooks, plays not only a critical role in shaping societal attitudes towards gender roles and expectations, but also an influence on educators' practices. Discussing the consequences of gender representation in textbooks on students' perceptions and understanding of gender equality. Research shows that the portrayal of genders in educational contexts affects students' self-esteem, aspirations, and career choices (Meyer & Schmid, 2021). Stereotypical representations may lead to limiting beliefs in all genders—girls may feel inclined to pursue traditionally feminine careers, and boys may shy away from expressing emotional vulnerability. Such portrayals can hinder the development of gender-neutral identities and perpetuate societal inequalities (Connell, 2010). Textbooks also influence educators' perspectives and teaching practices. Findings from Johnson (2021) suggest that teachers who rely heavily on traditional textbooks may unconsciously reinforce gender biases in the classroom environment, thus perpetuating societal norms that favor students over others. This highlights the

importance of critically evaluating the materials used in educational settings. In brief, the portrayal of gender in textbooks has significant implications for students' understanding of their roles in society and their potential career paths. Addressing biases in educational materials is essential for fostering an inclusive learning environment that empowers all students, regardless of gender. Continued advocacy for gender-sensitive educational policies and curriculum reforms is necessary to dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote equity in education.

2. Methodology

Using a mixed-methods design, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research, can provide a well-rounded understanding of gender representation in English textbook since the objective of this study is to investigate gender portrayal in English textbook. Results about number of females and males as they appear in the textbook illustrations will be given in number. These aspects are analyzed quantitatively. While, the qualitative analysis is applied for interpreting material. Quantitative research was employed to count number of female and male; whereas, the qualitative design of this research study used document analysis to gather the data. Ary et al. (2010) believe that document analysis is a method to collect the data in a written or visual form for identifying specific characteristics of the material. The English textbook entitled "My book of English'' is the sample of this study which is assigned for 3PS pupils. The textbook was published by the Ministry of Education in 2022, and it was chosen for analysis for two reasons. First, in order to know how female and male are represented in a textbook that is a second-generation book. Secondly, to what extent initiatives in ensuring gender equality in educational materials for EFL are taken, and whether or not it provides updated data on gender representation. In the analysis, the social aspects of gender representation were taken into account. The social aspect of gender representation includes a vision that is mirrored by male or female visibility throughout the number of images. It also includes domestic activities usually attributed to both sexes. Moreover, gender roles and responsibilities were included in this research. Those items were integrated for seek to examine gender representation in the textbook.

2.1 Data resources

The textbook "My Book of English" (2022) is addressed to 3PS pupils, aged 9-10 years, and the study seeks to understand how men and women are represented in the illustrations. The chosen book contains sixty-two pages with six main units. It starts first with the common vocabularies that learners deal with in class and their real world. "My First English Class" (pp. 6-7) is about the daily verbs that the learners use in the classroom. The first unit "Me, My Family and My friends" (pp. 8-18) helps learners to name different members of their families and strengthens the family bonds as most pictures portrays a large family, which carries a humanistic value. The second topic "My school" (pp. 19- 29) is introduced as the real world of the learners; they are exposed to school things, colors, days and sounds, etc. It is in this topic that learners are smoothly asked to answer with 'yes' or 'no' and 'what' questions. My Home that is the third unit (pp. 30- 37) also deals with the real life of the learners. Learners are expected to name the different rooms and locate them at their houses. They are also required to reinvest the two previous topics, naming their families members and colors. They are also smoothly exposed to answer 'where' questions of locating places and rooms. Learners are expected to make distinction between "p" and "b" phonics. My Playtime is the fourth unit (pp. 38- 44), it is where leisure for kids is presented; learners will be able to name some toys and demonstrative pronouns 'this'. The /æ/ sound presents in words so that learners make difference while articulating their tongues. My Pets unit (pp. 45- 51) gives a spotlight about some common animals' names learners may encounter in their lives. Pupils are expected to use the auxiliary 'to have' in different situations with the pronoun 'it'.

The last unit is 'My fancy Birthday' (pp. 52- 62), in which the main subject is entertainment; it focuses more about friendship and society. Learners are familial with new tongue articulation presented in words /e/ and / a/ vowel sounds. The fact that the textbook has been published and is still used in schools, while it has not been investigated triggers the need to do the analysis. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by exploring how men and women are depicted in the textbook.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

To analyze how the textbook represents gender and to assess whether it reinforces traditional gender roles or gender inequality, this study collected data

from the textbook illustrations. Then, the researchers conducted the following analysis. Firstly, the analysis of the categories that were integrated for gender representation examination, beginning with the category of visibility, which was used to assess the presence of gender representation of picture. This visibility category involved analyzing the number of female or male appeared in the textbook illustrations. Then, the whole data of visibility were presented in table and ratio for easy analysis. The second category was occupation, which was counted to examine what occupations were attributed to man or woman. The third category of the domestic role was examined to indicate gender representation. This study discovered some domestic gender roles and responsibilities that were analyzed based on the pictures appeared in the textbook. This category determined the domestic role attributed to females and males to examine gender representation in this textbook based on gender stereotyping. The data were gathered form the illustrations included in the textbook. Visual analysis is a method for analyzing gender representation that has been used in many EFL textbook studies. Males exhibit greater visibility than females in both textbook texts and visuals. Data analysis involves making an interpretation or meaning of the data and the data will also be discussed with the results from other studies. The researcher draws conclusions to determine the gender representation in the textbook.

3. Results

The research findings are presented in figures (see Appendices) and tables in order to answer the research questions and achieve the study purposes.

3.1 Data description
a. *Female/ Male visibility*

The analysis of the textbook reveals an unequal representation of male and female images, with pictures depicting males outnumbering those depicting females (Table 1).

Table 1. The Number of Female and Male Pictures In the Textbook

Unit	Female	Male
Unit one	18	20

Unit two	10	6
Unit three	7	10
Unit four	9	6
Unit five	4	5
Unit six	7	11
Total number	55	58

b. *Female/ Male Occupations*

It is found that gender occupations are depicted stereotypically (Table 2).

Table 2. Female and male's Occupations

Female's Occupations	Male's Occupations
Teacher Housewife	Doctor A car driver

c. *Domestic Gender Roles and Responsibilities*

Data showed that most of the illustrations included in the textbook represent women in stereotypical gender roles and activities (Table3).

Table 3. Female and Male's gender roles and responsibilities

Female's gender roles and responsibilities	Male's gender roles and responsibilities
Householder Mother Children caring	Free of assuming any responsibility Relaxing

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that Figure 1, (p. 8, unit one) shows a family of five members where the females outnumbered the males (3 females and 2 males). Similarly, Figure 2, (p.10) shows a family of seven members where the females outnumbered the males (4 females and 2 males). However, on the same page that presents three kids, we found the males outnumbered the females (1 females and 2 males). Similarly, Figure 3, (p. 11) shows a female teacher with her students in class where the male students outnumbered the female students (1 females and 3 males). Others as Figure 7 and Figure 9, on (p.12, p 47), show a female teacher with her students in class where the male students outnumbered the female students (Picture one, 1 female and 3 males; picture two, a female student and a male robot kid; picture three, 0 females and 4 males; picture four, 1 female and 3 males). This unequal visibility and total invisibility many times show the exclusion of females and thus their under-representation and marginalization.

Analyzing the second category, that is, to examine the occupations attributed to both genders in this textbook, it is found that the pictures appeared in the different units illustrate clear gender stereotypes. The occupation of teaching is attributed to women; whereas men are attributed to the occupation of being a doctor. Gender occupations are illustrated stereotypically. This portrayal reinforces gendered activities. Certain activities are attributed to females and some others to males. This gender representation creates gender bias among female and male students that leads to gender unawareness and inequality. Likewise, the Figures 6; 4; 9 (p. 21, 22 and 47, respectively) demonstrate a representation of a stereotypic gender occupation where two female characters are portrayed as teachers several times while a male character on page 60 (See Figure 10) is portrayed as a doctor and as a car driver. It seems through this representation that men are assigned to be in high positions than women.

About the third category that is to examine gender roles, it was noticed that the pictures illustrate stereotypical gender roles. Most of the illustrations selected for gender analysis in the textbook depict women as mothers or homemakers. Males, on the contrary, appeared most of the time as head of the family and being free of taking care of his children or house chores. Therefore, the illustrations included encourage the female traditional gender roles and occupations. The Figure 1 (p. 8) illustrates a female as a mother of three children who are all depicted standing up in front of their mother, but not their father. This implies that it is the mother's role to assume the responsibility of children, but not the fathers. This confirms more the stereotypical portrayal mother's roles. In

addition, the four pictures on page 13 (See Figure 5) show a father and a mother with their daughter who is displayed walking on the side of her mother who is in turn shown to take care of her daughter, but not the father. This confirms gender roles stereotyping. In the same vein, Figure 8, (p. 30) portrays a stereotyped gender role where two women (mother and grandmother) are portrayed being in the kitchen doing house chores; whereas, the man (the father) is depicted being in his bedroom relaxing. In addition, the boy (the son) is found to be in his bedroom studying, and the grand father is represented in his bedroom having a nap; whereas, the daughter is illustrated being in the bathroom combing her hair and looking at herself in the mirror, which exhibits an obvious gender roles stereotyping. The illustrations depict women in traditional gender roles and activities, suggesting to pupils, especially girls, that their primary responsibilities are domestic chores. This portrayal reinforces the notion that women's main role is housekeeping, while boys are seen as the primary earners.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the portrayal of males and females in an Algerian EFL textbook for third-year primary students, aiming to reveal hidden ideologies and their impact on learners through content analysis. The investigation found that the characteristics, roles, and jobs assigned to male and female characters reflect preconceived notions. The findings confirmed the presence of gender bias in the textbook. Analysis of the illustrations showed a dominant masculine presence, with men and women depicted in traditional and outdated roles. Men's activities were more frequently shown outdoors, while women's activities were mostly indoors, highlighting negative gender stereotypes. Although the goal of Algerian EFL textbooks is not to promote gender prejudice, some gender stereotypes rooted in customs and culture are evident. The standards and ideals of gender portrayal in EFL textbooks are influenced by cultural factors. This study significantly contributes to understanding gender representation and its role in Algerian educational settings. It highlights the potential long-term effects of stereotypical gender depictions on students' academic performance and social behavior, which can be severe. The analysis focuses on the textbook content that students encounter daily. The findings underscore the need for further research on these issues. To achieve truly egalitarian teaching, textbook authors must be more aware of gender and gender role stereotyping, with a greater emphasis on the education curriculum. Although changing societal attitudes towards gender roles is a slow process (Slater, 1996), investing in equal socialization is crucial to free future generations from traditional gender roles and help them become

global citizens. Analyzing textbooks is crucial for developing instructional materials that promote gender equality, especially given the significant influence textbooks have in early education. The dynamic relationship between educators, learners, and textbooks underscores the need for further research to understand these interactions, and how gender is portrayed in educational discourse.

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Appendix
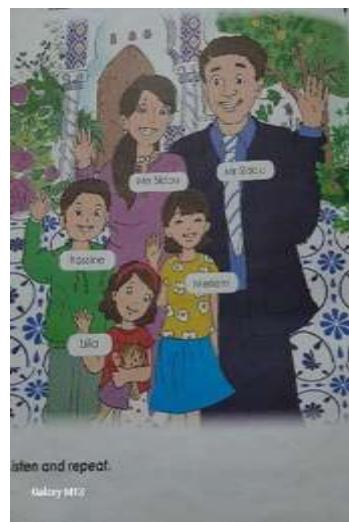
Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4
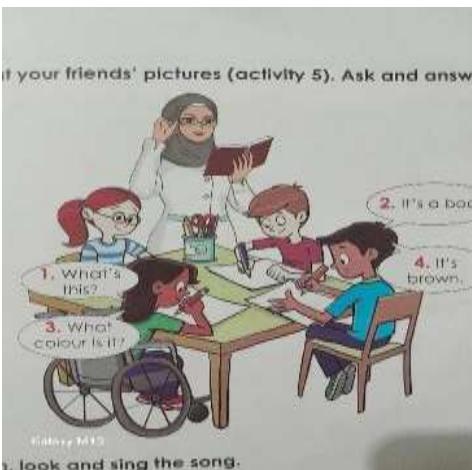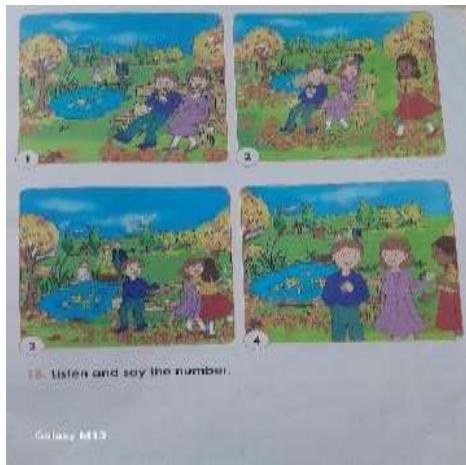
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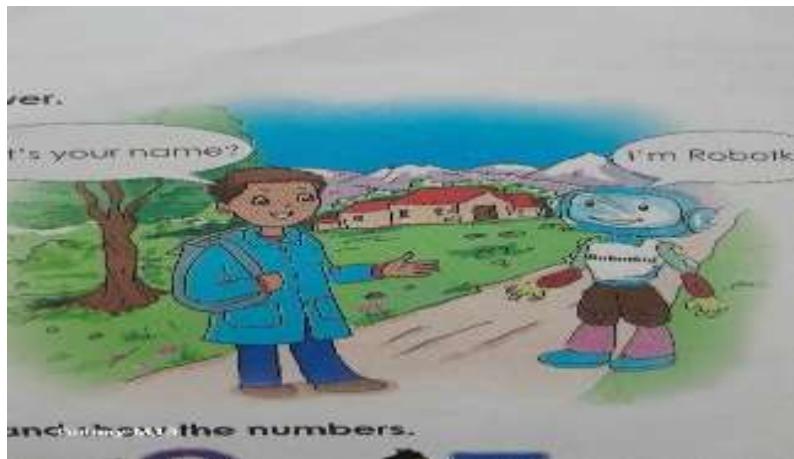

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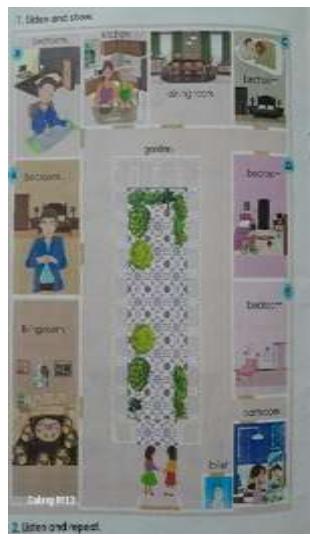
Figure 8   Figure 9

Figure 10