

Why Gender Matters in Language Teaching : Exploring Gender Representations in EFL Textbooks of Middle Schools in Mainland China

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Abstract: Gender issues constructed in school textbooks are seen as crucial in the field of English language teaching and learning. Existing studies in western countries have been examined substantially while a small number of researchers conduct to make investigations on gender stereotypes of EFL textbooks in mainland China. Textbooks have its own important impact on learners as they are underlying means to disseminate language knowledge and values to learners. Previous studies indicate textbooks influence values and beliefs of students, but textbooks with stereotyped representations would have an adverse impact on students' cognition (Cocoradă, 2018). Gender bias embedded in textbooks might have adverse influence on learners' perception of the society, motivation to study and career choices in the future. Thus it is instantly crucial to explore whether gender bias still exist in textbooks, ways to enhance students' gender equitable perception and the potentiality of designing a textbook with thorough gender equality.

This study selected three textbooks ranging from grade 7 to 9 (volume 2), published by People's Education Press since it is commonly used by EFL students in mainland China. It attempts to analyze gender representations in the textbook by using content analysis, linguistic analysis and visual analysis.

And the study results find that gender bias still persist in the textbook such as the occurrence percentage of men and women is unbalanced with the weakening of women's roles and acts. Roles of women are not only confined to roles the family endowed to, but also the society endowed to. Despite some efforts might be previously made to minimize the use of gender biased language, they are still recurrent. Therefore the purpose of study results attempt to enable people realize the prevalence of gender stereotypes in textbooks and discuss the possibility of compiling gender-fair textbooks. In the end, pedagogical implications and methods are provided for EFL teachers to reduce biased gender portrayals in the context of classrooms.

Keywords: English textbooks; English as a Foreign Language; Gender stereotypes; middle schools in mainland China

I. INTRODUCTION

Based on Understanding Xi Jinping's Educational Philosophy (2022), educational equality is an important foundation for social equality. All Chinese people should be ensured that have equal access to the benefits of education and further strengthen social equity. Education is a fundamental task for the country and the Party. Giving priority to the development of education is the first fundamental step in enhancing the development of the Party and

the country's various undertakings and emphasizing the fundamental, dominant and overall position and role of education. In addition, Chinese education should make a combination of China-rooted characteristics and people-centered basis, indicating the education development and curriculum design is required to be grounded on Chinese practical situations and students' needs. Furthermore, Reform is the fundamental motivation for the development of education, which must pay more attention to

systematicness, integration and synergy. In other words, make the research addresses major issues of educational reform and development and current issues concerned by masses, also resort reform to activate and enhance vigor and motivation. Under the circumstance, the carrier of education, teaching and learning materials should be adjusted duly to meet the needs of social development. And in order to respond the principles of “the educational modernization, construction of a powerful country in education and the promotion of fairness in education”, developing equal and inclusive education become much more urgent.

The issue of gender equality between men and women has always been discussing. Feminine and masculine traits are socially established and persistently produced through the indication of gender in discourse (Evans & Williams, 2013). In the end of 1960s in China, under the impact of human rights movements and women’s movements initiated by different sectors of the society, the situation of women representations’ deficiency in academia became obvious. All researchers in scientific field at that age were men; therefore perspectives of male were constructed as the mainstream and the views of females were despised. When it comes to 1980s, studies on female commence doubting the conventional gender theories and tend to reestablish new theories. In the 1990s, some researches indicate that educational experiences often vary with gender of a student, thus the issue of gender stereotypes is a focal point in the domain of academia (Shih & Wang, 2022). Additionally, it should be endowed with new interpretation between gender equality and inequality in education when entering the threshold of a new era.

English education in China has raised from all sectors of the society much more attention than before over the recent decades. As a lingua franca, English is identified as an issue concerning

globalization under the background of market economic reform in China. Since 1980s, the government was committed to make investments in enhancing the status of English education (Pan, 2015). For example, English is regarded as a basic main course in some crucial exams throughout the stage of compulsory education accompanied by the requirement of being taught over 80 minutes for each week (MOE, 2011). In the study of Law and Chan (2004), it is noted that gender bias has existed long ago in the globe due to the various social causes, for example, family, school and media. Moreover, schools are place where students spend a number of hours, hence it its impact on students (Cocoradă, 2018). Lee (2019) reveals that if gender equality awareness is constructed in schools, the steps move towards a gender-equal society will avoid more obstructions in the future. Teachers are the source and beacon of education for students. Positive beliefs enable teachers in educating students as the prospective seeds. Except for their language knowledge and teaching abilities, teachers also impact their students on personal code of conduct and values they hold toward the society and the country (Understanding Xi Jinping’s Educational Philosophy, 2022). According to Sunderland (2015), teachers’ treatment towards the given texts as well as students’ perspectives on gender representations in textbooks also have the potential influence to oppose against gender stereotypes in teaching and learning materials.

In addition, As the main materials for teaching and learning, textbooks play an important role in spreading knowledge for students. Considering their potential mass audience, textbooks are authority learning materials whose conceptions, values, and perspectives embedded in textbooks are influential. As Lee (2019) mentions that textbooks not only teach students how to listen read and write in terms of language, they also play a fundamental role

in imparting virtues valued by society, whether conscious or unconscious, by the means of the hidden courses. It argues that gender stereotypes in textbooks is an markedly common and universally persistent hindrance on the way to gender equality in educational fields, which is also a barrier concealed by confirmed stereotypes regarding gender roles' (Blumberg, 2008). Textbooks truly signifies the everyday study progress of learners in schools and are thus seen one of the main tools to moulding young learners' attitudes and values toward language learning and the society (Yang, 2011). Despite digital learning materials are becoming more widely prevalent, printed textbooks still maintain its fundamental position to achieve teaching objectives in classrooms (MOE, 2011). Suderland (1994) reveals that English textbooks are identified as the mostly and widely used learning materials in language learning around the world. Stereotyped gender representations in textbooks is considered by Yang (2011) as a worldwide issue. Nevertheless, rare gender bias in middle school EFL textbooks published in mainland China can be seen. In order to clarify various discourses in which influence practices of the society, exploring what certain kinds of language, texts and personal acts or roles are enhanced or disappeared may be necessary (Ledin & Machin, 2018). This study attempts to deepen understandings of biased gender representations in middle school EFL textbooks and promote people's gender awareness. Students will internalize gender-biased contents if they are exposed to these items. Researchers signifies that language textbooks in teaching and learning cannot be doubted; also they are crucial elements in language teaching (Lee & Collins, 2010). Thus the selected three textbooks includes volumes 2 of grade 7 to grade 9, which are mostly used in middle schools of mainland China for EFL learners. Various gender representations in textbooks, in terms of gender occurrence frequency,

gender pronouns and names placements and gender characteristics and roles are examined. Through analyzing these gender features, adopted tables and figures are embedded in this texts to support readers understand.

Therefore, one of the main issues regarding to the hidden courses is the gender representations embedded in EFL textbooks. The issue of gender representations has received a large number of attention and discussion from groups of compilers, social policies, even educational researchers in the domain of EFL teaching and learning. In the cultural context of some nations, one gender prioritize than the other gender. The dominance of men in language textbooks has spread widely in some nations, even in the English-language-speaking societies. Researchers mention that the process for exploring stereotyped gender representations in textbooks is developmental and constant.

People had changes toward understandings of gender in terms of the social and grammatical sense in 1990s. In a 1989 publication, Humm (1989) defines gender as a set of culturally-structured attributes and acts given to men and women appears to be useful while it sounds dogmatical and misleading ten years later. Specifically, Humm's perspective of attributes and acts further triggers the question of "by what or whom" and "how men and women passively receive these attributes and acts". Butler (1990) considers that current interpretation of gender is more complicated paying attention to gender issues in various ways, a sense of "masculine" and "feminine" while gender is not viewed as determined. Thus the advanced way to treat gender in language education is needed. Papers regarding gender and education still exist and identify female groups as victims and violate diversity and individuality where are parts of classrooms in spite of its well intention. Due to gender bias's pervasive effect, it influences people's life and

study in various ways, from their acts and roles in family career to the cognitive values and beliefs to the occupation selection in the future. Based on the new interpretation of gender and improvements on common gender issues in language classrooms, this study aims to:

1. Illustrate the necessity of gender representations in language teaching, especially in students' EFL textbooks;
2. Raise teachers' awareness regarding gender bias in EFL textbooks;
3. Promote students' awareness of gender bias through designing effective classroom activities;
4. Provide pedagogical implications for practice of classroom teaching;
5. Avoid stereotyped gender representations in future teaching and learning through analyzing gender bias in EFL textbooks.

The following chapters will discuss biased gender representations in textbooks broadly to narrowly: Chapter 2 literature review introduces the background of gender issues in our nations and foreign nations, the background of gender in education and studies on stereotyped gender representations of textbooks abroad and in China; Chapter 3 raises research question based on the research for literature view; Chapter 4 methodology is mainly consisted of theoretical framework, data and methods and data analysis methods; Chapter 5 results demonstrates the results of both textbook examinations and interviews and Chapter 6 actually makes further interpretation for results and previous studies on literature review as well as provides some pedagogical suggestion in classrooms.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. GENDER

Gender is always expressed as masculine and feminine terms, which is largely culturally determined and is presented as the sex they bear.

Parents tend to believe the gender of their children is in accordance with the sex at birth. And children may come to conceive that they do not identify themselves in that way or choose to express themselves differently in the process of their growth (Cartwright & Nancarrow, 2022). This study examine biased gender representations in textbooks, hence extended discussions for gender bias and gender representations are needed.

1. Gender bias

Gender bias is identified as an inaccurate perception with regard to a group of people or a set of values, and preferential treatments towards one of the gender over another. These cognition are often based on bias concerning attributes as in gender, race, or sexual orientation (Palacio, 2019). The indication of gender bias includes inequality on women, disregard and restriction of gender rights, also oppression on women, which is the consequences of manifest form of bias within the society (Barajas-Sandoval et al., 2022). For example, UN Women depicted gender bias for women as "conducting in insecure and underpaid employment, also occupying a minor number of those in superior positions and having restricted access to economic resources and engaging in constituting social and economic regulations".

2. Gender representation

Pakuła et al. (2015) mention that representation could be defined as something done by someone (or an individual or a group) in a kind of certain way, and this certain way expand to the domains of language, writing and visuals, such as written and visual representation in textbooks. In the written, spoken and visual texts, representation is further argued that be associated with the potential consciousness of texts compilers. It may results in biased representations in terms of gender; while the meaning endowed for representation in language texts does not imply that speakers or writers are the

unique origin (Sunderland, 2015).

B. GENDER BIAS IN THE WORLD

As Millan et al. (2014) mentions, gender equality is that every people have equal or similar access to economic, educational and social conditions regardless of gender. While gender inequality penetrates women's lives from their birth to adulthood. Despite there are some discrepancy, this issue truly happens in every country of the globe (Browne et al., 2022). For example, women groups are confronted with hindrance that undermine their opportunities of having equal access to economic, political and educational participation (Browne et al., 2022). Moreira and Sales Oliveira (2022) indicate that gender disparity between men and women is recognized by many people as the entrenched issue of the society. Despite significant changes have been made in recent several decades, the situation of gender issues worldwide still have a long road to go to reach the ideal pattern where all people, in spite of their gender, are not restrained to make their own choices. Moreover, the huge discrepancy between nations and regions still persists; thus this kind of condition is considered as the focal issue in the international political policy (Cascella et al., 2022). Furthermore, the latest analysis from World Economic Forum (WEF) (2022) indicates it will take around 132 years on average eliminate gender bias against women globally. The WEF has analyzed gender disparity in nations in the world since 2006. And WEF indicated the gender gap in education has relatively narrowed in the recent report on worldwide gender gap index standard within 146 nations. This result might be satisfactory, while prospective estimation notes that 14.2 years would be taken to be significantly alleviated, half a billion females aged 15 years old and over are illiterate (UN75, 2021).

C. GENDER BIAS IN CHINA

As Shu (2004) mentions the alteration of gender equality in China has evolved at different historical

periods. Women are expected to compliance with men due to the feudal society of gender ethics throughout much time of Chinese long history, and Liu (2014) indicates that female group were constrained to household scope with compelled duty to perform as a "responsible mother and considerate wife". Men have a comparatively superior social and familial status than women. In details, the symbol of father was deemed as the authority in the family field; therefore authority of men was established then stabilized by division of labour based on gender (Shu, 2004). Zuo (2009) reveals principal in Chinese patriarchal system, requiring absolute obedience from women at the same time attaching men much more power in ancient times. Besides, men-based norms rooted in family field where male were generally granted authorized power over female from the perspective of being in charge and managing economic resources (Yan, 2003). Li (2000) shows tangible historical transformative movements since initial 20th century were ran to promote gender equality accentuate, which accentuates female right of accessing to education and entering employment.

Throughout several decades, Chinese government is devoted to advocating gender equality between men and women (Loscco & Bose, 1998), gender perception and social status of women have been thus ascended. For instance, Chinese government has constructed basic national guideline of gender equality, also giving men and women equivalent legal rights. Under the influence the reform, women's social status in China has been risen accompanied with more employment opportunities and education access (Research Group, 2006). World Economic Forum (2021) demonstrates with a commitment to improve gender equality for decades, Chinese women's educational registration has achieved stable promotion, also China recently has attained in an acceptable place in the education sphere. Furthermore, documents, for example, the

Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020), published by government supported rules of gender equality should mirrored in the educational sphere, for instance equality in impartial curriculum syllabus and discipline domain (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2011). Nevertheless, there still demands more efforts in order to bring principles into effect.

According to Chinese university students' choices for majors (Liu & Morgan 2020; Sheng, 2015), the study reveals majority of male students go to science department, for example, engineering, chemistry and mathematics; yet more female students than male major in art such as education, journalism and foreign language. Fleming et al. (2020) suppose that this divergence is probably caused by domain of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) where male students are regarded as more suitable for science subjects than female students by elders (Gunderson et al., 2012). The divergence may accordingly have impact on career prospect of students. In China's universities, research by Liu and Morgan (2020) mentions female postgraduates prefer choosing settled job such as teachers or public servants. Women express that acceptable income and stable employment enable them to have more time to make a balance between family and career. Comparatively, men participants were inclined to find a decent job with well-paid salary after graduating from universities. Sheng (2012) argues patriarchy-dominant system may result in differential expectations for careers in China; while women group are demanded to assign more time for family to take care of children and backing husband. Many scholars demonstrated textbooks for students can deliver gender ideologies to the younger generation; consequently intensifying properly gender roles and publicizing principal gender values to them (Lee, 2019; Lee & Collins 2010).

D. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN EFL TEXTBOOKS WORLDWIDE

Preceding researches denote gender equity differs in nations (Ladge et al., 2018). Relevant researchers have examined acts of gender in EFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) textbooks or study materials appeared applied outside mainland China.

1. Potential influence behind textbooks

Widodo (2018) pinpoints textbooks hold attitude-loaded and demonstration criterion as authentic study materials, which use to mould values and thoughts of learners. Besides, Chinese textbooks deliver authority of government just as officially formulated study materials applied in classrooms. And English textbooks are compiled on the basis of *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education Phase* published by Ministry of Education. English classes are valuable for promoting language capability of students as well as providing construction of humanism values for language learners. Specifically, English curriculum is supposed to improve students building healthy characters (MoE, 2011). It implies that language textbooks have impact on ideologies of learners as well as conveying them knowledge. School textbooks make learners recognize those design curriculum materials (whether it is country or institutions, official press or individual producers) intend to let learners to accept is that this domestic or regional identities acknowledged as fitting and advisable (Vickers, 2005). As Tan (2020) suggests gender is viewed as a fundamental component when cultivating social identification. Sunderland (2005) comments, in this case, more attention is urged to pay on gender representations in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks. Meanwhile, the way teachers and students view textbooks to some extent influence students' cognition for gender

representations.

2. Nations outside mainland China

Romanian portrayals of females were stereotyped and females did not appear to be despised in Syria or India, while the whole forms imply noticeable convergence. By contrast, there are some instances at state-government level in Sweden to amend gender bias in teaching-learning materials. Stromquist (2007) presents that Nordic nations have succeeded in reducing bias on male groups over forty-year endeavors. Sweden is the pioneer as well as the focal point and curriculum here specifically supports and promotes gender equality (Sweden, 2006). In the research of Eilard (2006), studies on gender and ethnicity of a new first grade reader in Swedish multi-ethnic comprehensive schools where in school learning materials, revealing that slight gender bias for girls in textbooks still remains while the place of male students are more accessible and flexible to alter than female students. Nevertheless, changes of roles and acts on gender representations are considerable, which boys are accepted to behave in a childish and delicate way, meanwhile girls are encouraged to “grow up”. Boys are encouraged to freely express their personal emotions and moods, and would not be excluded the group of masculinity due to their tenderness. As well girls’ roles are not depicted as submissive or serve for the family and society.

Actually, Carlson (2007) indicates that there might be some consciously stereotyped representations in learning materials, which means gender-biased depictions instilled into textbooks intentionally are from their authors or compilers. This result may derive from biased gender perceptions and values those who compiled textbooks. Despite the study of Carlson also shows characteristics and values of learning materials and textbooks in language curriculum for Turkish immigrants and examine the rules of gender equality. However,

specific texts regarding to this sensitive argument are not actually revealed, for instance, whether gender-unequal representations existed in textbooks based on rules of gender equality.

On the contrary, the discipline of gender equality in Sweden seems to be more mediate, such as the illustration of division of labor force within the family field and the portrayal of who work with what in the work field. Also the most evident implication for distribution equality in daily routine appears to be found in the descriptions of various housework. A common picture shows that *the modern man* is a man who is in an apron when doing some household jobs, which appears to reveal readers that male groups extricate themselves from previous stereotyped images. Wellros (1995) have made reaction in an article to what she labels ideologically organized representations in school textbooks and insisted that parts of textbooks are intentionally surpassing structures of comparably gender bias in Sweden’s regular life. Put it in a simple way, the data about labor division in Swedish family refer to utterly distinct portrayals from that of presented in language textbooks. The researches of social science indicate the higher participation of men in Nordic nations when doing family activities than that of in non-Nordic nations. In this case, people from many sectors have the initial realization to reduce biased gender representations in textbooks. Although Swedish textbooks are consciously beyond various audiences’ life experience, it is an appropriate opportunity to combine gender-equal representations of textbooks with specific gender bias in life. Nevertheless, this issue still be pendent, for instance, investigating the field of education, economy and labor force under the sexist pattern and strive to make these gender bias diminished.

Another examination is on gender-unequal representations in textbooks of Northern Iraq in order to explore to what extent gender bias is

showed in these language materials. Unequal use and imbalanced proportion of adjectives for men and women have penetrated in textbooks over the several decades (Islam & Asadullah, 2018). For example, character-dominant adjectives like *responsible*, *powerful* or *ambitious* are employed to endow roles of men. By contrast, adjectives as in *soft*, *caring* or *emotional* are widespread throughout gender representations when looking at situations of women. Additionally, the use proportion of adjectives are preferential for men, this group owns more depiction for personality and acts than their counterparts. In Kurdish Regional Government schools, English is studied throughout majority time of students from primary school to their high school. Therefore, these students are exposed to see, hear, read and write through experiencing gender-biased representations when they conduct their language learning, namely English as a foreign language. Consequently, those EFL learners who experienced gender-stereotyped representations would extend or reproduce when entering other fields in the future. It not only has impacts on their social beliefs, but also domestic and occupational roles beliefs (Kallab et al., 1982).

3. In mainland China

In preceding researches, gender representations in EFL textbooks examined outside mainland China have attempted to examine how depictions of gender are manifested in EFL textbooks (Lee & Collins, 2010). Although endeavors on gender equality have strengthened, many problems were still found from language textbooks and materials in mainland China. In this part, three gender representations are continuously investigated in terms of: 1) imbalanced proportions of female-male representations in words and illustrations; 2) stereotypical gender roles and acts for female and male; and 3) the placements of gender's names and pronouns (Clark, 2016). Therefore, three analysis methods consisted of content analysis, linguistic and visual analysis are

employed to make examination.

Content analysis

Content analysis usually used to examine throughout one or more whole textbook or units instead of one single conversation. Based on Sunderland's (2015) study, numbers of occurrence of *she* and *he* means that each character will be numbered as once, no matter how many times they appear. Researches for enumerating the occurrence frequency of male and female including their roles and characters are considered as examining the gender visibility. Islam and Asadullah (2018) indicate that evident deficiency of specific gender is identified as a kind of negative stereotypes as well as a exclusion, and implying stereotypical gender representations to a large extent. The occurrence frequency of men and women characters can include with names and pronouns, as in *Mr. Brown*, *Bob*, *he* and *him*. Correspondingly, the many researches previously had investigated 24 top education texts used by students and teachers and then revealed 23/24 employed fewer than 1% content to achievements and challenges of females, also 8/24 see the absence of women's occurrence. have shown that textbooks in 1960s eliminate basically all important female characteristics. Jin (2002) have found relatively modest while statistically essential development, such as female group had made up only 5% of names in indexes in the 1980s, 13% in the 1990s and 16% in the 1990s.

The study of Jin (2002) on gender issues in textbooks showed that characters of male and female made up 63% and 37% respectively in 1970 to 1991. Xiong et al. (2017) found male descriptions reached to 61% while female to 39%, among which a subtle 2% increase. In this case, imbalanced gender proportions in textbooks indeed speed up gender bias. The research in 2002 showed from 1988 to 2001. Female-associated amounts increased to 3.4%, among which 7.3% in the introduction texts

while only 1.3% in the 16 method books of reading, science and social studies. Social studies provide the most coverage (2.5%) and the least reading textbooks (0.3%). Furthermore, researchers also revealed that textbooks nowadays are less offensive than those preceding published (more than 20 years ago). In brief, it seems that the intensity of stereotypes is reducing: despite the numbers did not show dramatic improvement, the most obvious examples of gender bias have eliminated or disappeared. Ironically, some people believe this campaign has already achieved the ideal pattern and efforts flows into new areas.; therefore this issue cannot be dismissed.

Linguistic analysis

Sunderland (2000) reveal another common analysis method of gender stereotypes is made through linguistic analysis, which mainly highlights linguistic features. This kind of analysis demonstrate the subtle representations of gender bias in textbooks as in names and pronouns of placements of both genders, but method of content analysis can ignore these nuanced gender elements or representations.

Lee (2014) denotes a indication of women's submissive position (or inferior status) can also be constructed through the conventional placements putting names or pronouns or name addresses of women after those of men in some phrases, for instance, *father and mother* or *Mr.Green and Mrs Green*. Consequently, Hartman and Judd's (1978) investigation on EFL textbooks was the first attempt to address the biased gender representation of the linguistic convention of male superiority in those common noun phrases, for example, *brother and sister*, and *he and she*. Recent studies of EFL learning materials in both primary and middle schools also discover that the placements of male appear to be more preferentially mentioned when two gender are both presented (Lee & Collins, 2010).

Moreover, recent researches has extended the scope of paired gendered noun phrases. For example,

based on Yang's (2011) study regarding to gender bias on a set of textbooks in primary schools, which also considers the issue of gender placements in relation to pairs of individual names such as *John and Cindy*. Names of two gender placing do not be identified as a convention, which different from name addresses like *Mr and Mrs*. Apart from paired gender names, their possessive nouns, for instance *Hank and Judy's* bags, subject and object pronouns as in *he and she*, *him and her*, are also needed to attract users' attention. Changes of gender-stereotyped representations may start from the balanced use of gender placements.

Visual analysis

Lee and Collins (2010) mention that EFL school textbooks always comprise visual elements since they play an key role in attract students' learning interest. Visual elements in textbooks include both pictures and line drawings regarding human or non-human features and activities (Yang, 2016).

As for visual analysis, according to Lee and Mahmoudi-Gahrouei (2020), men were generally depicted as joining in school organizations or sports programs while women were confined to stay at background of schools or home. Yi (2002) illustrates that the domains of scientists and soldiers are all male groups participating in when analyzing social study texts. And men are dominant in the public area while women are in the private area, even an influential woman in the political field is described as being adept at taking care of family and commending clothes. In the analysis of 12-volume primary school textbooks, Guo and Zhao (2002) demonstrate that women hold around 20% proportion of historical portrayals; accordingly in contrast with dynamic male group, typical stereotypes make them more unanimated. Apart from these researches, researchers also focus on exploring EFL textbooks in terms of gender in China. Study results demonstrated there is an evident disparity of male-female proportion in

EFL textbooks from Guangdong province (Xiong et al., 2017). Chinese academics have declared the gap between gender ratio and career roles' gender stereotype as the pattern of stereotype for the moment in social study materials where is accordance with discoveries of language textbooks investigation proceeded in global scope (Jin, 2002).

Nevertheless, stereotypical gender is mirrored in textual gender representations of textbooks and those defined social division of labor, also instilled in activities connected with men and women. Ruiz-Cecilia and Marín-Macías (2020) considers females are often investigated to be related to recreation activities, for example, manicuring, cooking or taking pictures. On the contrary, males were described as the image of being leisure with disinclination while the fans of challenging works. Correspondingly, males were portrayed as more progressive than females in learning materials (Lee, 2019). In textbooks, they are generally occupied with work or challenged risks; however women were represented as the followers of food cooking, baby caring and makeup making. Discoveries revealed stereotypical genders not only embodied on gender distribution of texts, but also reflected on actions conducted by males and females thorough analyzing these gendered traits (Lee, 2019). But it still requires further researches on how gender representations are appeared in Chinese textbooks and what is the interpretation of gender inequality in the eyes of various students.

Overall, limited measures aiming to eliminate gender stereotypes in textbooks are with the advent of textbooks' gender examination, which should raise much more attention. The conducive method to supply these conspicuous gaps should make further investigation and conduct to relieve the intangible hindrance of gender equality in education sphere (Blumberg, 2008).

E. GENDER BIAS IN EDUCATION

According to UNESCO, everybody has the

fundamental right to receive education. In recent years, increased international and local organizations have been making endeavors to provide men and women equal access to education and fair treatment during their educational time. It is named gender equality, and its implication and influence for progress are identified universally worldwide Galacgac (2017). It might maintain its fundamental position of the post-2015 education agenda globally as recognized in *World Declaration on Education for All* (UNESCO, 2000), millennium development goals in 2000 and UNESCO's midterm tactic for 2014 - 2021 and 2022 - 2029 (UNESCO, 2022). Nevertheless, the efforts have been made by national and international organizations to transform gender equality in the educational field, bias against women still remains from schools to the society. Gender inequality in the work field has widely existed for more than decades (Niemeyer & Colley, 2015). And the proportion of women's participation in the commercial domain as well as educational industry is noticeable (Egun & Tibi, 2010).

Based on the study of Hegna (2017), as international development programs have identified gender equality as a focal point, many nations have gradually embedded the object of predominant gender in their countries' policies. The mainstreaming of gender is policy worldwide to reinforce gender equality through investigating the influence of policies and structures for men and women. Although many aspects of the current society truly as it is, education nowadays is regarded as one of the most efficient and acceptable ways to eliminate or reduce gender bias in social system since a generation with gender-sensitive belief is developed in school years. Learners could enhance their potentials when these people who have equal access to education and benefit from its opportunities will dedicate to the development of the society. More significantly, teachers are also seen as the core of

education equality and gender equality by members from UNESCO due to their acts in disseminating knowledge and values and cultivate students potential skills. Considering the development in embedding gender into education, the challenge is changing institutional practices and cultures to back this program (Rahman et al., 2017). The first attempt is to mandate to have gender-conscious studies to examine the gender issues that have existed in institutions and to investigate their relations with some outcomes in academia, for example, gender bias present in school curriculum, learning materials or teaching methods (DepEd, 2013).

F. GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN EFL TEACHING

In the previous studies, education should accentuate breakthroughs made in gender-related education, promoting discussion of gender issues between teachers and students through effective courses design and establish knowledge of gender issues by integrating all genders' views, instead of those of the dominant gender. Besides, In the research of Tasi (2008), one of the most key purposes in gender-equal education is to achieve the dual educational results from the aspects of the society, culture, and the level of school and family. Gender-equal education aims to decrease gender bias and gender stereotypes, also enhances gender equality and gender diversity. This education seeks to build a society where is not restrained with gender roles, gender expectations, and gender discrimination. However, there are still some examples of gender bias in language teaching in classrooms.

In the same manner, teacher-learners interaction is also under the stereotypes in the classroom-observation researches. In Zhang (2003)'s research, it depicts how middle school students show their contradictory opinions on women roles, for example, mothers and teachers. 50% of them are unsatisfied with business mothers while prefer conventional

female roles, such as housewives; the remaining 29% students favor making a combination of both roles; and another 21% support career women-mothers. However, students firmly advocate a strong image of teacher and oppose housewives shaped by textbooks, which not keeping pace with modern family life. Similarly, Zhao (2003) explores contradictory views on gender roles in textbooks of English language teaching for middle school students. Despite both boys and girls participate in self-chosen activities, a piece of thought-provoking message implies "good girls" can shine as brightly at school as at home. Song (2003) also explores some science teachers still hold stereotype views, among which 71% teachers who read a description of a male student and assess him as a good science student while only 20% teachers assess a female student as a good one when the same description was added.

A concern tend to be considered is that how EFL teachers raise the issue of biased gender representations in language classrooms, what if students' expectations are inappropriate with teachers' inquiry? Not only at home, but also at school, similar results were made by other researchers who discovered that schools seldom provide chances for discussing gender stereotypes under the context of classrooms. Modica (2000) gives his positive learning experiences from a university-level EFL classes exploring the gender perception: learners with narrow English language proficiency who were initially silent and were soon joining conversations, even vehemently expressing themselves in group discussions. Summerhawk (1998) also raises the positive development of gender issues in EFL classrooms: many students may feel uncomfortable at the beginning when gender issues are being raised; while this feeling would be mitigated if the teaching methods are efficient. Thus during the process of exploring teaching strategies, another question should be taken into account:

how can appropriate teaching strategies be found to promote the EFL students' awareness of gender equality?

Examples above demonstrate that it is imperative to set up general gender-equal educational curriculum on gender issues to diminish gender bias, to eliminate gender stereotypes, and to promote students' awareness of gender equality and gender diversity. Therefore, whether gender-equal education can be successfully completed relies on how this curriculum is taught. The practices of gender-equal educational curriculum should consider following aspects: (a) teachers are supposed to maintain a neutral and flexible attitude when implementing teaching, (b) teachers should integrate their gender awareness and values into teaching and design the appropriate teaching methods, (c) teachers are required to ensure that discussed gender issues are consistent with social developments (Lin 2019).

G. WHAT SHOULD A GENDER-FAIR TEXTBOOK BE

Gender inequality can also be demonstrated as the texts and lexicon of a language. 'Linguistic gender bias denotes the usage of words, phrases or conversations in a way, which present imbalanced occurrence frequency or representations between women and men. Either gender, particularly females, is despised negated or excluded in textbooks. One of the form of linguistic gender bias is identified as the male-dominant ideology, which makes females diminished or makes them feel underappreciated. For the intention of amending gender-unequal representations of learning materials, many audiences of English textbooks have considerably used the gender-paired pronouns "he" or "she" or generic "they" in place of the generic masculine pronoun "he", and words suffixing with the morpheme "-person or -people" such as salesperson or salespeople in place of the masculine compounds. At the same time, some feminine words as in actress,

waitress and manageress have been obsoleted, and gender-unmarked words been used.

A gender-inclusive textbook puts emphasis on the achievements of both genders in discourses and representations. Additionally, it tends to clarify roles and acts of the "feminine" and "masculine" related to men and women: "domination" and "options" making with men and "sharing and caring" with women. Put it differently, gender-friendly textbooks attempt to reveal social realities where both males and females have contributions and engage in configuring the society, if not equally, then in a balanced way. It attempts to shape learners' cognition from their empirical reality to transformative reality where human ideologies, such as sharing and caring is the segment of both genders (Gouri, 2005). Moreover, another form of gender bias in textbooks is the conventional addressee order of putting female's orders after male's, reflecting the exclusivity of female, for example, Bob and Alice or Mr and Mrs Green.

Moreover, Blumberg (2008) indicates that someone views gender bias as a residual problem; someone shows apathy to gender bias in school textbooks, while someone consider gender bias still exist in textbooks. Therefore gender bias varies with different EFL learners, in other words, different people may have different interpretations of gender bias in textbooks. Studies with regard to biased gender representations are still required to proceed.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: Does biased gender representations still exist in English textbooks?

RQ2: How does biased gender representations reflect in EFL textbooks?

RQ3: Is it feasible to promote EFL learners' awareness of gender equality?

RQ4: What are the EFL students and learners' perceptions about designing a textbook with gender-equal representations?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The UNESCO classifies gender equality in education from four aspects: equality of access, equality in the educational process, equality of the educational results and equality of external outcomes (Wafa, 2021). Although continuous endeavors to expand women learners' school enrollment and job access, gender disparity has not been eliminated (Jones & Chant, 2009). As such, previous studies have shown that gender-stereotyped representations in textbooks still stand at the intersections of: 1) imbalanced distribution of male and female; 2) preferential placements of names and pronouns for only one gender and 3) differentiated gender roles and acts between men and women (Deliovsky, 2008).

Previous studies for examination on gender-unequal representations in EFL textbooks, revealing that women are largely (six times) to be represented as depending on male. In brief, male-associated arguments are over-represented in the examples of language learning and are presented in a more positive way than that of female. Underrepresented female concurrence and characteristics can be seen in textbooks; instead, there a large number of illustrations and depictions of male are demonstrated. In other words, occurrence frequency of men is considerably enormous while numbers of women' occurrence and characteristics almost invisible compared with their counterparts in textbooks (Wafa, 2021). For example, authors prefer using *he* or *him* instead of *she* or *her* in some language practices or sentence examples. As for personal addresses, names of women seems to directly disappear after their husbands'.

Apart from gender's occurrence proportion, the placements of names and pronouns for two genders are still existing in EFL textbooks, for instance, *Father and mother* or *Mr. Brown and Mrs. Brown*. There are rare women addressees to be put in front of

men's. These kinds of unequal gender representations may be invisible in the eyes of some people since they are used to the use of *he and she* rather than *she and he*. Thus it can be seen that the accustomed form of gender placements truly have a potential impact on people's perceptions; they consider that putting male names at the first place is normal while there may no thoughts come into mind concerning why women's cannot be put in front of male's.

According to Macionis (2012), conventional gender roles are socially created as characters of "feminine" (caring and emotional) and "masculine" (powerful and dominant), which assume that men are categorized as emotionless while women are as emotional. Ironically, men seem to be more socially criticized for deviating from the image of masculine stereotypes. Moreover, socially constructed gender bias would also expand to work roles as well as personal behaviors and emotions. Dominant gender rules specifically accentuate that men play important role in occupational fields while women in domestic fields; discuss men as active while women as passive (Parkins, 2012). There is a disparity between the roles played by women and those played by men. Women are often depicted as experiencing emotions or as perceived by others when they appear; on the contrary, men occupy in many social roles, for example, male are regularly portrayed as occupying dominantly in various domains, but women are still remaining underestimated except in serving fields. When it refers to the participation in economic and political domain, female are still in the excluded status in contrast with male (OECD, 2015). The image of women are often depicted in employment field as relying on men to complete their work. Representations of male characters are liable to be more dominant and they are prone to be represented as being in more socially and economically dominant service and better making decisions; but the mention proportions of female are dramatically smaller and

tend to be depicted as dependent and subordinate (Ombati & Ombati, 2012).

Some researchers also identify social and cultural factors as the dominant causes resulting in gender inequality. Nevertheless, the self-confidence disparity as added factor has been considered since women are educated and disciplined to distrust their capabilities throughout their youth period. More seriously in school education, particularly, if gender-unequal representations are presented in textbooks, it will intensify gender stereotypes by constantly misguiding knowledge girls received across their schooling time. When it comes to biased gender representations, studies indicated that they might not be directly accountable for empowerment while indirectly impacting students' values and beliefs (Batoool & Batoool, 2018); thus as young students have lacking of ability to make judgement, they are exposed to the impacts encountered in education or textbooks. In the study of Cru-Moya and Sánchez-Moya (2015), textbooks are considered as the means to spread knowledge and interact and socialize learners and new trainees in a domain at the same time. Therefore, textbooks are deemed as standard not only from the aspects of discipline-definitive content; but also regarding to dissemination of dominant social norms, values and acts. Also language learners spend a mass of time (80%-95%) in their schooling years, reducing stereotypical gender representations in textbooks have been categorized by the United Nation's Girl Education Initiative as one of the five significant challenges (Ombati & Ombati, 2012).

Overall, biased gender representations presented in textbooks would result in twisting young learners' self-perception, values and future career choices. It is necessary to perceive potential defects of gender representations in textbooks. Also, in order to enable both school girls and boys realize gender-biased representations in textbooks as well as promote

their gender-equal awareness, three EFL textbooks ranging from grade 7 to 9 (volume 2) published by PEP were adopted as examples to explore this issue. As presented before, follow-up research questions by studies attempt to address a set of regarding to biased gender representations in EFL textbooks as well.

B. DATA AND METHODS

1. Data collection and procedure

This research was based on data collection in mainland China, to examine biased gender representations in EFL textbooks. Data were derived from in-depth interviews. As Goldstein and Reiboldt (2004) mention that interview data support to focus on specific observation acts from participant. And it is essential that collect voices and views from participants with EFL teaching or learning experience in this study. Therefore, interviews are used as the main data collection method and 12 respondents were interviewed individually in Chinese or English on Tencent Meeting or in public places of the respondents' choices where they may feel comfortable. The form of audio and video were recorded with the consent of interviewees and then transcribed into Chinese literally. Various information was provided by these interviewees allowing the research more abundant and endow the issue gender representations in textbooks deep understanding. Actually there is no difference between online and in-person interviews that have been made successfully previously (Kim, 2018).

Each interview lasted around 25 to 60 minutes and was semi-structured, every respondent was given the answer of the same set questions regarding their EFL teaching or learning experience, views on gender bias and stereotyped gender representations in textbooks and potential reform of gender issues for textbooks. Gender issues in the learning materials was the main subject and interviewees were required to discuss their EFL teaching and learning experience under the context of gender issues.

Interviewees are asked clearly by the study whether they considered stereotyped gender representations still existed in textbooks, and whether they thought these stereotypes might be transformed into totally inclusive forms in the future.

2. Participants

The targeted participants in this study rest on the sample of undergraduate and graduate EFL learners from three Universities across five disciplinary areas (Business English, TESOL, Philosophy, Ethnology and Sustainable Energy Technology); also members of worked people (including EFL teachers and the dentist), in which all of them have EFL learning and teaching experience previously and currently. The sample was composed of 12 persons (54% of women, average age 25 years and 46% of men, average age 27 years) and the sample were not restricted to women only. This study tend to attain a balanced gender view of how both genders consider biased gender representations in textbooks differentiate between men and women, also how attach these views to gender equality in China. In both two cohorts, women were on average nearly 2 years younger than men. The the whole process of data collection lasted around two month and was a bit time consuming for looking for participants. Participants received interview questions with 12 items containing the background of gender issues, gender issues in education system and gender issues in EFL materials. They are asked to comment on their previous experiences and on gender bias in textbooks.

3. Instrument

This study adopts qualitative research method, making interviews. It can be classified as constructive because it not only analyzes the views' diversity from participants, but also explores and the potentiality of reforming learning materials to make it more inclusive (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research design provided explicit means for how

data were collected and organized that manifested the emerged gender issues when reinforcing gender equality in curriculum and learning materials.

C. DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

In the section of literature review, three main methods: content analysis, linguistic analysis and visual analysis, have been adopted for analyzing each gender feature in textbooks and addressing research questions. Each of them will be broadly introduced in this part.

1. Content analysis

Content analysis is identified as a systematic analysis method to analyze texts for “what they are doing for” and “aspects among them” by adopting qualitative method (Sunderland, 2011). Besides, content analysis usually goes to explore specific categories accompanied with categories' frequency numbers when gender bias in education appears. Also content analysis was used to answer RQ 1 and 2 in this study.

2. Linguistic analysis

Linguistic analysis mainly analyzes how gender bias is reflected and constructed through language choice and text structures, which combines words, phrases, dialogue or narratives. It is conducive to examine nuanced gender stereotypes and its relevant content forms. Linguistic analysis was also employed to address RQ 1 and 2.

3. Visual analysis

Visual analysis is considered as being linked with content analysis. It can be employed to answer questions, for example, “who or they are about” and “occurrence frequency of issues”. Hence gender illustrations in visual forms can be looked into by identifying categories such as gender roles or acts in drawings. This analysis was still used to answer RQ 1 to 2 in order to make research questions more conclusive.

V.RESULTS

Results mainly address four research questions

through analyzing biased gender representations in placements of pronouns, appearance proportions of genders and roles and acts of genders in textbooks, also interviewing 12 participants to let them talk about their opinions on gender issues in textbooks. The end of every exploration of two research questions will be attached with the conclusion of studies' results.

A. RESULTS OF TEXTBOOK EXAMINATION

This part mainly addresses research questions 1 to 2 through exploring gender representations. In order to make results more convincing, pictures will be provided directly to explain.

RQ1: Does biased gender representations still exist in English textbooks?

RQ2: How does biased gender representations reflect in EFL textbooks?

Incorporating following three tables into one, it can be seen that biased gender representations truly exist in EFL textbooks. The imbalanced gender appearance percentages and unbalanced gender roles and acts both indicate unequal gender representations are needed to be addressed. It also provides underlying clues for further research whether it is necessary and possible to transform textbooks to eliminate gender bias.

The following three pictures was found in classroom practices of textbooks, in the given examples, *he* and *men's name* were widely common to be seen in materials. In both Fig.1(a), instead of *Alice is the best signer because she can sing very well*, the subject of *Tom and he* was provided as a demonstration for EFL students to imitate and conduct to write sentences. Besides, in Fig.1 (b), activities of challenges and solution expanded around *he*. Furthermore, Fig.1 (c) had more male characteristics such as *brothers, Paul, Bob, John, father, Bill and Dale* than female characteristics; and only two female names were *Cindy and sisters*. Lastly, in Tab.1, appearance numbers of pronouns

and names for men and women was clearly presented, it can be seen that male occurred much more frequently than female.

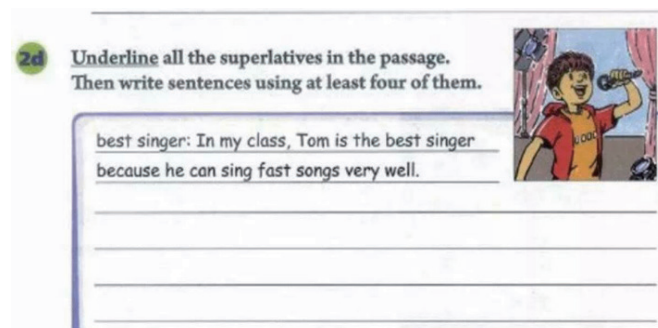


Fig.1 (a)

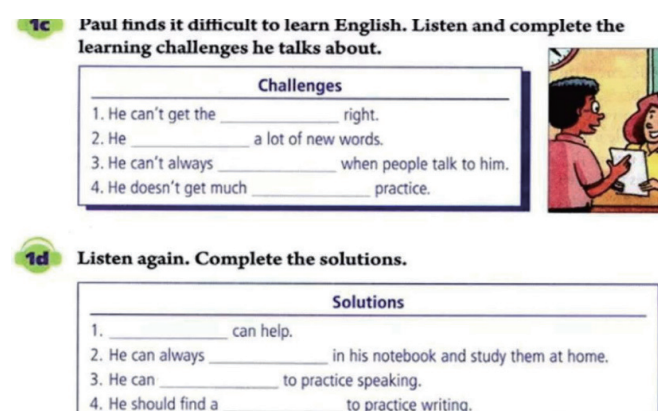


Fig.1 (b)

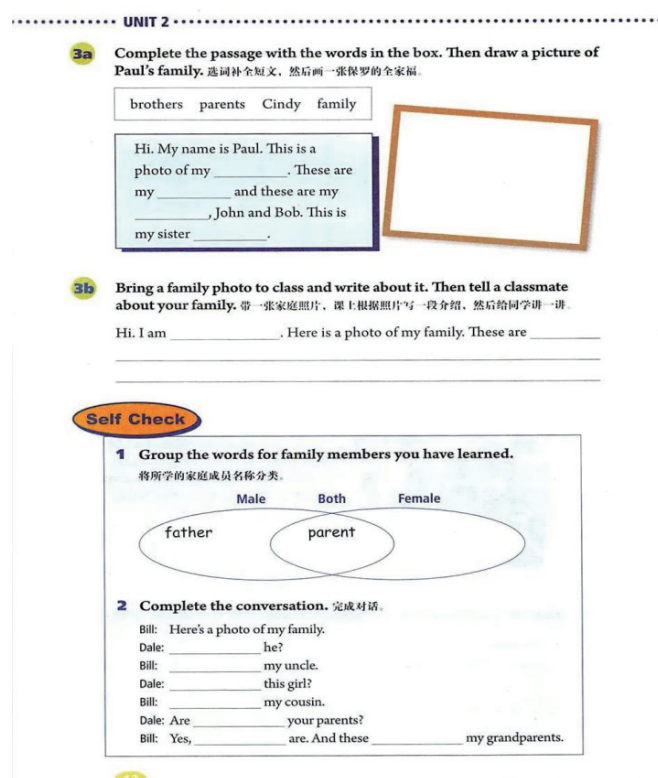


Fig.1 (c)

Fig.1 (a-c). Occurrence of "he" and "Tom"

Tab.1. Appearance numbers of pronouns and names

	Appearance number of pronouns(he,she)	Appearance number of names(Alan,Anna...)	Total
Men	217	114	331
Women	187	97	286

Simply exploring the pronoun placements of men and women is necessary; therefore two figures were provided here. In Fig.2 (a), *he* appeared in front of *she*. Even if the activity assigned in Fig.2 (b): *imagine you are somebody* was hard to avoid the situation of putting pronouns *he* ahead of *she*. Also in Tab.2, some other common male names and pronouns, for example, father, grandfather and

brother were markedly more than women's since the situation of putting names and pronouns for women at the first place was zero. It appears that textbook compilers tend to be conditioned to put men characteristics at the front when compiling materials.

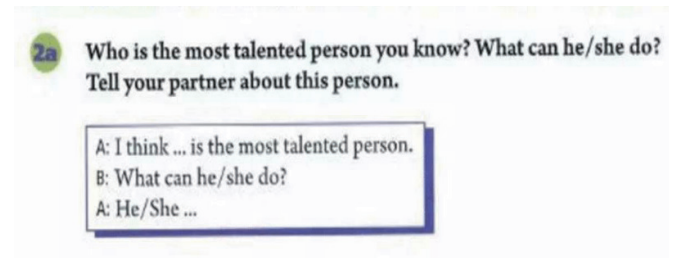


Fig.2 (a)

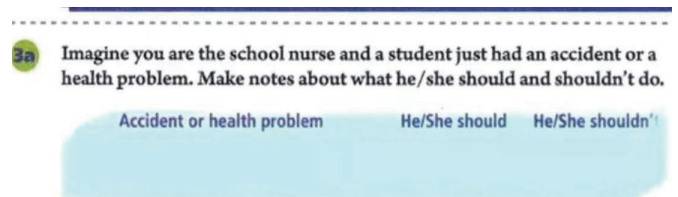


Fig.2 (b)

Fig.2 (a-b). Pronouns of placements

Tab.2. The use frequency of "men and women"

Pronoun placements of men	Numbers	Pronoun placements of women	Numbers
He and she	137	She and he	39
Him and her	56	Her and him	3
Father and mother	13	Mother and father	0
Grandfather and grandmother	11	Grandmother and grandfather	0
Brother and sister	8	Sister and brother	0
Total:275		Total:42	

Fig.3 demonstrated a daily conversation between mom and her son. The boy keep asking her mom the position of bag, map and hat and this mom almost answer immediately, which means she is familiar with her son's daily life, also she takes care her son very well. Moreover, according to Tab.3, men truly contributed to family, but compared with women, they were inferior. Women are usually depicted as the image of supporting family.

2c Ask and answer questions about the things in the picture in 2b. 就 2b 图中物品的位置与同伴问答。

A: Are the keys on the sofa?
B: No, they aren't. They're on the table.

2d Role-play the conversation. 分角色表演对话。

Mom: Come on, Jack!
Jack: Oh, no! Where's my bag?
Mom: Hmm ... is it on your desk?
Jack: No. And it's not under the chair.
Mom: Oh! It's on the sofa.
Jack: Thank you, Mom. Err ... where's the map?
Mom: I think it's in your grandparents' room.
Jack: Yes, it's on their bed! And my hat?
Mom: It's on your head!
Jack: Oh, yeah! Haha!



Fig.3. An conversation between mom and her son

Tab.3. Roles' Distribution of men and women

Roles of men	Appearance Frequency	Roles of women	Appearance Frequency
Taking care children	1	Taking care children	3
Doing housework	1	Doing housework	5
		Having conversations with children	12
		Helping children find clothes, pencils and rules	2
Total: 2		Total: 22	

B. Results of interviews

This part addresses research questions 3 to 4. In order to keep the confidentiality of each participant, their name of the following analysis will use the form of alias. To analyze the data, each interview was transcribed and read thoroughly. Records were made what information interviewees considered as important and repeated.

RQ3: Is it feasible to promote EFL learners' awareness of gender equality?

Noticeably, the interview time of interviewee 1 was dramatically longer than any other interviewees; thus included much emphasis. Although interviewee 1 did not mention too much definition and causes of gender bias, she transited her personal experiences to the discussion of possibility to promote students' awareness of gender bias. She considered teaching fair gender ideologies as an "idealism" since it is hard to define what is fair of the concept of gender bias. What teachers believe may not necessarily correct. Instead paying excessive attention to convey students equal gender beliefs, the best way is to focus on students' scores since their ultimate goal access to the entrance examination. Apart from that, for

middle school students, they are too young to realize and assume the concept of gender bias. The second interviewee, the EFL teacher, who holds the similar opinion with the interviewee 1. She thought there was not feasible to deliver students awareness of fair gender equality as students' main task was language learning. But as a teacher, she would attempt to appropriately remind the gender issue if gender stereotypes appear in the teaching process, maybe the result is not that ideal. The same result went to interviewee 4, she believed this task is a huge project because one teacher are not able to allow all EFL students hold equal gender beliefs in classrooms. It is time-consuming and less effective as the core of classes may deviate from language teaching to mainly discuss gender issues.

On the contrary, all the remaining interviewees held the positive opinion on conveying gender quality to students. As students cannot only have competence in academia, they are more required to behave well in values and beliefs. It was noting among interviewee 5 and 8, which they not only approved the possibility of equal gender dissemination, but also provided some suggestions in pedagogy. They believed that teachers play important role in teaching language knowledge, apart from this, have the responsibility to disseminate students positive values in order to promote their comprehensive development. Besides interviewee 5 believed the period of middle schools are the appropriate time for students to promote equal gender ideologies since their gender cognition are on the stage of enlightenment. For primary students, they are too young to have the understandings of gender. And for high school students they have almost formed their own gender cognition, which are influenced by their family thus it is hard to change. Furthermore, interviewee 8 considered that teachers' views are sometimes subjective, it would be also biased if teachers educate students

with their subjective experiences and judgement. Therefore setting training programs for EFL teachers is necessary since the identification of gender bias should be confirmed by Ministry of Education. This opinion is valuable as it may provide explicit orientation for textbook compilers and publishers to impel the next progress on the advancement of textbooks. Compared with previous studies, there is rare criterion for identify gender bias as well as training programs prepared for teachers.

In a word, according to Tab.4, the overall results tend to believe that it is feasible to promote EFL learners' awareness gender equality through training programs made for teachers and effective teaching methods used in classrooms.

Tab.4. 12 participants thought of feasibility of enhancing students' gender awareness

Interviewee	Feasible	Not feasible
Interviewee1	1	1
Interviewee2		1
Interviewee3		1
Interviewee4	1	
Interviewee5		1
Interviewee6		1
Interviewee7		1
Interviewee8		1
Interviewee9		1
Interviewee10		1
Interviewee11		1
Interviewee12		1
	Total: 2	Total: 10

RQ4: What are the EFL students and learners' perceptions about designing a textbook with gender-equal representations?

This question seems to have more space to let participants answer. For the positive side, in other words, it was potential to design a gender-fair textbooks. Interviewee 6 and 8 thought this

task not so difficult to complete because textbooks are always on the progress of revision in order to conform different teaching and learning situations. It could be better to achieve the goal if the requirement of gender bias elimination is raised by MOE as nothing can be convincing than documents released by official organization. The edition of authority will avoid the issue as much as possible. And interviewee 6 believed that gender issues are becoming more considerably discussed in the current society. Despite the discussion of gender bias in education or textbooks might not universal, this issue will become more prevalent than before, then reform will be followed.

When it refers to the negative side, interviewee 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 held that gender-fair textbooks does not exist. Their reasons why was impossible to design gender-equal textbooks were outlined in terms of human resources, funds and social institution. Interviewee 1 and 9 thought human resources were the biggest obstacle instead of funds. Since it is unpractical to particularly find compilers with gender-equal awareness while allocate funds for educational reform is common. However, interviewee 2, 3 and 11 strongly considered the current situation cannot be changed due to the social institution since dominant social and economic resources are absorbed by male group. Interviewee 2 experiences in language teaching in schools and she saw almost all executive leaders are men. In this case, she thought these decision-making people who were reluctant to make changes and were willing to maintain the current situation. Besides, interviewee 5 and 7 thought all three reasons resulted in this reform impossible. They thought compiling textbooks was a huge job; three aspects should be taken into account if a textbook with gender-equal representations attempts to be compiled.

In the end, interviewee 4, 10 and 12 stood in the neutral position. They considered this reform

may be successful or unsuccessful, and it is hard to give an exact answer. Actually it depends on the decision of MOE and determination of EFL teachers and students, specifically, teachers' teaching necessity and students' needs analysis. Moreover, the consciousness of women's liberation truly exist in the society, which means a good start. Although its result might be luminous, there is still a long road to go and

reach the pattern of equal gender representations in textbooks. If the result is not good, it is normal.

In a word, the negative side outweighs than the positive side, which can be seen at Tab.5. It appears that the issue of textbook recompiling is blocked by many obstacles; meanwhile some considerations should not be dismissed.

Tab.5. Participants' attitudes towards the reform in designing gender-equality textbooks and why they hold this kind of attitude

Interviewee	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Reasons
Interviewee1			1	Human resources are the biggest hindrance
Interviewee2			1	Social institutions
Interviewee3			1	Social institutions
Interviewee4		1		Depend on students and teachers' needs
Interviewee5			1	Social institutions, funds and human resources
Interviewee6	1			Textbook reform is common
Interviewee7			1	Social institutions, funds and human resources
Interviewee8	1			Social development needs
Interviewee9			1	Human resources are the biggest obstacles
Interviewee10		1		Depend on students and teachers' needs
Interviewee11			1	Social institutions
Interviewee12		1		Depend on students and teachers' needs
Total: 2		Total: 3	Total: 7	

VI. Discussion

A. Analysis for results of textbook examination

The study has identified that substantial attempts and efforts have been made to avoid gender- stereotyped portrayals in textbooks, along with gender structures of texts and drawings giving women more extensive choices of acts.

1. "Cross-gender"

A gender-equality view derived from following three analysis, which is that men and boys have

the rights to be emotional. Men were found to be depicted as expressing their 'cross-gender' emotions and moods, hence these people who are tend to be depicted as emotionally delicate and weak. Traditional conventions endow men that they have to be responsible for heavy loads, physically powerful and emotionally tough. Men whose personality is effeminate would be ridiculed by people around them as abnormal, especially their families and friends. In those people's minds, it appears that a man must be

“masculine”, otherwise this man would be identified as “sissy”. Actually the word “sissy” is full of sexism since it despises both men and women at the same time. In addition, when it refers to this certain image of men representations, they are not only allowed to pursue adventurous activities, but also encourage preferring some “quiet” activities that are often attached to female group such as painting or reading. Since there is no hobby or activity is exclusive to one person or a certain group.

2. Occurrence frequency of men and women

Additionally, in general, men outweigh significantly than women in occurrence frequency of textbooks, which means occurrence numbers of women are considerably underestimated in each gender category looked into the textbooks. Most texts represent men as the dominants, hence enhancing students the gender belief that men are more worthwhile mentioned than women. Gender is constructed by the society, caused by biology instead; hence how male and female genders produced by society are published and kept in terms of “constructive and normal” rules. Under the background of societal endeavors on contending with gender bias in education and extensive stress on English language education, schooling and English textbooks are supposed to serve as a medium to convert prejudiced status of genders rather than keeping biased or intrinsic gender values.

3. Names and pronouns’ placements of men and women

Imbalanced pronouns placements seems to be dismissed since learning materials compilers, teachers and students consider it as normal since it has always been so. People do not have the consciousness of “firstness of women”, instead, they tend to put names or pronouns of male in front of women’s in daily writing or conversations. To investigate the situation of pronouns placements of men and women does not necessarily mean to give

some kinds of priority to women. As some women are actually in virtue of the flag of gender equality and take feminism as an excuse and they will ask more benefits from others and take it for granted, for example, demanding other always make concessions for them. One of the ultimate goal for developing feminism movement and exploring gender stereotypes in textbooks are striving for equal rights between men and women.

4. Gender roles of men and women

Furthermore, the domain of gender cannot be confined only to quantities or numbers. By comparison with quantifying gender representations as the single evaluation, gender issues in language textbooks can be further revealed by examining subtle and perceptive portrayals of gender activities and roles. Since examining gender roles and acts in school textbooks play a critical role in gender equality. In language textbooks where activities and roles of gender concerning males and females might be consciously or potentially. Subsequently a substantial extent of gender imbalance in specific categories are identified, for example, the distribution for roles of men and women in the occupational and domestic field, originating from the prevalence in which a variety of men characters are demonstrated. That is the reason why males and females were depicted in textbooks accompanied by differentiated identities. The characters of “mom”, “sister”, “grandmother” and “she” are usually represented as taking care of children and supporting family, while “dad”, “brother”, “grandfather”, and “he” are depicted as the image of pursuing their career instead of “staying at home”.

B. Analysis for results of interviews

When it comes to RQ3, the discussion on whether students’ gender awareness can be promoted had been made. According to the overall results, more of them thought it can be achieved to enhance students’ gender conception. Since schools, teachers

and textbooks are the effective means to transit learners positive values and beliefs except for knowledge, which means teachers are supposed to guide learners on moral characters consciously. Also some of them indicated time convey gender-equal awareness is particularly important such as middle school years. Furthermore, effective teaching methods mentioned by one of them give me inspiration for next improvements and discussion of the study. However, two participants whose career is EFL teachers thought it was impractical as each of them were currently facing more than 120 students in two classes everyday. In their view, it is the most fundamental to finish routine work, in other words, teaching language knowledge. Apart from that, students may dismiss or not accept even if teachers express their gender-equal beliefs and have the consciousness to promote students' cognition in classrooms, so it is better to avoid this sensitive issue.

As for RQ4, actually it is an extended question based on promoting students' gender cognition. Although there are rare studies discuss this issue, my invited participants positively engaged in interviews providing valuable and constructive perspectives and suggestions, which may become prospective for future studies. Noticeably, answers were almost consistent on this question. Except for those who stand in neutral, 70% interviewees did not think textbooks with gender-fair representations exist in the world even if after making reform. Actually whether gender-fair learning materials can be compiled requires to take various factors into consideration, for instance, human resources, funds and current institutions of the society. Put it practically, human resources are consisted of pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and textbook compilers. Firstly, establishing training programs for teachers to learn gender-equal courses would consume a number of funds, also the program is hard to propagate. Besides,

social institutions impact gender ideologies, which also make it more difficult to disseminate fair gender representations in textbooks all around the society. In addition, someone revealed that the purpose for compiling gender-equality textbooks is preventing the perception of gender inequality emerged in students' minds, but actually gender inequality exist everywhere. And students are influenced not only by school textbooks, but also the society to a higher extent. So it is not necessary to design this kind of textbooks in order to promote gender equality awareness.

C. Pedagogical suggestions

Pedagogy is structured by the changes in teaching and learning context and the situated relations between teachers and students (Burke et al., 2013). By concluding those research findings above, including biased gender representations in learning materials, concerning suggested pedagogical methods are assigned here to allow teachers conducting effective classroom teaching on transiting students equal gender beliefs.

1. Needs analysis and situation analysis

This study is targeted to investigate middle school textbooks, hence students are in middle school. Actually the need analysis seems vague because teaching gender equality to raise students' awareness is not within the scope of syllabus published by MOE. Or maybe students themselves have not realized the consciousness of gender equality and whether they are willing to study lessons concerning gender. Many of students may be interested in this plan, while it does not exclude the situation that parts of them may feel harassed to conduct extra lectures as they have to finish daily learning tasks. Therefore both interesting and effective teaching methods are required. Their study tasks are not too heavy compared with students in high school, so the teaching activities could be conducted in class meetings every week if schools do

not assign teachers certain theme of class meetings. Provided that they are middle school students, the time duration for each lesson cannot be too long and all lessons are estimated to accomplish within 4 weeks. The volume of lessons can be regulated according to the learning progress and the situation of main subjects.

2. Teaching objectives

(1) Students will realize and promote the awareness of gender equality.

(2) Students will be able to find stereotyped gender representations in textbooks.

(3) Students will be unrestrained to choose their future activities and occupations.

3. Syllabus design

Lesson Plan

Context□middle schools in mainland China

Subject□the investigation on biased gender representations in textbooks

Students: middle school students, language-teaching

Materials: teacher-created handouts and selected textbooks

4. Courses and materials design

The volume of lessons is 15, which is appropriate for middle school students to study. The main purpose of lessons is to promote students' gender awareness. Therefore clarifying the necessity that why investigate stereotypical gender representations, especially in textbooks, is necessary at the first beginning of the class. And almost all of them are not familiar with the gender field, so introduce the concept of gender equality and inequality cannot be omitted. Only when students have understandings of the background information of gender can they be more easily to accept the knowledge of gender representations the transition to textbooks. Due to gender situations vary from different nations, students in China are supposed to know domestic background. In the next

step, watching relevant gender movies contribute to attract students' attention to conduct further learning. Transiting to the examination on gender representations combined with language textbooks, teaching tasks would become harder than ever thus more class activities are necessary to encourage to participate in. After completing systematic study, practices in classrooms, particularly interactions between teachers and students such as employing gender representations in conversation. In the end of courses, the potential influence of unequal gender representations in textbooks on students should be concluded.

Since this courses are experimental, in order to support the curriculum conduct successfully, the designed handouts should be compiled by teachers themselves. In the process of designing handouts, analyze students' situations should be put at the first beginning to decide the class volumes, time duration and teaching tools at the same time. Besides, selected textbooks for investigation can be decided by teachers themselves only since they have already made analysis of students' situation previously; therefore what textbooks chose have to conform the current learning situations of students. Apart from the main teaching and learning tools, other forms, for example, visual cards and ppt designed for supplementary teaching, among which middle school students tend to be interested in these extra design.

5. Materials evaluation

According to Celce-Murcia et al (2014), one question is needed to ask: can teaching objectives be accomplished with the teaching and learning materials supported. The dominant materials are composed of handouts compiled by teachers, selected textbooks to be examined, ppt made by teachers and oral presentations throughout the whole curriculum. For handouts, the reliability depends on whether teachers find and quote some principles or files for reference to identify the standard gender equality

and inequality so that they can convey well-founded gender equality perception to students. When it refers to selected textbooks, textbooks for daily use can be the target since students use them every day in and after class. If new selected textbooks are used, students will spend extra time to adapt to it. Additionally, for oral presentations, it can be conducted and supported with visual cards and ppt. While one thing is worth noting that forms of visual cards and ppt are required to maintain in a moderate pattern. For middle school language learners, flashy contents of cards and ppt may distract their attention while too simple contents to make them feel boring. When it comes to length of these means, too long or too short would result in exhaustion or insufficiency respectively.

Despite these improvements have been made in achieving gender equality, considerable space for advancements in textbooks is still needed since there may have gender issues of textbooks in some invisible orientations that we cannot touch temporarily. Some students nowadays, although may realize the conception of gender equality, they are more or less influenced by their parents or the whole society. Therefore, there is a long road to go for reaching gender equality, not only in textbooks, but also in the society of mainland China.

VII. Conclusion

A. Reflection

In this study, biased gender representations in middle textbooks published by People's English Teaching Press in mainland China have been investigated, specifically, the lopsided characterization of men and women with regard to their social and family roles. The classroom-based pedagogy discussed in this study attempts to explore gender equality under the particular context of EFL textbooks. It not only reveals the stereotyped gender representations in language textbooks and find the

effective pedagogical methods to promote students' awareness of gender equality, but also discusses the potentiality of designing a textbook with fair gender values. Although students seems to have rare or no personal experiences discussing gender equality in language classrooms, referring to gender issues can promote their gender consciousness and can develop their own understanding of gender equality. Besides, a combination of gender and textbooks or language teaching is practical since pedagogy is a tool to disseminate students ill-informed problem and help them cultivate their own values. Furthermore, it is an interesting and a challenge perspective to discuss the possibility of designing an acceptable gender representations in textbooks for all EFL learners despite previous studies have discussed gender stereotypes in learning materials. Therefore, this attempt might provide valuable factors in designing textbooks, as well as promoting open-ended gender perception in language learning for EFL students --- particularly within the cultural and social context where this issue is hardly publicly raised.

B. Limitations

However, this study has its own limitations since it specializes in analyzing three textbook authorized by Chinese Ministry of Education and the volumes of textbooks cannot represent all EFL textbooks used in mainland China. Thus there is generalization and features deficit such as nouns designating men and women or masculine generic construction usage, which means a larger-scale analysis for the corpus of EFL textbooks in mainland China, can contribute to the extensive understanding of gender bias presents in EFL textbooks and how this issue has alter over time. In addition, with the development of online learning, more students tend to study online, thus further research should be had to analyze whether gender stereotypes exist in courses and learning materials on the internet.

Furthermore, most of the participants in

interviews held negative attitudes towards the elimination gender-unequal representations in textbooks and the reconstruction of a gender-inclusive textbook. Despite they give specific answers in terms of practical and social aspects, these results are only come from their personal perceptions, experiences and even assumptions. There are no any experiments in this study to actually examine and evaluate the reliability and validity of recompiling a textbook accompanied with gender-equal representations; meanwhile, it is undiscovered whether attributes of human resources, funds and social institutions will become obstacles to textbook reformation. Therefore, the raise of question for the potentiality of textbook reformation worth to be further discussed. Probably the resolution of this question can make reference to *Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks* published by Education Bureau (2012).

In the end, this study reveals that various ways can be used to settle or eliminate gender bias constructed in EFL textbooks. To promote the awareness of gender equality and eliminate gender bias, thus the implication of this study clarifies the necessity for MOE to bring code of gender equality into school textbooks and designate a more specific formal the principle of conventions for editors and publishers of learning materials, for example, equal roles and acts of both men and women. And this proposal can be regarded as long-term strategy. Subsequently, the prospective value of the study is that men and women can be portrayed as less gender-stereotyped to reinforce gender consciousness of language learners. Another purpose, as for EFL teachers, is that could take pedagogical methods in reducing gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, the way teacher treating for the textbook contents in terms of gender equality is determined by their susceptibility to perceive gender bias. In this case, in mainland China, it is essential to erect formal training projects

for all teachers. In a word, up-bottom endeavors from educational system all hold the pivotal roles in promoting students' gender awareness further helping to establish the harmoniously gender-equality society.

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