

# **Cultural analysis of liberal feminism in American English language teaching resources**

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## Abstract

One of the ways to spread the approach of liberal feminism in the world is to use English language education, through which English culture is spread among language learners. With the aim of discovering the signs of promoting liberal feminism in language teaching resources, this research, with a cultural approach, first determined the dimensions and components of liberal feminism. After that, three sources were selected from the most widely used sources of English language education in Iran, and the parts where the signs of promoting liberal feminism were evident were analyzed for content. The analyzes were done based on the components of liberal feminism and common Iranian Islamic culture. These analyzes were given to 20 experts for verification and conclusions were drawn after corrections. The results indicated that the two dimensions of equality (35.5%) and empowerment (30.5%) were the most frequent in these sources. The dimensions of freedom (17.5%) and legal protection (13.5%) were in third and fourth place. The statistics of other components were less than 5% and negligible.

Keywords: liberal feminism, American English language teaching resources, equality, freedom, equal empowerment.

## **1. Introduction**

The place and position of women in today's societies has become a challenging issue. On the one hand, extreme advocacy of women's rights and equality and even the preference of women over men has attracted fans and led to actions which has been proposed to eliminate inequality and remove restrictions and discrimination from women to demand the right to complete nudity, sexual freedom, homosexuality and remove job restrictions and free communication. On the other hand, supporters of human, moral and traditional values have resisted these radical attitudes and emphasize on maintaining human, moral and family values. Especially, the Islamic-Iranian approach, with the benefit of Islamic teachings and Iranian traditions, has put forward a special position for women, which is incompatible with the materialistic and natural attitude and in many cases contradictory.

The history of feminism shows that the feminist view of women has taken a special form according to the prevailing doctrine in the world at any time(1). As Bakhishi stated:

"Feminism, in every era, has sought the help of prominent and dominant political philosophy of the era to present its claims. In fact, the difference in feminist opinions and ideas is to some extent the result of the

influence of political and social developments"(1). At some point in the 19th century, liberalism became popular as an achievement of Western thought and played a role in the formation of modern social thoughts and formed the theoretical infrastructure of the development of feminism. Gradually, the liberal approach proposed a special form of feminism thought, which became known as liberal feminism. In this idea, women as a social element equal to men have all the freedoms claimed by liberalism. In fact, liberal feminism formed a bed in which the foundations of liberalism were developed in relation to women.(2)

The approach of radical feminism was also proposed with a sharper attitude about women's freedom and rights alongside liberal feminism, but since this approach sought to destroy the structure and wanted to overthrow the system based on capital and patriarchy, it was not noticed by the American liberal system. However, liberal feminism, which follows a moderate and conciliatory approach and is more compatible with the liberal system of America, received the attention of this country.(2)

The purpose of the research is to look for the signs of American liberal feminism in English language teaching resources and to answer the question of how far America promotes liberal feminism in English language teaching resources and what damages are caused to the culture of Iranian language learners.(3) .

The root of the word feminism is French and it means feminism or woman's originality or woman-centered school. The common meaning of this word in Encyclopaedia Britannica is as follows(20): "Belief in the social, economic and political equality of the sexes." Like many modern theories, feminism is also a reactionary theory. In fact, this trend was the result of the humiliation and oppression that was applied to women, that they could be pledged and exchanged even to the extent of men's property. Feminism includes different beliefs, opinions, programs and actions that have been proposed according to the historical conditions and dominant doctrines in each period. In general, feminism includes beliefs, attitudes and opinions about women's culture and specifies how goals and ideals related to women should evolve and which values and behaviors should be respected and which should be changed. Basically, feminism is a kind of radical attitude towards women.(4)

Feminist thinking, while originating from culture, affects culture and overshadows all its dimensions, including social and family relations. The main points emphasized in feminism, which define its main approach, according to the Stanford encyclopedia,(32) are:

Fighting against everything that is considered inappropriate, discriminatory or oppressive against women.

Fighting against what brings negative points for women in the culture.

Treating men and women equally and giving equal respect in different roles (32).

Liberal feminism is rooted in a broader philosophy called the political philosophy of liberalism. For this reason, the Stanford Philosophical Encyclopedia has mentioned Kant, Stuart Mill and Raoul as the founders of liberal feminism (32). The main indicator of this approach has something in common with the "gender system" and is based on the idea that the customs, traditions and institutions left over from the patriarchal system should be modified for the benefit of women (5). The new ideas of liberal feminism are designed on the basis of feminist ideas and are mostly in conflict with patriarchy and the restoration of equal rights for women.(6)

Liberal feminism is a form of feminism that considers the restoration of women's equal rights in all fields possible only through legal methods and recourse to social reforms. In this approach, conflict with men over these rights is considered necessary. This approach, unlike the first wave of feminism, which only emphasized women's right to vote, calls for social transformation in order to end women's dependence on men.(7)

This type of feminism is also different from the third wave of feminism, which follows the extreme trend and wants a fundamental change in this field, and emphasizes on maintaining the existing structure and carrying out reforms (32). Although the main point of feminism is conflict with men in order to achieve women's rights, this conflict is not severe in liberal feminism and has resulted in a kind of peaceful coexistence. Paknia believes that radical liberal feminism constitutes an attitude of feminism that "seeks a female society that stands against men", but liberal feminism follows a conciliatory approach.(8)

The main foundations of liberal feminism will be considered in the rest of this article and the sub-categories attributed to each will be explained in order to obtain the conceptual model of the research. These foundations, which are obtained from the combination of the foundations of liberalism and feminism, can culturally cause more damage to religious-oriented cultures. The reason is that this approach is not as radical as radical feminism and other forms of feminism and may be more easily accepted among students who have religious cultures.(9)

Liberal feminism is compatible with the foundations of liberalism, and therefore it can be considered as the American approach to feminism. Based on the approach of liberalism, individual freedom is emphasized in all fields. (10)With the addition of the word feminism, this freedom extends to all issues related to women. Freedom in liberal feminism has been considered as individual freedom, in which a person is free to live in any way he wants. This is a type of personal freedom based on which a woman is not subject to any constraints in her behavior.(11)

In this approach, all social and cultural restrictions that prevent women from growing and flourishing by depriving them of their freedom have been negated. As Okin believes, all these constraints are caused by the gender system and customs left over from the past. Liberal feminism considers women to have the same physical and mental capabilities as men and considers any existing differences to be the result of the patriarchal era of the past. According to this approach, the different nature of men and women, which was previously used to justify the difference in women's duties and capabilities, is not important, and as Paknia explains, It is believed that "the superior discourse, by insisting that the body and mind of a woman are completely in harmony with her duties, considered the natural position of a woman in the home and her work in dealing with her husband and children" (12). For this reason, liberal feminism strongly emphasizes the ability of women to do male and violent work. According to this approach, there is no difference between men and women in doing things, both in the family system and in the social system. Women's equality in accepting responsibility and having the necessary ability to carry out these responsibilities is one of the hallmarks of liberal feminism.(13)

Regarding the role of women in the family, liberal feminism emphasizes on removing restrictive laws. In this approach, it is emphasized that the power of free choice in family roles should not be taken away from women and the government should guarantee this equal right for women. Okin writes in this context:(29)

Family life has a strong effect on the individual freedom of adults. For example, the responsibility of taking care of children imposes a lot of restrictions on women's personal freedom. In the system of liberal feminism, the government tries with interest so that family life does not harm the individual freedom of women. Some believe that the government should rule justice in the family. For example, it is the government that determines the share of salaried and non-salaried work for each. (14) Liberal feminists, as stated by Cornell, reject any legal restrictions on women's sexual relations and believe that "no restrictions on pornography are acceptable" (15). He also considers women's sex trade to be in favor of their right to freedom and believes that action should be taken for higher wages and better working conditions for women (16). In this regard, Kad also recommends that any violence against women should be prevented anywhere.

Equality in personal relationships between men and women is one of the things that is emphasized in liberal feminism(17). Inequality in personal relationships between men and women, in the way that men dominate the situation and put women under pressure and prevent them from accessing the facilities related to work, capital and education, is a phenomenon that liberal feminism claims to fight against. (14).

Playing an equal political role is one of the other things that has been taken into consideration in liberal feminism. The lack of role of women in some electoral systems has provided the ground for the proposal of equal right to be elected and to choose as a right for women, by liberal feminism. In defense of women's right to political and electoral participation, the Stanford Philosophical Encyclopaedia writes(21):

The effort to increase the right to vote and vote for women is in conflict with the restrictions that exist for women. The patriarchal system puts women in trouble in using this right. For example, women do not have enough time to participate in political discussions. Some male role models do not consider women to have the necessary talent for leadership." (20). The Stanford encyclopedia adds that in order to get rid of the tight circle of patriarchal culture, "cultural changes must be made and the patterns that consider women's ability to participate in political affairs as insufficient must be changed." This work is necessary to establish women's rights and democratic values and end the domination of men. (21).

The damages of liberal feminism on Islamic Iranian culture are significant from several perspectives.(19) The approach of liberal feminism considers the aspect of women's personal and social freedoms apart from any cultural and moral considerations and has no regard for cultural differences and moral teachings. Diana Meyers looked at feminism from this point of view and came to the following conclusion: "The moral imaginations of feminist theorists and activists are limited. They don't really know what the real options compatible with individual freedom would be. In the field of equal division of work at home, Alstair believes that "the equal family is problematic even from the point of view of the basis of idealism. Egalitarianism in the family creates limitations, not in the sense that it is different from today's theories, but in the sense that free people want to manage their lives differently(18).

Cultural difference is also an issue that challenges liberal feminism.(19)It is possible that liberal feminism, due to its roots in liberalism, can be meaningful in liberal cultures, but in cultures that are based on worldviews, it will have nothing but conflict. Based on Islamic principles, the theory of feminism is opposed to the status and place that is considered for women in Islam. As Hazrat Ayatollah Javadi Amoli does not consider Islam's view of women or men to be outward, superficial and

materialistic. Islam, while observing the smallest material and legal aspects, does not consider them as a goal or a reason for superiority(4). He believes:

If someone summarizes the criterion of virtue in material, low and status issues, he should revise his thinking and evaluation principle. A system that looks at issues from the axis of nature and matter considers the person who has a bigger table, a higher position, and more rights and benefits to be better. But Islam does not value such matters and says: The greatness of man is due to the soul of man, and what is apart from the soul of man is only a means of implementation. Therefore, if one enjoys only benefits outside the soul, his soul is not perfected.

## **2. Method**

In this research, the attitude of liberal feminism, which is more widespread in the field of soft power and cultural influence of America, is explored in a qualitative way in the multimedia resources of American English language education. To conduct the research, the dimensions and components of liberal feminism were determined by reviewing the literature of this field. After that, three widely used sources of English language education in Iran were selected. After examining the multimedia sources, the parts where the signs of promoting liberal feminism were evident, were analyzed according to the dimensions and components of liberal feminism. The results of the analysis were provided to twenty experts for confirmation and were used after confirming and making the corrections suggested by the experts. The result of this research showed which dimensions and components of liberal feminism are more abundant in English language teaching resources. Being aware of this process for the cultural workers of the society and the policy makers of English language education provides the possibility to protect teachers and students from cultural harm with neutralizing and insightful measures.(23)

In the content analysis of three selected sources of language teaching resources, first, a part of each lesson in which there are indicators of liberal feminism is placed in the table. The translation or explanation of the related phrase or image is provided and the main and subcategories related to it are mentioned in the bottom row.(24)At the bottom of the table, the contents and approach of that lesson and its connection with liberal feminism are explained. In the analysis of these topics, the harmful points of each content are explained culturally. After reviewing all the sources, their main and subcategories are summarized in a separate table and their frequency percentage is determined. The general analysis of this research is presented by analyzing the statistics obtained from all three collections.(25)

Table No. 1: Analysis of CD 4 of the VOA training series


<b>MUSIC PROMOTER TURNS AMERICAN WOMEN INTO BELLYDANCE SUPERSTARS</b>	
Synopsis: Mick Copeland, an American musician, tries to promote Arabic dance and mix it with Western music. He practices this type of dance only with American girls and by performing numerous programs in different countries, he wants to convey a message to the Middle East.	
Recording unit 1	Translation of recording unit 1
COPELAND HOPES THAT HIS BELLYDANCE SUPERSTARS WILL SEND A MESSAGE TO THE MIDDLE EAST	Copeland hopes her troupe's superstar dancers will send a message to the Middle East.
Subcategory: women's equality in work and business; caring for others; Legal independence	The main component: equality; capability; Legal support
Recording unit2	Translation of recording unit2
...WHEN I HAVE A MAN COME UP TO ME AND SAY THAT I'VE MADE HIM FEEL PROUD ABOUT HIS CULTURE.	One of the dancers: When an older man comes and says that I have made him proud of his culture, (I feel successful).
Main category: equality; legal protection; ability	Sub-category: equality in doing work and business; Caring for others

The cultural result of the fact that American dancing women can remind them of the native culture of non-Americans so that they can be proud of it, is that American culture has the ability to spread in the world with a feminist perspective. The special emphasis of this text on the Americanness of all the women in the dance group is in line with the expansion of liberal feminist American culture. Apparently, this group has been so attractive that it has performed 800 programs in different countries. This sentence of the author, who says that this group has a message for the Middle East, is culturally worthy of reflection. Most of the Islamic countries are located in the Middle East, so the author wants to convey his message about the ability of American women to these countries in order to achieve two goals. The first goal is to magnify the American culture in which women have such artistic abilities that they can influence others and be a role model for them. The second goal is to spread American liberal feminism and influence in Islamic culture and Eastern traditions.(28)

In order to promote American liberal feminism, the US Department of Defense plans to recruit 14,000 women in various military positions in the US military. The recruitment of women in the army alone does not indicate a feminist approach, but the statement of this matter with such a shocking number suggests that there is a deliberate exaggeration of the news, especially that these women are supposed to participate in foreign missions.(26) With the recruitment of women for military jobs, with the violence and hardships that are necessary for military work, the approach of the Ministry of Defense in showing the ability of women to do hard work is determined. Declaring such an approach in language teaching books that are taught in other countries is to promote this attitude among language learners. From the point of view of the Iranian-Islamic culture, in which a woman, while having her own rights, also has a spiritual and sacred position, especially that she has special privileges in performing military duties, such approaches will be harmful.

This text tells the story of three sisters who all joined the US Air Force and became pilots. The embodiment of liberal feminism in this text and accompanying images is made clear in the way that from the last generation in which the grandfather was the pilot, only the daughters of the family took advantage of the opportunity to spread feminism in America and followed his path. This story implicitly emphasizes the claim that it is women's turn to do hard and formerly male tasks and they can have social and national positions. In this text, the daughters of the family bear the responsibility of continuing the social honors of the family.(27)

Table No. 2: Analysis of CD 60 from the Voice of America educational collection

<b>MORE WOMEN ARE PLAYING FOOTBALL IN US</b>	
Summary: American football attracts more women every day. The field of activity and progress of women in this sport is available in America. The US women's soccer team has achieved great success and won a gold medal.	
 <p>MORE WOMEN ARE PLAYING FOOTBALL IN US.</p>	More women are joining American football. A picture of the American women's national football team.
Subcategories: ability to do difficult tasks; the ability to do rough work; the ability to do men's work; Management and leadership ability	Main components: ability; equality; Legal support
IT'S A HUGE MENTAL TRANSFORMATION." MOSSANEN MOVED TO AMERICA FROM IRAN AS A CHILD.	Mojdeh Mohsenin, who came from Iran as a child America has migrated: "This is a great intellectual evolution."

Subcategory: gender equality; the ability to do hard work; denial of gender discrimination; the right to choose work; social freedom; Individual freedom	The main component: equality; capability; Protection legal; the freedom
MOST OF THE TIME AS WOMEN GROWING UP WE'RE TOLD, YOU KNOW NOT TO BE AGGRESSIVE, AND IT'S NICE TO HAVE AN OUTLET WHERE YOU CAN COME SOMEWHERE AND LET ALL OF THAT OUT.	When women are growing up, they are often told not to be aggressive. It would be nice to have a place to dump all this advice.
Sub-article: Negation of gender discrimination; equality in social rights; freedom of social action; Freedom of individual action	Main category: legal protection; equality; the freedom

The American football show, with the violence and pressure it requires, emphasizes the violent American lifestyle and the equality of men and women in all matters by emphasizing that women can do all the jobs of men. Emphasizing the success of women and the gold award means that women can have a strong American football team and achieve success just like men. The feminist approach of this article is clear from the fact that one of the team members (who is originally from Iran) refers to this work as intellectual transformation. Another reason for the feminist approach of this article is related to the promotion of violence by women. The author is glad that there is a place that rejects anti-violence thoughts by women. According to the author, women's tendency towards American football is because they can show their violence in it. The cultural damage of this text is to promote the spirit of violence in women. The text shows that in order to achieve women's rights, it is necessary for a woman to have a fierce and hard fighting spirit.(33)


Table No. 3: Analysis of the content of lesson 5, book 1, English file

Girls being out at night	
Recording unit	Translation of recording unit
THE MAGAZINE MARI CLAIRE ASKED ITS WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN RIO, BEIJING AND MOSCOW TO GO OUT FOR EVENING AND THEN WRITE A REPORT (ON GIRLS' NIGHT OUT)	p. 56 Marie Claire magazine asks its female reporters to go out at night in Rio, Beijing and Moscow and report on girls going out at night.
Subcategories: freedom of social action; freedom of individual action; equality of social rights; Negation of gender discrimination	Main components: freedom; equality; Legal support

This lesson is dedicated to the issue of women staying out late at night in three non-American cities. By doing this, a non-normative and unrestrained culture is promoted under the title of freedom and equal



rights for women. In the absence of such freedoms in these cities, the language learner will naturally consider their culture incomplete. The choice of Beijing and Moscow to present the report is very significant. In this text, two countries, which are considered to be historical rivals of America politically and economically, have been considered in order to measure the influence of western culture on rival countries and to challenge their culture by observing the difference in the freedom of social actions of women in these countries.(28)

<b>Iman cosmetics</b>	
Recording unit	translation of recording unit
	p. 21 On this page, a picture of a Somali woman named Iman! It has been published that he lives in America and his job is modeling to sell cosmetics. He knows five languages, is married to an American and has two daughters. There is a cosmetic company called "Iman" in New York, whose title is taken from her name.
Subcategory: freedom of social action; freedom of family action; ability to do hard work; denial of gender discrimination; family responsibility; right to work	The main component: freedom; capability; legal protection; equality

**Table number 4: content analysis of lesson 3 of book 1 of American Headway**

There are several important points in this picture. First, the name of the cosmetics company is composed of the word "faith" and it does not seem to be a coincidence. The fact that a company named Iman produces cosmetics has a symbolic meaning. The author's choice of this company among all manufacturing companies is aimed at changing the identity that Americans pursue for other non-neighboring countries. The effort is to make the cultures that follow religious teachings and indigenous culture in relation to women lean towards the American approach. This story that a Somali woman can come to America and learn five languages and establish a company with the same name as her, can indicate the growth of women in the feminist environment of America in other countries and have an admirable reflection. The result of this work can bring a lot of cultural attraction for America and be effective in changing the religious and cultural identity of other countries.(29)

Although liberal feminism is less concerned with gender struggle than other types of feminism, it is important to address feminist gender conflicts in the fields of business, politics, and science in textbooks to attract an audience, especially among women who tend to learn foreign languages more than men. They have, it is one of America's soft power tricks.(31)

In this lesson, gender orientation is quite obvious. Two issues of this lesson show, there is no difference between men and women, and the existing rules and division of work are all artificial and oppressive(30). Both women can do men's work and men can do women's work. This proposition is promoted in the form of American culture's fight against gender discrimination and inequality between men and women and false beliefs in other cultures. The purpose of these efforts is to change the values and beliefs of the audience and model them in line with American culture. The promotion of feminist culture is completely contrary to Iranian-Islamic teachings. A language learner who lives with Iranian Islamic culture and has learned that a woman has a heavenly position because of being a mother, in the face of a culture that sends women to other people's houses to pipe sewage To show that there is no difference between men and women, he will be confused.(32)

### **3. Analysis of the abundance of dimensions of liberal feminism**

The English language indicates that all aspects of liberal feminism are promoted in these sources. This result shows that dealing with liberal feminism in American English language teaching resources is not accidental and is done by plan. The highest frequency of categories is dedicated to the promotion of the dimension of equality and shows that the promotion of this dimension is more important for the policy makers of English language education. Except for the category of educational equality, which was not seen in these sources, the other categories of this dimension have a significant frequency. The largest category is dedicated to equality in the right to work and trade, and it has a figure equal to 15% of the total number of categories.(34)

Empowerment dimension is in the second place and has allocated 30.5% of the frequency of categories. This figure indicates that the ability dimension is also very important like the equality dimension in the researched sources. All the subcategories of this dimension are in the sources. Among these categories, the percentage of doing difficult work is the highest (12.5%) and doing rough work accounts for only 2%.

The freedom dimension constitutes 17.5% of the total frequency of categories and has nearly half the frequency of the previous two dimensions. For this reason, the importance of promoting it is less than the previous two cases and there is not much insistence on promoting it in these sources, although it has not been neglected and in some cases, especially in connection with the freedom of social and individual action, this category has also been promoted. .(35)

The dimension of legal protection, like the dimension of equality, has a small frequency (equivalent to 13.5%) and is in the last place. Despite this category of negation of gender discrimination, which is one of the important foundations of radical feminism, it has the highest frequency (equivalent to 9.5 percent).

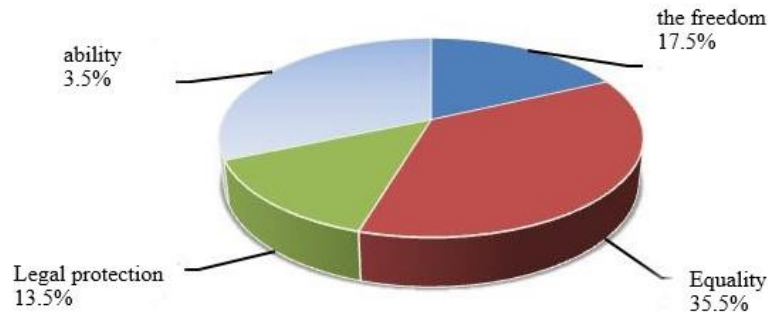


Figure 2. Frequency chart of liberal feminism dimensions in American English language teaching resources.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research was carried out with the aim of cultural analysis of liberal feminism in American English language teaching resources and the cultural damage it causes to the society of language learners. First, the basics of liberal feminism were extracted from the literature and research related to this field and placed in the dimensions and components chart. This diagram has four dimensions: equality, empowerment, freedom and legal protection. Each of these dimensions has five components and makes up a total of twenty components of liberal feminism.

The diagram of dimensions and components of liberal feminism was used as a reference for content analysis of American English language teaching resources. Three sets of American English language teaching were selected for content analysis based on the frequency of use in English language schools, and the contents related to the promotion of liberal feminism were extracted and analyzed from them. After analyzing the content of each of the analysis units, its cultural analysis was done and its cultural damages were explained in comparison with Islamic-Iranian culture.

After analyzing the content and extracting the dimensions and components of radical feminism, their frequency in the selected sources was calculated and their frequency percentage was obtained. The results of the research indicated that among the four dimensions of liberal feminism, the dimension of equality has the most frequency (35.5%). The second place is assigned to the empowerment dimension (35.5 percent). The two dimensions of freedom and legal protection were ranked third and fourth and had less importance.

American English language teaching resources promote dimensions and components of liberal feminism. This culturally affects learners and alienates them from their native culture. The category of equal work and trade for women includes 15% of the total number of categories, which indicates the importance of this category in liberal feminism. Emphasis on doing difficult tasks, which is very emphasized in liberal feminism, contains 11.5% of frequency in these sources.

Freedom of social action also has 9.5% of the frequency of categories and is very important in these sources. In the same way, the negation of gender discrimination is also very important and constitutes 9.5% of the frequency of all categories. In the next ranks, there are categories such as freedom of

individual action, gender equality, having equal social and political rights, and the ability to care for others, each of which has 7.5% of the total frequency of the categories and is very important.

Being aware of this approach will help those involved in cultural affairs, especially the English language education policy makers, to take the necessary warning and immunity measures in accordance with America's tricks, so that the goals of the cultural enemies of the Iranian nation do not come to fruition.

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