A Corpus Study of Gender Representation in Chinese Secondary School EFL Textbooks

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Abstract: *This study seeks to examine the representation of gender in a popular series of Chinese secondary school EFL textbooks and investigate whether the Chinese government's promotion of the 'gender-equal' society is reflected through the patterns of gender representation in these textbooks. The present study analyzed one popular series of EFL textbooks published in 2012 for Chinese secondary school students with corpus linguistic techniques (e.g. concordances, collocate-Lancs Box). While some of the findings (e.g. common use of gender-neutral constructions) indicate the textbook designers' gender awareness, significant underrepresentation of women (e.g. male-firstness) and gender stereotyping still exist (e.g. women only appear more frequently in domestic roles), suggesting that to promote the building of a gender-equal society, textbook authors should make endeavors by increasing female visibility (e.g. mixing gender order) and depicting men and women as possessing equally diverse characteristics in the EFL textbooks.*

Keywords: *Corpus-based; Gender representation; EFL textbooks; China*

Abbreviations: *EFL: English as a Foreign Language, KWIC: Key Word in Context, PEP: People Education Press, MoE: Ministry of Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language textbooks not only teach grammar and vocabulary, but also transmit social norms and values to students (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009).Such norms and values are related to specific social contexts and are represented through the textual and visual constructions in textbooks (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015).For instance, the hidden curriculum of gender representation in textbooks can have significant impacts on young learners' beliefs and attitudes towards the two genders. According to Gullicks et al. (2005), learners tend to view textbooks as authoritative. If gender disparity or gender stereotypes exist in school textbooks, learners may consciously or subconsciously follow and imitate them, which hinders their personal development and limits their academic/career choices (Macaulay & Brice, 1997; Witt, 2001).For example, the hidden gender discrimination against women in textbooks may make female learners perceive themselves as marginalized and less important than men, thus underestimating their abilities to achieve academic excellence and get well-paid jobs. Despite the rising global awareness of redressing gender disparities, imbalanced and stereotypical portrayals of gender are still common in textbooks (Lee & Collins, 2008; Matsuno, 2002; Wharton, 2005).Therefore, policymakers and textbook designers should pay attention to how the portrayals of gender in textbooks affect learners and develop strategies to address the arising issues.

China has traditionally been a patriarchal society, treating women as inferior to men in almost all domains of social life. Although since the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949, a series of laws and regulations have been formulated and implemented to improve the status of women and redress the situation of gender disparity (Fang, et al., 2005), the traditional gendered belief "men should work and earn money, women should look after children at home" is still apparent in China. More recently, there have been efforts to promote gender equality with the China National Program for Women's Development (2011-2020) promulgation, which calls for better protection of women's rights and interests, reflecting the Chinese government's endeavors to promote a gender-equal society.

In this situation, to what extent is gender equality promoted in the educational domain? Is gender impartiality properly redressed in language teaching materials? Motivated by these considerations, this paper seeks to examine the representation of gender in a popular series of Chinese secondary school EFL textbooks using corpus tools and investigate whether the Chinese government's promotion of the 'gender-equal' society is reflected through the patterns of gender representation in these textbooks. Specific research questions will be given at the end of the literature review section.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Gender Representation in EFL Textbooks

So far, the issue of gender representation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks has aroused interest worldwide(e.g. Baghdadi & Rezaei, 2015; Evans & Davies, 2000; Gebregeorgis, 2016; Lee, 2018, 2019; Lee & Collins, 2008, 2010; Shachar, 2012). The findings have revealed gender biases in various forms. First, the underrepresentation of women is found to be common in many EFL textbooks(Bujubajm, 2020; Lee & Collins, 2008; Wharton, 2005), with the ratio of female occurrences being much lower than male occurrences, reflecting a tendency of portraying women as invisible and less important. Another type of gender bias is presented as the male-as-default principle. Generic masculine pronouns (he, him, his) and the morpheme -man (e.g. policeman) are often used to refer to all humankind, while gender-marked constructions -ess (e.g. actress) were used to refer to women exclusively (Lee, 2019). Several studies have been conducted to explore the use of gender-neutral and gender-marked constructions in language textbooks. With the aid of corpus techniques, Lee (2018) investigated the representation of gender in four series of EFL textbooks for Japanese high schools published in 2011. The findings revealed the textbook authors' awareness of gender equality, including common use of gender-inclusive terms (e.g. businessperson) and the neutral address title Ms. for women. However, the underrepresentation of women and a high ratio of male-firstness (putting male terms before female terms) can still be observed, suggesting that the textbook design requires further modification. Similar patterns of female invisibility and gender inequality have also been identified in Bujubaj (2020), Lee (2019), and Li's (2020) corpus studies.

Previous studies have also revealed evidence of gender stereotyping (Bujubaj, 2020; Li, 2020; Matsuno, 2002; Sakita, 1995; Suwarno et al., 2021; Yang, 2011).In the study of sexism in Japanese English textbooks, Sakita (1995) identified stereotypical portrayals of the two genders in the usage of adjectives and descriptions of gender-associated activities. While men were depicted as physically strong, reputational, and qualified for important positions, women were frequently associated with weakness, emotional, and domestic chores, implying that men are more powerful and more prestigious than women. The gender-stereotypical ideology is also reflected in the description of occupational roles in the textbooks used for business English in Japan, as Mastsuno (2002) identified a high tendency of associating males with esteemed jobs (e.g. president, chief executive officer, doctor) while associating women with domestic roles (mother, wife) and low-income jobs. Suwarno et al.'s (2021) corpus-based investigation of the gender construction in the Indonesian government distributed English textbook revealed gender stereotypes in verbal and visual texts. While female students were frequently depicted as good at academic study, male students were overrepresented in non-academic domains. For example, there are pictures depicting two boys holding a football, which semiotically associates playing football with men's hobbies. Meanwhile, the concordances of football in KWIC show that this word only co-occurs with male participants, who are the actors and tokens in material (go, went) and relational (were, was) processes, implying men's domination in the sports domain. Examining KWIC concordances using World Smith tools, Lee (2019) identified a tendency of associating men with cognitive and material processes and women with relational processes, suggesting that men are more suitable for physically and cognitively demanding activities than women.

The representation of gender issues in mainland China EFL textbooks remains under-researched. Using AntConc, Li (2020) investigated gender representation in one series of Chinese high school EFL textbooks, demonstrating an unequal treatment of males and females in the frequency of gendered words/pronouns and adjectives collocating with females and males. One limitation of this study is that the selected series of textbooks were published in 2004, which are much older versions compared with the newest released textbooks. Therefore, the present study included one series of secondary school textbooks released in 2012 to gain a more updated overview of the gender representation in EFL textbooks.

It should also be aware that previous studies focusing on gender construction in textbook dialogues remain rare. Jones et al. (1997) and Poulou (1997) only examined the amount of talk produced by women and men in textbooks, revealing conflicting results. While the first found a roughly equal amount of dialogue produced by men and women in EFL textbooks, the second identified male dominance in Greek textbooks. Unlike the two studies, Lee (2019) incorporated the analysis of utterance functions in mixed-sex dialogues, discovering significant gender dichotomy. While men were frequently constructed as the information provider, women were depicted as the ones seeking information from men (most were seeking for help, such as asking for direction), thus positioning women in a secondary and weaker position. To have a more holistic understanding of the construction of gender in textbook dialogue, I have added the analysis discourse functions in single-gender dialogues in the present study.

Given the scarcity of research on gender representation in mainland China EFL textbooks, the lack of focus on the utterance functions in textbook dialogues, and the limitation in Li's (2020) project, the present corpus study aims to fill the void by investigating the following specific research questions. Noting that the first three questions are mainly related to gender equality constructions, while the other four are mainly related to the representation of gender stereotypes.

(i): What is the ratio of males and females represented in the textbooks studied?

(ii): How frequent are gender-neutral and gender-marked terms used?

(iii): What is the order of mention of men and women?

(iv): What are the personal adjectives collocating with men and women?

(v): What are the social roles associated with men and women?

(vi): What are the activities performed by men and women, and what are the process types?

(vii): What is the number of utterances produced by male and female speakers, and what are the utterance functions in single and mixed-gender dialogues?

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. Data

A specialized corpus was built for the present study. The data was collected from one series of three-year EFL textbooks for secondary school students published in 2012, New Senior English for China by People Education Press (PEP, a large publishing house under the Ministry of Education): Student's Books 1-5(see Table 1). The increased complexity of the five books leads to the increased number of words from book 1 to book 5. These textbooks were selected because they were newly published, authoritative, and are widely used in more than 20 provinces in China (MoE, 2022).

Table1. *PEP EFL textbooks examined*

Textbook	Pages	Tokens
Book 1	111	4524
Book 2	141	7740
Book 3	143	10877
Book 4	137	16385
Book 5	185	20766
Total	717	60292

All the selected textbooks were scanned and converted into text files with the help of Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and counter-checked for accuracy through line-by-line scrutinizing before analyses. Reading passages, paragraphs, dialogues, tape scripts were included as the content of the corpus. The first three parts are considered to contain texts "where ideologies and values are more easily detected" (Hong & He, 2015, p. 94). The tape scripts (attached at the end of each book) are significant materials because Chinese students are often asked to read and understand the scripts after the listening practices. Tables of contents, gap-filling exercises, grammar, and vocabularies were excluded since they are unconnected texts, which are not suitable for the identification of lexico-grammatical patterns in corpus analysis (Hong & He, 2015). Visual images are not considered due to their relatively low coverage in the selected PEP textbooks. Additionally, the physical features of the cartoon male/female characters in these illustrations remain vague.

2.2.2. Corpus Techniques

Corpus linguistic techniques were adopted in the present study. Lancs Box, a software package for the analysis of corpora data, was employed to examine patterns of gender representation in the selected textbooks. The KWIC tool was used to generate the occurrences of the search terms and to organize data in the form of concordance lines. The Graph Coll tool was used for the analysis of the collocation network so that the collocational features of the node words could be identified. To address the seven research questions, specific methods of analysis were adopted to examine the following features:

1. To answer question 1, the frequency of the gendered words (man/men, woman/women, husband, wife/wife's/wives/wives', mom, dad, girl, boy, etc.) and male-female pronouns (she/her/herself/hers, he/him/himself/his) were computed using the KWIC tool.

2. To answer question 2, the frequencies of the following gender-neutral or gender-marked constructions were detected using the KWIC tool:1) gender-inclusive paired pronouns (e.g. he or she, he/she, his/her)2) gender-marked words ending with masculine/feminine morphemes (e.g. -man/men, -women/women, -master, -mistress, -boy (s)/girl(s)) 3) gender-neutral terms (e.g. people, person, everyone, human/human being). The gender-marked and gender-neutral items were also cross-checked with the vocabulary list in the final pages of each textbook.

3. To answer question3, I searched the use of coordinating conjunctions and (e.g. mother and father vs. father and mother)/or (e.g. his or her vs. her or his) in the KWIC module, and recorded the order of appearances of men and women in the concordance lines.

4. To answer question 4, the personal adjectives collocating with the subjective pronoun she and she and the gendered nouns (woma (e)n/ma(e)n, boy(s), girl(s)) were recorded using the Graph Coll and cross-checked with KWIC concordances. The span is 5L, 5R. The statistics is frequency. The threshold is 1.0 (so that all the collocating adjectives can be recorded).

5. To answer question 5, the vocabularies for the social roles (e.g. artist, teacher) were firstly identified in the wordlist. Then, I used them as the searching terms in the KWIC module to identify whether these roles were performed by male or female characters.

6. To answer question 6,the verbs collocating with the subjective pronouns he and she and the gendered nouns (woma (e)n/ma(e)n, boy(s), girl(s)) were generated using the Graph Coll and cross-checked with KWIC concordances. Meanwhile, the process types (Halliday, 2004) were identified and recorded. The span is 0L, 5R (so that only activities performed by men/women were computed). The rest of the setting is the same as question 4.

7. To answer question 7, all the direct speech in the textbooks examined were recorded. Dialogues in tape scripts were excluded since the genders of many speakers remain unknown. The number of utterances produced by male and female speakers in dialogues was counted manually. Then, the discourse functions (Leech, 1981, see Table 2) of the utterances produced by male and female speakers were examined in either single-gender or mixed-gender dialogues.

Table2. *Categorization of language functions*

Language functions	Descriptions
(1) Informational	Asking for and giving information
(2) Phatic	To maintain good social relations
(3) Expressive	Relating to one's feelings and attitudes
(4) Directive	(a) Ordering/Commanding/Instructing (b) Advising/Suggesting (c) Offering/Inviting (d) Requesting

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Ratio of Female-to-Male Appearances

The results revealed a significant underrepresentation of females (Bujubaj, 2020; Lee, 2018; Li, 2020). As shown in Table 4, the ratio of 2.31:1 shows that the frequency counts of masculine pronouns substantially outnumber feminine pronouns. In Table 3, the ratio of male to female-gendered

words is 1.14:1, indicating more male appearances. Nevertheless, the patterns are not consistent in all pairs of gendered vocabularies. As it can be observed, women in domestic roles tend to appear more frequently than men in domestic roles (father vs. mother, grandpa vs. grandma, husband vs. wife), implying a stereotypical gendered belief that women are more suitable for family roles (Mastsuno, 2002; Sakita, 1995).

Table3. *The frequency of gendered words*

Vocabularies (plurals included)	Male	Vocabularies (plurals included)	Female
Man	75	Woman	38
Male	0	Female	0
Father/dad	47	Mother/mom	95
Boy	251	Girl	188
Grandfather/pa	5	Grandmother/ma	13
Grandson	0	Granddaughter	1
Uncle	14	Aunt	12
Husband	5	Wife	12
Brother	35	Sister	27
Son	10	Daughter	3
Nephew	0	Niece	0
Total	442	Total	389

Table4. *The frequency of gendered pronouns*

Nominative		Accusative		Genitive		Reflexive		Total	
he	she	him	her	his	her/hers	himself	herself	Masculine	Feminine
428	237	96	37	218	71	18	3	739	319

3.2. Gender-Neutral and Gender-Marked Constructions

The present study revealed a strong tendency of using gender-neutral terms in textbooks (333 gender-neutral terms vs. 35 gender-marked terms).As shown in Table 5, the results suggest that the textbook authors are inclined to use gender-neutral vocabularies (e.g. human, people, person, everyone) in place of pseudo-generic man (0). Figure 1 is an extract displaying the use of everyone in KWIC concordances, demonstrating the authors' awareness of minimizing gender disparity when gender is mixed or unknown. The use of gender-inclusive paired expressions is also apparent, and there is only one gender-marked word ending with -man morpheme (postman). Despite a few marked terms, they were used mainly when gender is known, for example, the use of headmaster in reference to Larry Smith, which is obviously a man's name.

Table5. *Gender-neutral and gender-marked vocabularies*

Gender-neutral(N) Gender-marked(M)	Vocabularies (plurals included)	Number of occurrences
M	pseudo-generic man	0
N	human/human being	3
N	people	221
N	person	25
N	gender-inclusive paired pronouns (e.g. he/she)	27
N	police	7
N	any/everyone/body	50
M	*-man/woman* (postman)	1
M	headmaster	1
M	waitress	6
M	waiter	3
M	king	19
M	queen	1
M	god	2
M	goddess	2
Total	M	35
	N	333

Fig1. *Concordances of everyone (extract)*

3.3. Order of Mention

As can be observed in Table 6, there is a high ratio of male firstness (3.46:1) in the selected textbooks, demonstrating evidence of gender inequality, reinforcing the secondary status (Hartman and Judd, 1978) and the invisibility of women. Most of the cases of male-firstness are concerned with the order of gendered pronouns (see Figure 2), with the rest related to proper names (e.g. Dave and Mary) and domestic relationships (e.g. two brothers and two sisters, grandpa and grandma). For the instances of female firstness, four out of the thirteen are concerned with family roles (aunt and uncle, see Figure 3), with the rest associated with proper names (*e.g. Sandy and Dave*) and fixed collocation (*ladies and gentlemen*).

Table6. *Order of mention coordinated by and/or*

	and	*or*	Total
Male-first	17	28	45
Female-first	13	0	13

Fig2. *Concordances of male-firstness with gendered pronouns*

Last year he went to visit his	aunt and uncle	in San Francisco. He found it interesting
did Kang Jian go to visit his	aunt and uncle?	2. What did he discover in the
your vacation, Wu Ming? I visited my	aunt and uncle	in Hong Kong. Wow! So what did
end of this month to visit my	aunt and uncle.	However, I'd still be glad to help

Fig3. *Concordances of female-firstness with family roles*

3.4. Adjectives

Table 7 shows that six more adjectives were used to portray men than women (46:40). Of the 68 adjectives identified, 18(old, young, short, tall, thin, heavy, blonde, good, great, active, shy, quiet, happy, sad, angry, afraid, silly, sick) were employed to describe both genders, showing the authors' awareness of describing men and women equally in terms of a range of common characteristics. Another noticeable observation is that there are fewer adjectives collocating with the age and emotions of female characters, challenging the traditional gender stereotypes that women were often associated with age and emotionality (Lee, 2018; Li, 2020).Fantastic, creative, famous, special, busy, unusual, cool, boring, important, nice, silent, warm were exclusively associated with the personality and evaluation of females, suggesting that women can be portrayed as successful and attractive.

In terms of appearances, men were exclusively associated with physical strength (big, strong) and handsome, as opposed to the traits of cute and beautiful exclusively related to women, making both genders appear more gender stereotyped. Men also patterned more strongly with adjectives associated with intelligence (smart) and wealth (poor, rich), reflecting the problem of gender impartiality and stereotyping in terms of the adjectives used.

Table7. *Personal adjectives collocating with subjective pronouns and gendered nouns (adjectives describing both genders are in italics)*

Categories	Gender	Adjectives	Number of adjectives
Physical features	M	*short (25), tall (24), thin (7), heavy (4)*, big, strong (2), *blonde*, handsome (1)	8
	F	*tall (6), short (5)*,medium (3), cute, *blonde, thin, heavy*, beautiful (1)	8
Age	M	little (6), *old, young (3)*	3
	F	*old (3), young (1)*	2
Wealth	M	poor (12), rich (1)	2
	F	/	0
Personality and evaluation	M	*good(9), great (7)*, bad (4), nice, funny, popular(3) outgoing, friendly, serious, strict, wonderful (2), *active*, careless, lucky, normal, professional, *quiet,shy*, strange, strict (1)	20
	F	*good (8), great*, fantastic (4), creative, famous, special (3), busy, unusual, cool (2), boring (2), *active*, important, nice, *quiet, shy*, silent, warm (1)	17
Emotions	M	*happy (10), afraid, sad (4)*, unhappy (2), *angry*, excited, glad, nervous, sorry (1)	9
	F	*happy, sad (3), afraid, angry*, mad (1)	5
State	M	dead, (2), *sick (1)*	2
	F	tired (3), married, *sick (2)*, healthy, homeless, hungry, ill (1)	7
Intelligence	M	*silly (3)*, smart (2)	2
	F	*silly (2)*	1
Total (68)	M		46
	F		40

3.5. Roles

As shown in Figure 4, the range of social roles performed by women (12) is much more limited than masculine social roles (26), revealing gender dichotomy. In the selected textbooks, students are the most mentioned social roles for male (8) and female (5) characters. Different from previous studies that found teachers were only associated with females (Lee, 2018; Yang, 2011), the present study

revealed that teachers were performed by both men and women. The other three common items (interviewer, reporter, writer) are related to writing and oral skills, showing that men and women can both be good at conveying messages. Despite the fact that women were involved in jobs that require physical strength (volleyball star) and intelligence (computer programmer, engineer), they were also exclusively portrayed as nurses, reflecting the traditional stereotypical belief that nurses are female. On the other hand, men were depicted as capable of performing a much wider range of social roles in domains of art and entertainment (artist, singer, TV star), sports (basketball/soccer player, running/sports star),prestigious/scientific (astronaut, doctor, expert, scientist) (esteemed jobs that tend to be associated with males (Mastsuno, 2002)), ordinary work (bus driver, cook, farmer, police, postman, staff, visitor, waiter), and ruling (king). Therefore, although the findings show some awareness of gender equality, the highly imbalanced proportion still indicates latent gender discrimination against women who can only perform limited social activities. Such gender dichotomy might be ascribed to the different frequency counts of male-to-female appearances examined earlier.
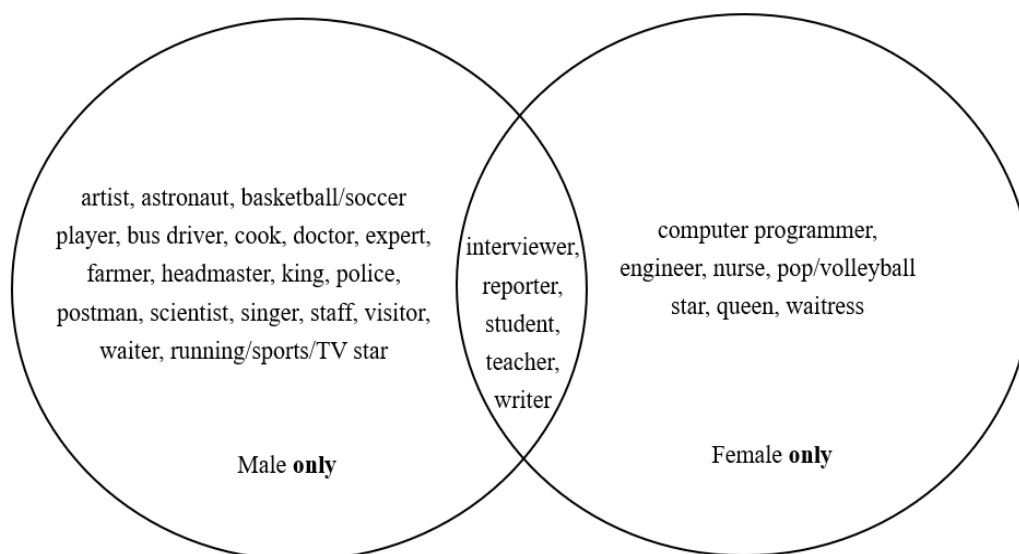

Fig4. *Social roles performed by males and females*

3.6. Activities and Process Types

The findings, as presented in Table 8, show that twice as many activities were associated with men as women in the data examined (428: 229), and all the process types associated with men outnumbered those associated with women, which might be caused by the disparity in male-to-female occurrences. For men, the most frequently used process type is the material action process (60.7%, e.g. drive (car), help (me), make (money), play (soccer),which were often presented in the form of can + verb/could + verb, indicating men's abilities to perform different tasks), where they were portrayed as doers of actions and risk takers, suggesting men's agency and activeness. Men were also frequently presented as being or possessing (relational process, 22.5%, e.g. has (straight hair)), cognitively active (cognition process, 4.4%, e.g., think (of)), and having verbal communication (verbal process, 7%, e.g., say). Unlike previous findings that women were more likely to be depicted using relational processes (Lee & Collins, 2010; Lee, 2019; Li, 2020), women in the textbooks examined were most associated with material action processes (67%), indicating that the authors have tried to describe women as physically active. However, in terms of the common action verb make, while men were portrayed as making money and making changes, women were portrayed as making Chinese food, which is stereotypically viewed as a feminine domestic activity (Yang, 2011). Moreover, women were seldomly associated with the cognition process (1.3%), portraying women as less cognitively active than men.

Table8. *Process types associated with subjective gendered pronouns and gendered nouns*

Process types	Freq. (male)	Freq. (female)
Material action	260 (60.7%)	150(67%)
Relational	96(22.5%)	41 (18.4%)
Mental: perception	7(1.6%)	3(1.3%)

Mental: reaction	6(1.2%)	5(2.2%)
Mental: cognition	19(4.4.%)	3(1.3%)
Verbal	30 (7%)	15(6.7%)
Behavioral	9(2.1%)	2(0.9%)
Existential	2(0.5%)	5(2.2%)
Total	428	229

Utterances by Male and Female Speakers

Finally, as Table 9displays, unlike Jones et al. (1997) and Poulou's (1997) studies, female characters produced more utterances (425) than male characters (359). This phenomenon demonstrates the authors' awareness of increasing female visibility and audibility in the textbook dialogues, especially when female nouns/pronouns were found to occur much less frequently than males.

Table9. *Number of turns produced by male-female speakers*

Male character	**359**
Female character	425

As presented in Table 10 and 11, giving information is the most common female utterance function in both single-gender and mixed-gender dialogues. More importantly, most of the utterances were providing useful information instead of answering simple questions. In contrast, men were portrayed as more likely to seek information in single-gender dialogues. The occurrences of other language functions for males and females were roughly the same. Another noticeable aspect of the findings is that there were a large proportion of expressive utterances used to convey feelings and attitudes. For example, more expressive utterances were produced by males (44) than females (38) in single-gender dialogues, challenging the traditional stereotypical view that women are more emotional than men. Moreover, women are found to produce more directive order/command in single-gender dialogues, indicating the power of women.

Table10. *Discourse functions of the utterances produced by male or female speakers in single-gender dialogues*

Functions	No. turns (male)	No. turns (female)
Asking for information	75	65
Giving information	63	84
Phatic	6	5
Expressive	44	38
Directive: ordering/commanding/instructing	3	7
Directive: advising/suggesting	15	14
Directive: inviting/offering	2	1
Directive: requesting	0	3

Table11. *Discourse functions of the utterances produced by male or female speakers in mixed-gender dialogues*

Functions	No. turns (male)	No. turns (female)
Asking for information	55	67
Giving information	63	75
Phatic	19	30
Expressive	26	26
Directive: ordering/commanding/instructing	1	1
Directive: advising/suggesting	8	5
Directive: inviting/offering	2	3
Directive: requesting	3	3

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the present study has found evidence of the textbook designers' gender awareness, including common use of gender-neutral constructions, employment of material action processes to describe both genders, and increased female visibility in textbook dialogues, etc. These findings reflect the government's endeavor to promote a 'gender-equal' society, at least to some degree. However, the underrepresentation of women, the 'male-first' phenomenon, as well as the adjectives/social roles/activities collocating with males and females still indicate the unbalanced treatment of the two genders and stereotyped gender differences in the textbooks examined. Learners

who are repeatedly exposed to this kind of hidden gender discrimination against women may internalize the gender misconceptions, thus subconsciously treating women as less prestigious and less important than men. Therefore, it is crucial for authors and publishers to modify the newest released PEP textbooks by increasing female visibility (e.g. mixing gender order) and depicting men and women as possessing equally diverse characteristics, so as to promote the building of a gender-equal society.

One possible limitation of this study is that it only investigated one series of textbooks. Future studies can either approach from a diachronic perspective to investigate whether and how the representation of men and women has changed with the government's promotion of a gender-equal society these years. Alternatively, different series of EFL textbooks across China can be studied in larger corpora to gain a fuller picture of gender constructions in English teaching materials in China. Similarly, comparative analyses across different countries can be carried out to obtain a holistic understanding of gender representation in English textbooks in different socio cultural contexts.

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