



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Moray House School of
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Gender Stereotypes in Chinese Primary English Textbooks: A Study of a Widely Used 6th Grade Textbook

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Abstract

A number of previous studies have proposed that textbooks influence the beliefs and values of children, while those showing negative gender stereotypes may impact on students' cognitive development and choice of career (Cocoradă, 2018; Kereszty, 2009; Kızılaslan, 2010). This paper examines the gender stereotypes found in a widely used Chinese Primary school textbook, *PEP Primary English textbook series for sixth grade I*, by means of content analysis, linguistic analysis, and visual analysis. Firstly, I examine the extent of gender stereotypes in the text, particularly in terms of the prevalence of male and female characters, their associated adjectives, their occupational and domestic roles, and 'firstness', e.g. father and mother. Secondly, I discuss the male and female characters in the line drawings in terms of their frequency of occurrence, as well as their occupational and domestic roles. The results reveal that male characters outnumber females and traditional gender stereotypes are common, with the most stereotyped category being the domestic role and 'firstness'. Females are portrayed primarily to take household responsibility and the male-firstness phenomenon remains prevalent. This indicates that traditional gender stereotypes are still reflected and constructed in Chinese primary EFL textbooks. The study concludes with recommendations for methods for reducing gender stereotyping for all stakeholders, including the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) and teachers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In response to proposals made by a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) for preventing the feminisation of male adolescents, the Letter of Response to Proposal No. 4404 released on the official website of Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) on January 28, 2021, stated that it would focus on cultivating masculinity by strengthening physical activity in schools (MOE, 2020). Both the proposer and the respondent thus propagated, and reinforced, the gender stereotype that males who do not fit the 'masculine' gender stereotype are 'sissies', while at the same time stereotyping physical exercise as a cultivation of masculinity. This socially charged incident has provoked many criticisms from both ordinary citizens and the media (see, for example, Love and life, 2021) and reflects the presence of gender stereotyping in China.

A potential reason for this stereotypical view is that the Chinese have been under the influence of Confucianism for almost two thousand years, whose gender system is embedded in feudal rituals. Dong (2012), who has made a considerable contribution to the study of Confucianism, cited the statement: “those who are ministers, sons and wives must absolutely obey the king, father and husband”. This emphasises the assumption of male superiority and female inferiority, reinforced by a long tradition of gender asymmetry in Chinese culture (Wang, 1998).

However, since the founding of the new China in 1949, there have been rapid social and cultural changes, leading to gender equality becoming a major issue of Chinese policymakers. A famous saying from that period, that “women could hold up half the sky” (Mao, 2014) reflects an improvement of the status of women and the pursuit of gender equality. The principle of equality between males and females was enshrined in the first Constitution of China in 1954, becoming a basic state policy retained in the subsequent amended version (China, 2004). In addition, *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors (amended in 2020)* stipulates that schools should offer age-appropriate and comprehensive sex education to young people, key elements of which are the elimination of gender stereotypes and the establishment of gender equality.

These initiatives have led to some improvements, but there remains a lack of 'equal status' between the sexes, and gender stereotypes remain common in daily life, including in relation to attitudes and behaviour. Zuo et al.'s (2013) evaluation of the gender endorsement of stereotypes in China among 5709 adolescents found that a considerable proportion of teenagers held a rigid stereotype of gender, with between 55% and 74% considering that a woman's greatest happiness lies in finding a good husband. In addition, there is the issue of the representation of gendered characters in books, and written texts/images in textbooks. A study by Chu (2020) analysing seventy-five recent Chinese children's picture book identified the use of gender stereotypes in

gendered images, with female characteristics focusing on being ‘considerate’ and ‘quiet’ while those of males referred to as being active and intelligent.

It is widely believed that internalised notions of gender stereotypes are formed from an early age, by means of a number of different agents of socialisation, e.g. family, school, and the mass media (Law & Chan, 2004). In addition, schools are also considered to exert a strong influence on students, as they spend most of their day in the classroom (Cocoradă, 2018). In education, textbooks “represent the everyday for children” (Kereszty, 2009: 3) and are therefore considered one of the major instruments for shaping young people’s attitudes and values (Yang, 2011). Although digital materials (e.g. e-books) have become increasingly common, textbooks have remained the most important materials for achieving teaching objectives in Chinese classrooms (MOE, 2012).

According to Stromquist et al. (1998), the roles accorded to male and female characters in textbooks may have a lasting influence on students, with the potential to influence their gender construction. Ambady et al. (2001) also highlighted that negative gender stereotypes represented and constructed in textbooks can influence students’ performance in class, along with their affective and cognitive development (Kızılaslan, 2010) and their choice of career (Cocoradă, 2018). Moreover, Kereszty (2009) discussed the damaging impact of gender stereotypes in textbooks at the societal level, arguing that they may contribute to social inequality. This highlights the need to

consider the issues of Chinese students' own development and sense of social equality by establishing whether gender stereotypes are found in textbooks in China.

Yang (2011) identified gender stereotyping in textbooks as being a global issue. However, gender stereotyping in Primary EFL textbooks published in China has only been investigated on a single occasion previously, focusing on three English textbooks published between 1978 and 2003 from the People's Education Press (PEP) (see Wu & Liu, 2015). This current study thus makes a significant contribution to the understanding of gender stereotypes in Chinese primary English textbooks, including through the use of more recent data.

In this study, I focus on the most recent edition of a widely used 6th grade textbook series from PEP, known as *English*. I have selected a language textbook due to these being considered important for the study of gender, as there are: firstly, many textual forms of gender representation (e.g. adjectives associated with male and female characters) (Pakuła et al., 2014), and secondly, visual forms of gender representation, i.e. visualised versions of occupations associated with male and female characters (Lee & Collins, 2010). In addition, English textbooks have been found to represent the most typical and widely studied language learning material throughout the globe (Sunderland, 1994). Moreover, English plays an important role in Chinese education, being a compulsive subject within basic education, with a requirement of being taught for over eighty or ninety minutes per week (MOE, 2012).

This current research therefore investigates whether, and to what extent, gender stereotyping is reflected by gender representations in the *PEP Primary English textbook series for sixth grade I* (henceforth *PEP Primary English*) in China and offers corresponding suggestions for teachers and MOE.

To fulfil this aim, I ask two specific RQs:

1. How is gender represented in the written texts of *PEP Primary English* in terms of:
 - 1a. frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens);
 - 1b. domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters;
 - 1c. adjectives associated with male and female characters;
 - 1d. 'firstness'.

2. How is gender represented in the line drawings of *PEP Primary English* in terms of
 - 2a. frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens);
 - 2b. domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters.

The remainder of this study is organised as follows. Chapter 2 consists of a literature review examining the existing literature relevant to the research aims. Chapter 3

discusses the research design and methodology, focusing on the design of this research and the three methods of data analysis employed. Chapter 4 discusses the findings, and the final chapter is the conclusion, including the limitations, implications, and application of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature and extent of the gender stereotyping of male and female characters in EFL/ESL (English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language) textbooks found in previous studies, employing the following using frameworks of analysis: (1) content analysis; (2) linguistic analysis; and (3) visual analysis. The first discussion concerns the concepts of *gender*, *gender representation*, and *gender stereotyping*.

2.2 Definition of gender

The concept of gender is distinct from that of sex, although it is often considered synonymous and used interchangeably. According to Brugeilles and Cromer (2009: 27), gender differs from sex, because the former can be defined as a social category relevant to “qualities, tastes, aptitudes, roles and responsibilities associated with men and women in a society”, while the latter “refers to the biological differences between males and females”. This forms a widely accepted concept of sex, i.e. that it is concerned with biological differences, including anatomical, and reproductive attributes (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

Litosseliti (2006: 10–11) stressed that the definition of gender concerns “the traits assigned to a sex”, however, fails to note how gender is constructed. For the purpose of this study, I therefore adopted the view of Pakuła et al. (2015: 9) that “gender is associated with people of different biological sexes, but with ideas of learning, socialisation, social construction and representation, rather than what is innate”. This indicates that, unlike sex, gender is not fixed and binary like sex but relates to socialisation and social construction.

Ehrlich (1997) provided a fundamental theory appropriate for this current study, which states that language and its use can play a role in gender construction, thus reversing the established view that gender is only reflected in language use. This consideration that language use forms part of social construction is important for gender and language studies, as it raises the possibility of discussing gender and language in relation to “what is said (or written) and how, rather than by whom” (Pakuła et al., 2015: 9). Thus, the language we use/read/hear plays role in constructing gender in our lives. This indicates that textbooks also have influence on learners’ gender construction, with Connell (2000: 19) arguing that language creates multiple masculinities and femininities. In the following section, I examine how gender is constructed through language in English textbooks, followed by two key concepts related to this study: (1) gender representation and (2) gender stereotyping.

2.2.1 Gender representation

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether, and to what extent, gender stereotypes exist in *PEP Primary English* through various representations.

Representation can be defined as “of someone or something (an individual, social group, or institutional practice) by someone(s) (an individual, social group, or institution) and in a certain way, and this ‘certain way’ extends to talk, writing, images, and hence discourse more widely” (Pakuła et al., 2015: 12), e.g. visual representations of characters in textbooks. This definition also implies that representation is frequently used when “the subject is ‘other’ rather than self” (Sunderland, 2004: 24), i.e. representations of different ethnicities and genders (e.g. Mike and Chen Jie) in *PEP Primary English*.

Sunderland (2015) further argued that, in spoken/written/visual/multimodal texts, representation is relevant to the “intentionality, or at least consciousness,” of text designers (Sunderland, 2015: 44). This often results in stereotypical representations of gender. However, the representation of meaning in language does not imply that speakers or writers are the only source. Hall (1997) adapted a constructionist approach for understanding representation, considering that it emphasises the co-production of meaning through language. This implies that meaning originates from both teachers and learners (i.e. textbook users when they use the textbook), however this aspect is beyond the scope of the current study.

2.2.2 Gender stereotyping

A stereotype consists of a set of “beliefs about the characteristics of members of a particular social group” (e.g. females) (Ryan & Branscombe, 2013: 217). Ellemers (2018) put forward a similar view, i.e. that a stereotype reflects recognisable expectations of members of a particular social group. It is difficult to determine the impact of a given stereotype as either helpful or harmful, but one that is specific tends to be exaggerated or oversimplified (Lewandowski, 2014). For example, men are assumed to be stronger than women, which is not always true (and can even be reversed) for some individual men and women.

Gender stereotypes have been defined as “beliefs about the characteristics of each sex” (Manstead & Hewstone, 1995: 256), and are considered relatively strong if held by the majority of a population, accompanied by a broad consensus concerning the traits of men and women (Williams & Best, 1990). One dominant gender stereotype is the understanding of masculinity and femininity as dichotomous, and in binary opposition (Mandal, 2004), i.e. men are what women are not and vice versa. In addition, such stereotypes exaggerate the differences and downplay the similarities between the genders, while at the same time underestimating the differences present between those of the same gender (Kielkiewicz-Janowiak & Pawelczyk, 2006).

Gender stereotypes can be constructed for children from an early age, in particular a gender socialisation process employing different ‘agents’, including the games they

play, the characters in books they read, and the schools they attend (Lindsey, 2011). Of these, school is a highly influential socialisation agent for children as, from an early age, they spend most of their time in class (Cocoradă, 2018). Lewandowski (2014) also argued that educational resources (e.g. textbooks) have the ability to reinforce gender stereotypes. In response to these comments, I examined the development of gender stereotyping in language education, as discussed below.

2.2.2.1 Development of gender stereotyping in hidden curriculum

Although gender stereotypes are not taught within the scope of the existing curricula, it is possible for them to be produced by means of the ‘hidden curriculum’, described by Skelton (1997: 188) as the “implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behaviour and attitudes”. These are received by learners by means of educational processes, including gender messages (Grayson, 2006), i.e. the value placed on masculinity and femininity. Hidden curriculum theory suggests those aspects that go beyond the current actual school curriculum are usually conveyed through textbooks, teachers or other tools (Islam & Asadullah, 2016). Thus, “sexual bias, prejudice and discrimination” can be disseminated through the depiction of male and female characters in stories and in the illustrations of textbooks (Mustapha & Mills, 2015: 28). Therefore, the present study considers that language textbooks can contribute to gender stereotypes related to male and female roles (Kabeer, 2005).

2.2.2.2 The potential influence of gender stereotypes in textbooks

A number of scholars have argued that gender stereotypes in language textbooks have a negative impact on: firstly, students' performance and potential learning (Cocoradă, 2018); secondly, cognition and personality development (Hamilton et al., 2006; Meyer, 2010); thirdly, students' future social roles (Tyarakanita et al., 2021); and fourthly, social attitudes and behaviour (Amodio, 2014).

However, the impact of gender stereotypes can prove unpredictable. Sunderland (2015: 56) argued that “a textbook sitting in a cupboard is going to have no relationship with gender identity”, regardless of whether the gender representation in the textbook is progressive or traditional. This is due to students not being passive ‘dupes’, changed in a deterministic way by what they have seen or heard (Sunderland, 2015: 59). Instead, reading is a constructive process, in which readers from diverse backgrounds may respond differently to identical content (Peterson & Lach, 1990). In addition, it is vital to understand how the text is used in class, in order to gain an additional understanding of students' response to a specific textbook, as its use mediates this understanding. An important factor concerns the teacher's treatment of textbook content which cannot be predicted, including the possibility of a text with gender stereotyping being “rescued” by the teacher (Sunderland, 2000: 155). However, although these issues of use and treatment can be seen as significant, these are outside the scope of the current study.

2.3 Previous studies on gender stereotyping in EFL/ESL textbooks

This research reviewed previous studies of gender stereotypes found in EFL/ESL textbooks, focusing on those aimed at primary or secondary schools, along with a number of additional EFL textbooks. Based the methods of analysis used in these studies, I have divided the review into: (1) content analysis; (2) linguistic analysis; and (3) visual analysis. Due to limitations of space, I have chosen to demonstrate only a small sample of the findings for each aspect.

2.3.1 Content analysis

Content analysis forms one of the most popular methods for determining the extent of stereotypes in a textbook, and is used as a quantitative method for determining the frequencies of selected features (i.e. ‘content’) (Franzosi, 2008). Gender stereotypes have been examined by means of content analysis in several ways, including: (1) the frequency of occurrence of male and female characters; (2) the domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters; and (3) the personal characteristics of male and female characters. These analyses are generally made of a complete book, or of whole units, rather than ‘sub-genres’, i.e. dialogues.

2.3.1.1 Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters

Studies counting the frequency of occurrence of male and female characters are known in the literature as examining ‘gender visibility’ (see Porreca, 1984; Islam & Asadullah, 2018). The Equal Opportunity Commission of Hong Kong (2004) stated that the conspicuous absence of certain genders is considered a ‘passive stereotype’. A number of studies, such as that of like Islam and Asadullah (2018), have considered the absence of a specific gender as a form of ‘exclusion’, as well as inferring a high degree of gender stereotyping. In this study, I also view the invisibility of a specific gender as a form of gender stereotype.

The frequency of male and female characters can include ‘types’ and ‘tokens’. According to Sunderland (2015), the number of ‘types’ infers that each character (e.g. ‘Zhang Peng’) is counted once, no matter how many times she/he appears. If that character appears four times in the textbook in terms of the name, pronoun and means of address (e.g. *Zhang Peng, he, him, Mr. Zhang*), this gives four tokens of Zhang Peng. Thus, every word form of that specific character is counted as a ‘token’ (Nation, 2001: 7). The distinction is important for the “heterogeneity” of findings, providing a more nuanced investigation into gender stereotypes found in textbooks (Sunderland, 2015: 46). However, some previous studies have lacked any clear distinction of ‘types’ and ‘tokens’.

Existing studies have shown that male characters almost always outnumber those of

females. For example, Porreca's (1984) examination of fifteen of the most widely used ESL textbooks revealed the average male to female ratio as being 1:2.06, although this does not include a further distinction of 'types' and 'tokens'. However, more recent work has focused on this issue, with Lee and Collins's (2009) study of ten English language textbooks used by intermediate English learners in Australia, finding that the male to female ratio consisted of 1.35:1 for 'types' and 1.40:1 for 'tokens'. These particular ratios are similar, but this is not always the case.

Some recent studies have indicated that the phenomenon of male overrepresentation may have been addressed. For example, Lee's (2014a) longitudinal study found an increase in the occurrence of females for both 'types' and 'tokens' in a more recent Hong Kong primary school ELT textbook, *Longman Welcome to English*, published in 2005, in comparison to the edition published in 1988. Thus, for 'types' the ratio of female to male was 1:1.77 for the 1988 edition and 1:1.12 for the 2005 edition, while for 'tokens' it was 1:1.74 for 1988 series, and 1:1.25 for the 2005 series.

2.3.1.2 Domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters

Previous studies have shown that there remains a lack of representation of women in the workplace, particularly in terms of their frequency of appearance and the type of occupational roles they are seen to fulfil. This was demonstrated by Hellinger's (1980) study of English language textbooks in four German secondary schools, which found

that men were shown fulfilling a wider range of occupation roles, while women were mainly confined to the field of family and parenting.

This kind of gender stereotyping continues to persist, with Lee's (2018) research into three Japanese high school EFL textbook identifying that women were associated with a more restricted range of occupation roles (e.g. *music teacher*) in *Comet*, while in *All Aboard* the ratio of occupation roles occupied by males to females was 19:8. Moreover, all three textbooks revealed that even when males were portrayed as taking more domestic roles than females (e.g. *father*), females were still largely confined to traditional household responsibilities, e.g. cooking and childrearing.

2.3.1.3 Personal characteristics

Previous studies of EFL/ ESL textbooks have identified that male and female characters are frequently shown as having stereotypically different personal characteristics. In ten EFL textbooks aimed at Japanese junior and senior school students, Sakita (1995) found gender-stereotypical characteristics assigned to females as consisting of being emotional, crying and complaining. However, Lewandowski's (2014) comparison of three EFL textbooks issued in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s with three new versions issued in the 2000s found the more recent textbooks to have fewer stereotyped male and female images. Thus, both sexes were attributed 'cross-gender' character traits, with females given male features, such as a desire to demonstrate their abilities. This

longitudinal study is valuable due to its investigation of developmental trends related to gender stereotypes in textbooks over a period of time.

2.3.2 Linguistic analysis

A further popular method of analysing gender stereotypes is through linguistic analysis, focusing on linguistic features including: (1) verbs associated with male and female characters; (2) adjectives associated with male and female characters; (3) ‘firstness’; and (4) masculine generic constructions. These can reveal the subtle elements of gender stereotypes in textbooks which can be overlooked by studies of content analysis (Sunderland, 2000).

2.3.2.1 Verbs associated with male and female characters

Verbs related to female characters can reflect traditional stereotypical female behaviour patterns. In her study of the stereotyping of males and females in German secondary English language textbooks, Hellinger (1980) compared male and female activities, concluding that females tended to be portrayed as passive, (e.g. not shown as *driving or traveling*), while their male counterparts undertook voyages and explored different countries. In addition, Lee’s study (2014b) of two Japanese EFL textbooks showed males being portrayed as active and physically strong, while female occupations tended

to be shown as requiring neither physical activity nor strength (e.g. *playing the piano*).

2.3.2.2 Adjectives associated with male and female characters

Studies of adjectives related to gender stereotyping has been undertaken over a considerable period of time. Porreca's (1984) exploration of adjectives in fifteen ESL textbooks showed that those attributed to women were more likely to relate to physical attractiveness (e.g. *pretty*) while those associated with men included *famous* and *intelligent*. A more recent work has revealed similar results. After examining four current EFL textbooks in Japan, Lee (2018) found a limited range of adjectives related to females, concentrating mainly on their age, appearance and emotions (e.g. *elderly*, *old* and *angry*), while a greater range was attributed to males, with these also tending to be associated with strength, success, and wealth, e.g. *tall*, *important*, and *rich*.

2.3.2.3 'Firstness'

A implication of women's inferiority (or at least of secondary status) can also be created by the traditional placing of putting women's names after those of men in noun phrases, e.g. *brother and sister* (Lee, 2014a). Hartman and Judd's (1978) examination of ESL materials was the first to address the issue of the language convention of male firstness in two common noun pairs, i.e. *husband and wife*, and *Mr. and Mrs.* Recent studies of

English textbooks in Australia and Hong Kong for junior, senior students and intermediate ESL learners have also found that, when the two genders are portrayed, men are more likely to be mentioned first (Lee & Collins, 2008, 2009, 2010).

Recent literature has expanded the range of paired gendered terms. For example, Yang's (2011) study of gender stereotyping in the primary school textbook series *New magic* also considers the issue of 'firstness' in relation to pairs of proper nouns (e.g. *Mike and Sally*), which, unlike *Mr and Mrs*, cannot be described as a convention, along with possessive nouns (e.g. *Mike and Sally's food*), subject and object pronouns (e.g. *he/she, him/her*).

2.3.3 Visual analysis

EFL/ ESL Textbooks almost always include a visual element, due to this playing an important role in promoting students' interest in learning (Lee & Collins, 2010). Visuals in textbooks include both line drawings and photographs of human and non-human characters (Yang, 2016). The reflections of gender stereotyping in visual representation have been previously studied in a number of ways, including: (1) the frequency of occurrence of male and female characters; (2) the domestic roles and occupations of male and female characters; and (3) activities pursued by male and female characters. Furthermore, Sunderland (2011) indicated that visual analysis cannot always be

separated from content analysis, and it is therefore feasible to undertake frequency counts on visuals, in a similar manner to those employed for content analysis.

2.3.3.1 Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters

This study found that male characters not only appear more often in texts, but also in images. When counting the frequency of occurrence of male and female characters in visuals, the distinction of ‘types’ and ‘tokens’ (see Section 2.3.1.1) can also be considered valid (Sunderland, 2015). No matter how many times a character appears in the textbook, the image of this character is tallied once (‘types’), and the appearance of this character in the textbook is counted as a ‘token’. In previous studies, the counting of ‘types’ in images has been less frequent than in text, due to the difficulties of identifying some illustrated characters in a textbook (see, Yang and Yan, 2020). The following studies all counted ‘tokens’, but not ‘types’.

Barton and Sakwa’s (2012) study of English textbooks in Uganda showed females to be underrepresented in the visuals, with 20.7% of images represented females and 79.3% males, referring only to ‘tokens’. Lee and Collins (2009) had similar results in relation to Australian EFL textbooks, with 56.9% of images depicting males, and 19.2% females. In addition, Yang and Yan’s (2020) study of *English Language Reading and Writing papers* for Primary 3 in Hong Kong found a higher frequency of male ‘tokens’, but with

397 males and 347 females the gap was narrower than those found by Barton and Sakwa (2012) and Lee and Collins's (2009).

In this current study, due to each character in the *PEP Primary English* being sufficiently clear to be identified, I have counted both 'types' and 'tokens' of characters in the images.

2.3.3.2 Domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters

This study found a lack of female occupational visibility and diversity in the illustrations examined. Porreca's (1984) study of fifteen ESL textbooks found that the illustrations assigned fewer occupational roles to females, with the ratio of female to male being 1:5.12, while the diversity of illustrated occupations for females and males was 1: 3.87. Giaschi's (2000) analysis of two selected series of ESL textbooks showed males to be more often be portrayed as taking a leadership role, while females were associated with fashion. Hall's (2014) study of two Iranian secondary EFL textbooks, *Right Path to English I & II* (2012), revealed that men were given a broader range and a greater level of occupations than women. Moreover, Hall's (2014) examination of domestic roles revealed females to be shown as taking on more household responsibilities and portrayed as fulfilling stereotypical roles, i.e. washing dishes and cleaning the house.

2.3.3.3 Activities pursued by male and female characters

A small number of studies undertaking a visual analysis of the activities of male and female characters in textbooks had confirmed the presence of stereotyped activities. For example, Ansary and Babaii (2003) examined two Iranian textbooks for secondary students, *Right Path to English I & II* (1999), finding that females were generally assigned to indoor and relatively passive activities (e.g. *reading at home*). Nevertheless, Hall (2014) indicated that progress can be observed in the 2012 edition of the same textbook, i.e. women are not limited to the domestic sphere, but are shown pursuing more active outdoor roles (e.g. *visiting art galleries*).

2.4 Studies on gender stereotyping in Chinese mainland EFL/ESL textbooks

This section focuses on EFL textbooks employed in mainland China. Most research studies of gender stereotypes in textbooks have focused on Hong Kong (Yang, 2011), which has separate policies to mainland China, including in relation to education and gender (The State Council Information Office, 2014). Thus, the results of studies of gender in Hong Kong cannot be straightforwardly applied to the situation in mainland China.

One of the earliest studies of gender representation in EFL textbooks was initiated by the Ford Foundation (2000), who funded twenty researchers in China to investigate

gender bias in textbooks at all levels. Of these, Zhao (2003) focused on a comparison of gender roles, as portrayed in the visuals of the *PEP* Secondary EFL textbook issued in 2000 with those in the 1994 edition. A key finding was that female images in the *PEP*'s 2000 edition were more stereotyped than the previous version, with stereotypical female professionals (e.g. *nursing*) replacing the opera heroines found in the 1994 edition.

However, some progresses in reducing gender stereotypes was found by Wu and Liu's (2015) investigation of gender representation in three primary *PEP English textbooks* from 1978, 1992 and 2003, which examined several dimensions in the text, i.e. visibility, occupational and domestic roles. The results revealed that women were shown to be participating in a greater number of occupations, including those of higher-status. Nevertheless, they found gender stereotypes were retained in all textbooks when it came to tokens, with men being more visible than women, whose roles also continued to be largely dominated by domestic responsibilities.

The current study examines the extent of the gender stereotypes found the latest *PEP English textbook*, which was published in 2014 . Moreover, my aim is to obtain a more comprehensive result by focusing on the stereotypes, not only from the point of view of Wu and Liu's (2015) content analysis, but also by means of linguistic analysis and visual analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The review of existing studies revealed that previous researchers have employed a variety of criteria to examine gender stereotyping in EFL materials. Although these criteria all accord with the purpose of my research, due to limitations of space, I have only used a proportion in this study.

I adopted the criteria used by Yang and Yan (2020) for exploring gender stereotyping in Primary English Language testing papers in Hong Kong. I applied these criteria to my own study for two reasons. Firstly, Yang and Yan's (2020) research was published in a peer-refereed journal, and is relatively new, and is therefore capable of showing the latest research trends in studying gender stereotyping in EFL textual materials. Secondly, these criteria have been widely used in past and recent studies (Hall, 2014; Lee, 2014; Lee & Collins, 2009; Yang, 2011), having been tested and documented in the literature and considered to be valid and reliable indicators, and therefore capable of contributing to the internal validity of this study (Lodico et al., 2010). As noted previously, the RQs for this study are as follows:

1. How is gender represented in the written texts of *PEP Primary English* in terms of:

- 1a. frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens);
 - 1b. domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters;
 - 1c. adjectives associated with male and female characters;
 - 1d. 'firstness'.
2. How is gender represented in the line drawings of *PEP Primary English* in terms of:
- 2a. frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens);
 - 2b. domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters;

3.2 Data selection

The textbook selected for this current study is the *PEP Primary English* for sixth grade I. It has four main authors (i.e. Zhou Jia, Ma Jianhui, Liu Lifang and Fraser Bewick) and four main illustrators (i.e. Jiao Jie, Ge Nan, Chen Luxi, and Liu Xin). *PEP Primary English* contains six normal units and two 'recycle' units, i.e. exercises used for reviewing. Each unit contains some sections termed in a number of studies as 'sub-genres', in which a foreign language textbook is seen as a 'genre' (Sunderland, 2015: 46). In *PEP Primary English*, each unit contains similar sections, including two main

texts (mostly in the form of dialogue), a story section and different forms of exercises, e.g. listening, reading, writing, blank filling, and role playing.

PEP Primary English (2014 edition) is the latest textbook in the PEP series. The second reason for choosing a PEP textbook is that it is based on the National English Curriculum Standard (NECS) for compulsory education (2011 Edition), as issued by the Chinese MOE, who have also approved its use. In addition, the PEP textbooks are the most widely used in China (PEP, 2021).

Furthermore, due to being a textbook aimed at the highest grade in primary school, it can provide additional data for analysis (e.g. *adjectives*), when compared to textbooks for lower grades, whose content is limited by less variety of grammar and vocabulary. The data for this study consist of all the written text and line drawings selected from all of the six units, as well as two ‘recycles’. The reason for choosing line drawings rather than images is that some photographs are not sufficiently clear to allow identification of every character (see Figure 3a from *PEP Primary English*: 18).

Some children in Jiangxi,
Chim, go to school by
ferry every day.



Figure 3a. An unclear photo in *PEP Primary English*

3.3 Methods of data analysis

In the literature review for this study, I outlined the methodology available for analysing each feature. Thus, the main methodology used for the analysis to answer the RQs consisted of: (1) content analysis; (2) linguistic analysis; and (3) visual analysis.

3.3.1 Content analysis

Content analysis has been defined as a ‘systematic method’ of looking at texts for “what they are about” and “the elements in them” using quantitative analysis (Sunderland,

2011: 39). In addition, Bock et al. (2011) confirmed that quantitative content analysis can provide objective and replicable results. When it comes to gender stereotyping study in education, content analysis always involves identifying particular categories (e.g. social roles), along with the frequency counting of these categories (Sunderland, 2011). In my own study, I have employed content analysis to answer RQs 1a and 1b.

3.3.2 Linguistic analysis

Linguistic analysis explores how stereotyping is reflected and constructed through linguistic choice or discourse structure, including “words, phrases, clauses, dialogues, and narratives” (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000: 64). It can provide “a nuanced understanding of the less visible workings of texts” (Sunderland, 2015: 63), which is beneficial for exploring the subtle gender stereotyping, as well as quantitative information concerning language forms (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000). In this current study, I have used linguistic analysis answer RQs 1c and 1d .

3.3.3 Visual analysis

Quantitative visual analysis is seen as being closely related to content analysis (Sunderland, 2011). Krippendorff (2018) argued that the frequency counting of visuals in visual analysis is a form of quantitative content analysis. Quantitative visual analysis,

can be used to answer questions such as “who or what is represented by the media” and the frequency of the number of appearances of “actors or themes” (Bock et al., 2011: 266). Thus, gender representation in visuals can be explored by identifying categories such as domestic roles in line drawings, followed by counting the number of categories for each gender. In this study, I have used visual analysis to answer RQs 2a and 2b.

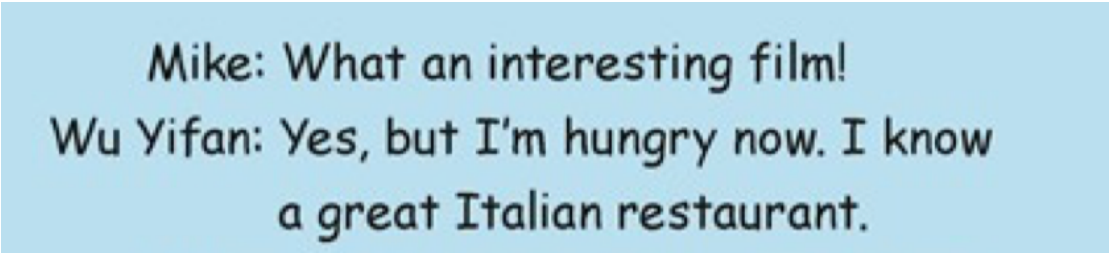
3.3.4 Statistical analysis: Chi-square test

In this research, I have also conducted a Chi-square test to address the issue of the potential for observed differences only occurring by chance. A Chi-square test was applied to establish any statistically significant differences between two variables (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2011), these being male and female characters in text and line drawings.

In this study, for each table with a sufficiently large sample size in each category (i.e. >20), I undertook a Chi-square test to check whether the difference of one measurement feature between males and females was statistically significant, taking the significance level as 0.05. For any test with a p value less than 0.05, I concluded the difference of measurement feature between males and females as statistically significant.

3.4 Data collection

This study records the number of all male and female characters in texts and images in the form of tables, in order to answer RQs 1a and 2a, with both ‘tokens’ and ‘types’ being counted. The literature review demonstrated the distinction between these two types, accompanied with examples of ways of counting them in texts and images. In *PEP Primary English*, a large proportion of the text takes the form of dialogues, so I have taken a dialogue from *PEP Primary English* as an example (see, Figure 3b).



Mike: What an interesting film!
Wu Yifan: Yes, but I'm hungry now. I know
a great Italian restaurant.

Figure 3b: Example of a dialogue

Here *Mike* and *Wu Yifan* are counted as two males ‘types’, and two ‘I’s in the dialogue are counted as two ‘tokens’ of *Wu Yifan*.

An example of counting ‘types’ and ‘tokens’ in line drawings are shown below in Figures 3c and 3d.

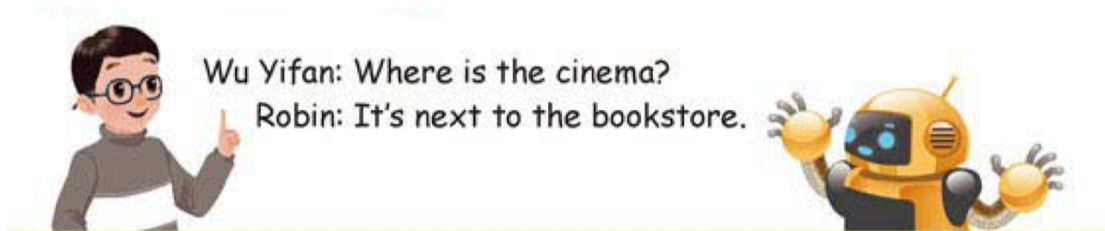


Figure 3c: Example of two ‘types’



Figure 3d: Example of ‘types’ and ‘tokens’

The two line drawings contain three ‘types’ (boy with glasses, boy without glasses and a robot). In addition, Figure 3d shows one ‘token’ for the boy wearing glasses and one ‘token’ for the robot.

During the process of identifying characters in the line drawings, I excluded those whose gender was unclear (i.e. with no name and with ambiguous gender features) (see Figure 3e).



Figure 3e: Ambiguous gender

To answer RQs 1b and 2b, the number and frequency of occurrence of all the domestic and occupational roles given to each gender, as reflected in both the written texts and images, were counted, and recorded in four separate tables. In addition, after calculating the domestic roles, I undertook a further examination of the particular household responsibility taken by male and female characters, in order to obtain a deeper understanding.

To examine RQ 1c, adjectives associated with male and female characters in written text were noted down, along with their frequency in a table. The adjectives consist of those used to describe male and females preceding the noun, but also those in the same sentence as nouns, e.g. '*your father is ill*'.

For RQ 1d, the analysis of 'firstness' was carried out by identifying the frequency of the male or female character being mentioned in the first instance (including pronouns, names, title, nouns) in mixed-gender phrases.

3.5 Reliability, validity, and generalisability

This study can be considered quantitative research because the collected information and data are transformed into numbers, which is a central and typical feature of quantitative research (McCartan & Robson, 2016). For example, it records the number of occupational roles of male and female characters reflected in written texts and images. Robson and McCartan (2016) argued that, in order to ensure high-quality quantitative research, trustworthiness should be established through its reliability, validity and generalisability.

Firstly, reliability refers to the consistency of measurements on the same study subject under identical conditions (Yilmaz, 2013). Gray (2013) stated that reliability can be ensured by gathering information on the same material over a period of time. In this current study, all the data were counted twice, with a month-gap between the first and second count. The difference between the statistics obtained from these two counts on each page of *PEP Primary English* was less than two, inferring a reasonably high retest reliability. A further method of reducing unreliability is to keep comprehensive notes of the observed data for the purposes of review (Gray, 2013). Therefore, while collecting the data, I kept detailed notes of the specific units and ‘recycle’ units to which the data belonged, in order to improve the replicability of study (see Appendix 1 for Relevant units).

Secondly, validity relates to whether those aspects a study claims to have measured have, in fact, been accurately measured and identified (Given, 2008). This is related to the quality of the data-gathering instrument or procedure (Best & Kahn, 1997). In this current study, internal validity was enhanced through the use of measurement criteria that have been both tested and documented in the literature (Lodico et al., 2010), being adapted from that employed by Yang and Yan (2020). In addition, an appropriate statistical method, in the form of the Chi-square test, was also employed to improve the statistical validity of the research (Gray, 2013).

Thirdly, generalisability concerns whether the results of a study can be generalised to a wider range of people, places, and times (McCartan & Robson, 2016). In this study, generalisability was achieved through the representational sample, i.e. the chosen textbook is the most widely used English textbook for primary schools in Mainland China (*PEP*, 2021).

3.6 Pilot study for the main study

A pilot study generally takes the form of a reduced sized study, capable of modifying the main study (In, 2017). In this current study, I undertook a pilot study of Unit 1 in *PEP Primary English*, in order to establish whether the RQs are operationalisable, and the method (i.e. data collection and analysis) was proper for addressing the RQs. The textbook contains six units, of which I chose one to include most of the required data

relevant to the RQs, to enable me to check whether the RQs were operationalisable. In addition, in comparison to six units, the data in unit one is neither too large nor too small.

The results of the pilot study showed that all the RQs concerning gender stereotypes in the written texts and line drawings of *PEP Primary English* were operationalisable. In addition, the process of collecting data proved successful, thus establishing that the proposed methods of data collection and analysis were effective in addressing all the RQs. However, for RQs 1a and 2a (i.e. ‘How is gender represented in the written texts and line drawings in terms of frequency of occurrence of male and female characters for types and tokens’), the results indicated that both human and non-human characters should be included, due to Unit One including a non-human character, i.e. a robot referred to as ‘he’. The insight for the main study was that the non-human characters (including animals and robots) assigned with a gender would also be included in the representation of gender in the textbook. However, this did not require any re-wording of the RQs.

In addition, during the data collection for the pilot study, Unit One was found to contain a topic about finding the way, with the main characters being exclusively male. This made me question whether the visibility of gender is related to the subject of the unit (Lee, 2014a). To this end, I also adopted Lee’s (2014a) research method to investigate whether the distribution, or proportion, of males and females could be seen as even

across all units in a given textbook. This led to the frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens) being counted in the main study, both as totals and separately for each unit, in order to explore the relationships between the gender distribution of the characters and the subject covered by each unit.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter addresses RQs 1a to 2b by analysing the gender representation in the written text and in the line drawings of *PEP Primary English*. The results are as follows: firstly, Section 4.1 shows gender representation in written texts; secondly, Section 4.2 concerns gender representation in line drawings; and thirdly, Section 4.3 presents the summary of the findings.

4.1 Gender representation in written texts

This section addresses RQs 1a to 1d: How is gender represented in the written texts of the *PEP Primary English* in terms of (a) frequency of occurrence ('types' and 'tokens'), (b) domestic and occupational roles, (c) adjectives and (d) 'firstness' of male and female characters?

4.1.1 RQ 1a: Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens)

The number of 'types' of male and female characters, and their number of occurrences in terms of 'tokens' in all eight units, is summarised in Table 4a (below).

	Types	Tokens
Male	53	429
Female	30	158

Table 4a: Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters in text

The total number of ‘types’ of male characters was found to be greater than that of female characters, i.e. fifty-three compared to thirty, while the ratio of male to female characters was 1.77:1. With $\chi^2(1, n = 83) = 6.37, p < .05$, this confirms the difference between the number of male and female characters as statistically significant. When it came to the frequency of occurrence of male and female characters in terms of ‘tokens’, the ratio of female mentions (158) to male mentions (429) is 1:2.71, i.e. a statistically significant difference, while there is an even greater imbalance than for ‘types’ ($\chi^2(1, n = 587) = 125.11, p < .05$). The apparent preference towards male characters for both ‘types’ and ‘tokens’ in the textbook is similar to the findings of some earlier studies of English textbooks (Lee and Collins, 2009; 2014). This clearly demonstrates that the content of *PEP Primary English* is numerically male dominated.

To identify the distribution of gender, and whether this is related to the topic of every unit, I further investigated the number of occurrences of male and female characters for both ‘types’ and ‘tokens’ in each unit. It is significant that this is not evenly distributed, with Table 4ai (see Appendix 2) revealing males outnumbering females in most units:

one, four, five and six of six units. It is also significant that the male characters were portrayed as the protagonists in these units.

This unbalanced distribution may be related to the topic of each unit. This does not refer to the name of the unit, but a more accurate summary of its content, e.g. the topic of Unit One concerns male characters finding the road, with the topic ‘finding the way’ being clearer than the name of unit ‘How Can I Get There’. In this unit, the exclusively male characters are portrayed as being adventurous and problem solvers, with the text describing how Wu Yifan, Mike and Robin find the road to a restaurant using GPS. The male images in this unit thus perpetuate traditional stereotypes of males being naturally adventurous (Burden, 2021).

Unit Four shows the hobbies of the different characters, with the key roles all being played by male characters. Thus, in one main text, Oliver is talking to Zhang Peng about Peter’s hobby. The hobbies associated with male and female characters are shown in Table 4aⁱⁱ in Appendix 3, demonstrating that males are assigned a greater range of interests than females (ten for males and four for females). In addition, males are seen as enjoying both indoor and outdoor activities (e.g. *playing football* and *reading books*), while females only participate in indoor activities, e.g. *dancing* and *singing*. The result reveals females being stereotyped as less active, with gentle, indoor images. In comparison with a number of previous textbook studies, including Hall (2014), who

studied two EFL textbooks in Iranian secondary school, this textbook retains the use of stereotypical indoor female images.

Unit Five also shows male dominance in relation to careers, as well as being associated with a broader range of careers. This is also in line with the finding in earlier studies that occupations tend to be more frequently assigned to males than females (Amini & Birjandi, 2012).

Unit Six focuses on feelings, in which male characters are given more detailed descriptions and are assigned a greater range of emotions in comparison to female characters, e.g. Robin is described as worried in a reading exercise, while there is no mention of a female character. The presentation of male characters in this unit appears to break the stereotyped view that males are mentally strong rather than emotional (Barton & Namatende-Sakwa, 2012).

According to the analysis of units 1, 4 and 5, numeric male dominance can be related to the choice of protagonist with 'masculine' associations, or of a masculine topic and the corresponding portrayal of males. Stereotyped male images (i.e. having an adventurous nature, and a greater range of hobbies and careers) can be found in these units, along with stereotyped female images (e.g. *gentle indoor images*). However, Unit Six shows that male characters can break the stereotypical strong male image, being depicted as emotional.

Furthermore, in Unit Two, females appear more frequently than men for tokens for the first time (i.e. forty-five compared to thirty-six). This is due to two females, Amy and Annie, being protagonists in the story section, with the story following their introduction to each other of their own countries' characteristics. This leads to each being mentioned several times (tokens) in the text. In Unit Three, male and female characters are portrayed equally in the main text with the topic 'weekend plan'. No gender stereotype is found in either of these two units.

4.1.2 RQ 1b: Domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters

Table 4b shows the domestic roles of males and females and their frequencies of occurrence.

Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences (Male)	Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences (Female)
Father	11	Mother	6
Grandpa	4	Grandma	2
Uncle	3	Aunt	3
brother	1	Sister	1
Total: 4	Total: 18	Total: 4	Total: 16

Table 4b: Domestic roles of male and female characters in text

Table 4b shows that the types of male family roles are the same as that for females, with four types for each. In addition, the frequency of men appearing as family members is almost identical to that of females, with eighteen and sixteen, respectively. However, the father is the most often occurring familial role (eleven occurrences, in comparison to six for the mother). This result differs slightly from some previous studies, which found a greater tendency to portray females than males in domestic roles (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Quantitatively, this could be considered an improvement in the gender balance, however, it can also be seen as due to there being more male tokens in general. Furthermore, a detailed examination of the distribution of their specific household responsibilities in Table 4bi reveals that gender stereotyping is retained. Table 4bi reveals traditional female household responsibilities, such as

nursing, caring, and cooking, e.g. *telling stories to grandchildren* and *making mooncakes*.

Household responsibility for males	Numbers of occurrence (Male)	Household responsibility for female	Numbers of occurrence (Female)
Telling a story to family	1	Telling a story to grandchildren	1
Talking to the family /friends	1	Comforting children	1
Transforming a robot to grandchildren	1	Looking for her son	1
		Making mooncakes	1
		Taking care of children	1
		Teaching drawing to her sister	1
Total: 3	Total: 3	Total: 6	Total: 6

Table 4bi: Household responsibility for male and female characters in text

The actions in which female characters engage are all aspect of their traditional role, shaping them the as good mothers and wives who serve the needs of their families and

children. This therefore confirms the stereotype found in many earlier textbooks that, despite both sexes being portrayed in terms of family roles, only females are represented as housewives performing domestic tasks such as childrearing and cooking (Hall, 2014; Lee, 2019). This representation contributes to Chinese traditional and stereotyped gender perceptions of “men dominating the outside, while women dominating the inside of households” (Chen et al., 2015: 1), i.e. the man earns money while the woman is responsible for household chores.

This is supported by male characters being portrayed as less domestically active than females, taking part in only three familial activities, all of which are creative: (1) *transforming a robot for a grandson*; (2) *talking to the family*; and (3) *telling a story to the family*. They do not, however, take on any traditional domestic activities, i.e. controlling the kitchen and children.

Table 4c demonstrates the occupational roles of male and female characters as shown in the *PEP Primary English*.

Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences (Male)	Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences (Female)
Businessman	2	Businesswoman	1
Fisherman	2	Fisherwoman	1
PE teacher	1	Head Teacher	1
Scientist	1	Teacher	1
Coach	2	Scientist	1
Police officer	2	Tour guide	1
Factory worker	1	Secretary	1
King	1		
Pilot	1		
Sports reporters	1		
Total: 10	Total: 14	Total: 7	Total: 7

Table 4c: Occupational roles of male and female characters in text

Table 4c shows that male characters enjoy a wider range of careers (i.e. ten kinds) while female characters are only assigned seven choices of career. This echoes the findings of previous studies that the textbooks tend to show females engaged in a more restricted range of occupations than males (Amini & Birjandi, 2012; Hellinger, 1980), which also means that male characters are shown more often in public settings.

One reason for this is again that the textbook is male dominant. With more male characters in the textbook, the range of occupations for male characters is naturally broader. A further possible reason is the traditional Chinese belief, which has continued

to remain prevalent, that men should be the one earning money in a public setting, and women should stay indoors (Chen et al., 2015).

This further research into the specific occupations of males and females has revealed the persistence of traditional stereotypes, with men tending to be involved in traditional male roles, such as physically demanding jobs (e.g. *factory worker* and *fisherman*) or sports related work (e.g. *PE teacher or coach*). In addition, typical male jobs appearing in the textbooks tends to be those of *police officer*, *fisherman* and *coach*. Moreover, males are also portrayed to be engaged in adventurous jobs, e.g. *pilot* and *police officer*.

By contrast, females are shown working in services and support, e.g. *tour guide* and *secretary*. Nevertheless, women are also seen to engage in traditionally male occupations, such as *fisherwoman* and *businesswoman*, which shows a slight progress towards gender equality. In addition, there is also a portrayal of some females as having higher social status roles (e.g. *head teacher* and *scientist*). This challenges the traditional stereotypes, particularly as such prestigious jobs are more often portrayed as fulfilled by male characters (Lewandowski, 2014).

4.1.3 RQ 1c: Adjectives associated with male and female characters.

Table 4d shows the adjectives associated with male and female characters and their frequency of occurrence in the written text.

Adjectives associated with males	Numbers of occurrences	Adjective associated with female	Numbers of occurrences
ill	2	ill	1
Happy	3	Happy	1
Angry	1	Angry	2
Sad	1	Sad	1
Worried	1	Worried	1
Afraid	1		
Ashamed	1		
Honest	1		
Not well	1		
Old	1		
Rich	1		
Strong	1		
Total: 12	Total: 15	Total: 5	Total: 6

Table 4d: Adjectives associated with male and female characters in text

Table 4d reveals a far wider range of adjectives being used to describe male characters (i.e. twelve separate adjectives for males and five for females), while females are described less frequently than males (six and fifteen instances, respectively) thus

ensuring male characters are more vivid and interesting. The text in Unit Six portrays Sam as *sad* because he cannot go to the park, while there is no use of any adjectives related to his sister.

After examining the adjectives assigned to both male and female characters, I have concluded that all those used for females are also used for males. This could be due to these five words being key words taught in this unit and therefore assigning these words to different characters enables them to be encountered and repeated many times, which is beneficial for practicing and learning (Pinter, 2017). Whether or not intentionally, these ‘cross-gender’ adjectives, (e.g. *angry, ill, sad, worried, and happy*) can be seen as a positive sign of breaking with some stereotypes found in previous research, in which males were portrayed as being less emotional than females (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2018).

In addition, female and male characters are both described as being *ill*, so diverging from the traditional stereotyped descriptions found in one study of EFL textbooks, which identified females as being portrayed as being unwell more frequently than males (Hall, 2014). Another male adjective phrase *not well* is also an interesting exception, in that it does not conform to the traditional image of masculinity, also inferring a challenge to the traditional stereotypical male image.

However, a large proportion (four out of five) adjectives for female characters focused on feelings, making females appear more emotional, so perpetuating the traditional

stereotype of females as over-sensitive (Lee, 2018). By contrast, adjectives concerning emotions make up a relatively smaller proportion of adjectives employed in relation to males (i.e. six out of twelve).

4.1.4 RQ 1d: ‘Firstness’

This section discusses male/female firstness, with the frequency of male/female firstness in mixed-sex phrases shown in Table 4e.

Male firstness	Numbers of occurrences	Female firstness	Numbers of occurrences
He or She	7	Grandma and Grandpa	1
Father or Mother	4		
His or Her phone number	1		
Mike and Sarah	1		
Total: 4	Total: 13	Total: 1	Total: 1

Table 4e: ‘Firstness’

There are only a small number of examples of recurring firstness in the *PEP Primary English* compared to the number of data collected for other RQs. Nevertheless, these

exhibit a high tendency to present male firstness (i.e. thirteen instances compared to one for female firstness). Male firstness is presented in various forms, including: (1) common and proper nouns (e.g. *Mike and Sarah, Father or Mother*); (2) possessive nouns adjectives (e.g. *His or Her phone number*); and (3) pronouns (*He or She*). The only instance of female firstness is *Grandma and Grandpa*. These results echo the findings of previous studies that the male-first phenomenon remains prevalent in textbooks, including Lee and Collins (2010), who studied gender representation in twenty English language textbooks for intermediate students from Australia and Hong Kong.

Among these examples of firstness, the conventional *He or She* is the most frequently occurring (i.e. seven occurrences), and if the sequence of *He or She* is deliberately changed, it tends to sound strange (Yang & Yan, 2020). One main reason for more instances of male firstness is convention, while another explanation, as noted previously, is that the Chinese are deeply influenced by Confucianism, which emphasises that men and women are unequal, with men being considered superior to women (Wang, 2016).

An interesting finding relating to male firstness in the textbook concerns a particular form of male firstness: 'Mike, Amy and Mrs. Smith', as the traditional 'firstness' that occurs when two nouns, rather than three, are paired in relation to gender (Lee, 2008). Although it is not a common form of male firstness, the bias is similar, and in

this instance does not face the possible opposition of “unnaturalness” and “irregularity” that might arise from changing a conventional expression like ‘he and she’ (Lee, 2014a: 48), because the order *Mrs. Smith, Amy and Mike*, is also idiomatic and not ungrammatical. This example shows the continued insistence on male firstness in the textbook, which further reinforces the deep-rooted bias view that women are ‘secondary’ to men.

To summarise: the findings examined in Section 4.1. have identified a range of ways men and women are stereotyped in the written text.

4.2 Gender representation in line drawings

Following the above discussion of gender stereotypes in the written text of this PEP textbook, the current section analyses the gender stereotypes in the visual representations. Images are essential elements of primary English textbooks for encouraging primary students to take an interest in the lesson (Bland, 2015). In this section, I address the issues posed in RQs 2a and 2b: “How is gender represented in the line drawings of the *PEP Primary English* in terms of (a) frequency of occurrence, (b) domestic and occupational roles”.

4.2.1 RQ 2a: Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens)

The number of occurrences of male and female characters for both ‘types’ and ‘tokens’ in line drawings are summarised in Table 4f.

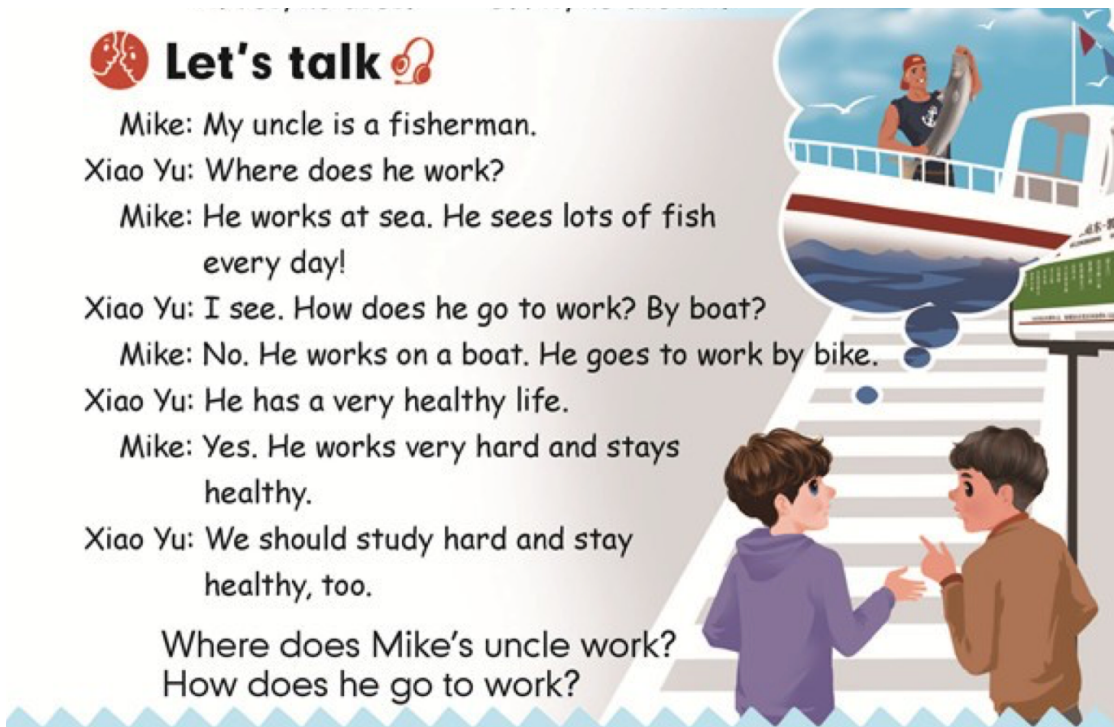
	Types	Tokens
Male	66	174
Female	43	99

Table 4f: Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters in line drawings

This demonstrates that more males than females are shown in line drawings, with sixty-six males to forty-three female characters (ratio 1.53: 1). With $(\chi^2(1, n = 109) = 4.85, p < .05)$, the difference between the number of male and female characters is statistically significant. The frequencies of occurrence of male and female characters in terms of ‘tokens’ are 174 and 99, respectively, with the ratio of male to female being 1.75: 1, i.e. a further clear asymmetry. With $(\chi^2(1, n = 587) = 125.11, p < .05)$, the mentions of male characters can also be seen to differ significantly from those of female characters.

My frequency counts of male and female characters in written texts and images in *PEP Primary English* revealed a greater representation of male characters. More ‘types’ of

male characters in the written text can also result in a larger number of male characters for ‘types’ in line drawings, due to most containing a simple image–word relationship, in which text accompanies line drawings to show the general depiction of the speaker or the content. An example is shown in Figure 4a from *PEP Primary English*, in which Mike, Xiao Yu and Mike’s uncle are both characters (types) and images (types).



Let's talk

Mike: My uncle is a fisherman.
Xiao Yu: Where does he work?
Mike: He works at sea. He sees lots of fish every day!
Xiao Yu: I see. How does he go to work? By boat?
Mike: No. He works on a boat. He goes to work by bike.
Xiao Yu: He has a very healthy life.
Mike: Yes. He works very hard and stays healthy.
Xiao Yu: We should study hard and stay healthy, too.

Where does Mike's uncle work?
How does he go to work?

Figure 4a: Simple image–word relationship

However, the ratio of male and female characters (‘types’) in the line drawings was found to be more balanced than in the text (1: 1.53 for line drawing and 1: 1.77 for the text). One reason may be that most female characters do not appear in the main text but rather in the exercise sections, in which characters are only shown using line drawings

without any textual record, as in Figure 4b (below) from *PEP Primary English* (three females, four males).

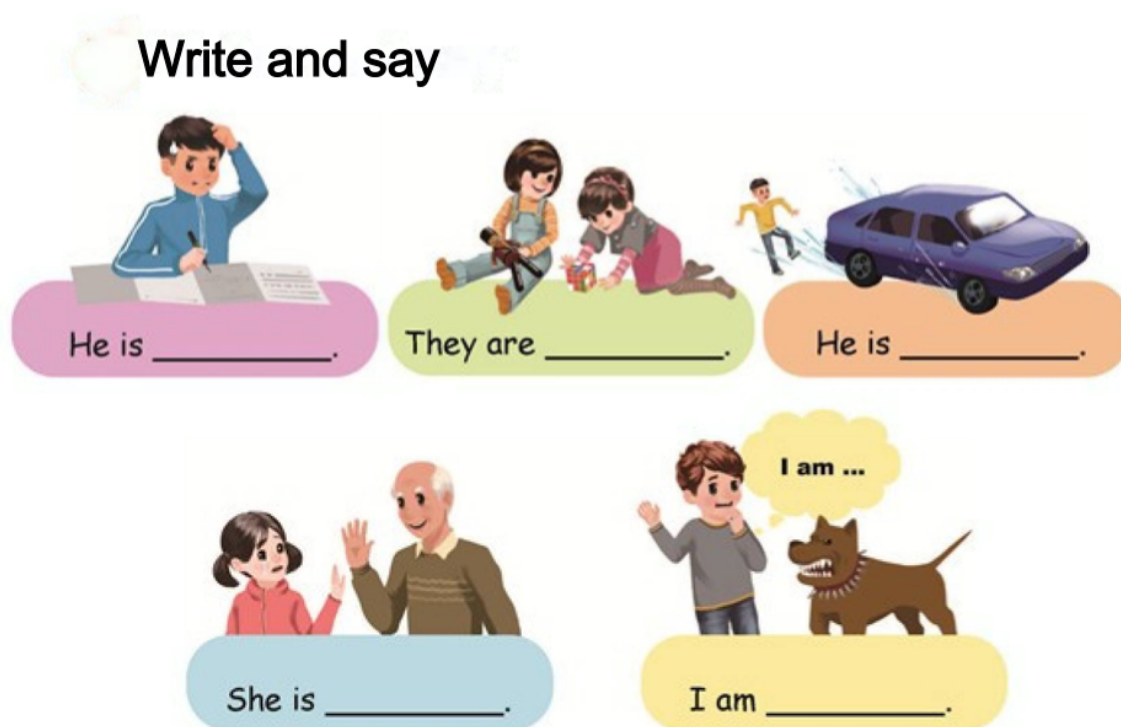


Figure 4b: More balanced ratio of female and male characters in an exercise

One explanation of the variation in distribution of female characters in text and images is that a different illustrator was used than for the textual part of this textbook. A possible inference is that some textbook illustrators have attempted to portray male and female characters in a more balanced number, resulting in a relatively higher number of female characters as ‘types’ in line drawings.

The distribution of gendered characters in line images in each unit is shown in Table 4fi in Appendix 4. This reveals a higher number of males than females for types and tokens in every unit apart from for 2 and 3, whose topics consists of ‘ways to go to school’ and ‘weekend plan’. In these two units, females have higher token numbers due to being the protagonists or main character in both the story and exercise sections. In general, however, the textbook tends to present males as the focus of each unit, with female characters playing only minor roles. The distribution of gendered characters in these visuals corresponds to that found in the text. Take unit five for example: the distribution of males and females in text is twenty-one and twelve, which is similar to the line drawings, in which there are twenty-one males and ten females.

4.2.2 RQ 2b: Domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters

The representation of male and female characters’ domestic roles through line drawings is shown in Table 4g.

Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences (Male)	Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences (Female)
Father	3	Mother	5
Grandpa	3	Grandma	1
brother	2	Sister	1
Uncle	1	Aunt	1
Cousin	1		
Total: 5	Total: 10	Total: 4	Total: 8

Table 4g: Domestic roles of male and female characters in line drawings

Table 4g shows males occupying slightly more domestic roles (five) than females (four), with mother the most often illustrated (five occurrences). This diverges from some results of previous studies, in which males were found to be less visible than females when it came to domestic roles (Law & Chan, 2004; Yang & Yan, 2020). One obvious reason for this is the overall greater number of male than female characters in the line drawings of the textbook.

Despite this increase in the number of male characters represented in terms of their family roles, a closer examination of their family responsibilities reveals that gender

stereotyping is retained. Table 4gi shows the domestic responsibilities of male and female characters as represented in line drawings.

Household responsibility for male	Numbers of occurrences	Household responsibility for female	Numbers of occurrences
Taking children across the road	1	Comforting children	2
		Bring food and drink	1
		Being angry with children	1
		Cooking	1
		Taking care of children	1
		Talking to children	1
Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 6	Total: 7

Table 4gi: Household responsibilities for male and female characters in line drawings

The domestic responsibility recorded in Table 4gi shows females actively involved in traditional domestic work, e.g. *cooking and childrearing* (see, for example, Figures 4c from *PEP Primary English: 57*).



Figure 4c: A female taking on a childcare role

By contrast, the only male shown carrying out a family responsibility is guiding children across a road. Thus, even this sole responsibility takes place outside the home, potentially reinforcing the stereotype that men are more active outside the home while women are more confined within the domestic sphere.

Compared to the text analysis of household responsibility for males and females, the line drawings can be seen to contain stereotyped images of male and female characters when it comes to domestic concerns, with a higher frequency of females accorded traditional household responsibilities like childrearing, while males are less visible when it comes to such domestic responsibilities.

The following section analyses the occupational roles represented as pursued by male and female characters take in line drawings, as shown in Table 4h.

Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences (Male)	Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences (Female)
Police officer	2	Police officer	1
Scientist	1	Scientist	1
Factory worker	1	Factory worker	1
Pilot	1	Pilot	1
Businessman	3	Cook	1
Clerk	2	Lion tamer	1
Coach	2	Teacher	1
Fisherman	2	Ticket seller	1
Fireman	1	TV presenter	1
Magician	1		
Postman	1		
Taxi driver	1		
Traffic warden	1		
Waiter	1		
Total: 14	Total: 20	Total: 9	Total: 9

Table 4h: Occupational roles of male and female characters in line drawings

Table 4h shows that male characters are illustrated as taking part in a broader range of occupations in the line drawings than female characters, with fourteen and nine ‘types’,

respectively. When related to the higher frequency of family responsibility accorded to female characters, this result corresponds with Lee and Collins' (2008: 127) conclusion that women are stereotyped "as operating primarily within domestic rather than social domains".

A closer examination shows that, apart from one stereotypical female career (e.g. *teaching*), four female occupations are shared with male characters, e.g. *factory worker*, *scientist*, and *police officer*, all of which are traditionally male-dominated occupations. This indicates that a wider range of occupational roles showing female characters are now illustrated, rather than purely stereotypical female roles, such as the nurturing professions (e.g. *nurse*) or as an assistant (e.g. *secretary*) (Amini & Birjandi, 2012; Lee & Collins, 2008).

The investigation of occupational roles occupied by males also shows that there is now a broader portrayal of male occupations. Thus, although male characters are assigned to many traditional physically demanding 'male' jobs, such as a *factory worker* and *fireman*, they are also associated with a number of 'service' jobs generally considered to be female-dominated, e.g. *waiter* and *traffic management*.

The findings concerning to the occupational roles of male and female characters in the line drawings corresponds to the findings related to the text, in that females are shown following a broader range of occupations, thus, partially challenging traditional stereotypes. This can be related to the social reality in modern day China, with women

experiencing increased occupational diversity and social status when entering into the workforce (Wu & Liu, 2015). However, the occupations assigned to males in the text remain more stereotypical (e.g. physically demanding jobs) compared to the line drawings, in which males are given more diverse occupational roles. This has led me to conclude that this may be due to the illustrator and author being separate individuals.

4.3 Summary of the findings

This study has identified that, in general, there have been a number of efforts to avoid gender stereotyping in the textbooks, with gender constructions in the text and line drawings assigning women a broader range of occupation. In addition, men were found to be portrayed expressing ‘cross-gender’ emotions, so allowing men to be portrayed as emotionally vulnerable. Moreover, when it comes to the portrayal of men, they are not only shown taking part in outdoor sports, but also pursuing many indoor hobbies that are more usually assigned to female characters, e.g. *singing* and *dancing* (Lewandowski, 2014).

However, despite these advances in gender equality, I consider that there remains considerable room for improvement. In the textbook, males greatly outnumber females in both ‘types’ and ‘tokens’, thus demonstrated that females are significantly underrepresented in every category examined in this study. There also remains a considerable degree of gender asymmetry in categories such as the distribution of

occupations and family roles for male and female characters, arising from the fact that there a greater number of male characters are represented. In addition, most units portray men as the protagonists, so reinforcing the gender ideology that men are more worthy of mention than women (Lee, 2014a).

In addition, in both the text and line drawings, females remain largely restricted to indoor activities, being presented as good mothers and wives who serve their families. Furthermore, the textbook contains sentimental images of females, and males are mostly portrayed in the text as engaged in traditional male occupations like physically demanding jobs. Furthermore, the prevalence of the deep-rooted conventional stereotype of male firstness continues to be used. The above finding also indicates that this textbook tends to portray female characters in a more stereotypical manner compared to male characters, thus identifying this is worth investigating in further study.

An interesting finding of this research is that, in some respects, the visuals are more progressive than the written text, i.e. visibility of female characters (more balanced female to male ratio for 'types' and 'tokens') and the appearance of unconventional occupations (e.g. *waiter*) assigned to males. In addition, the study also identified a more even representation of females in the line drawings accompanying the exercise section than in the main text sections. This indicates the 'heterogeneity' in the representation of gender in text and line drawings. This also highlights the value of a further examination of the representation of male and female characters in different sections

(‘sub-genres’) of textbooks to establish further details of this phenomenon, rather than “unnuanced findings about the textbook as a whole” (Sunderland, 2015: 46).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study has examined gender stereotypes constructed in the most widely used and newly published Mainland Chinese primary school English-language textbook, *PEP Primary English*. In general, the study has revealed that gender stereotypes persistent in *PEP Primary English* like the unbalanced portrayal of males and females in relation to their activities and household responsibilities. However, I have also highlighted a number of attempts to avoid such gender stereotypes, like the wider range of occupations assigned to male and female characters. In addition, the line drawings revealed the ‘heterogeneity’ of results as discussed in Chapter 4.

5.1 Limitations

This small-scale study has a number of limitations, particularly as it focused exclusively on only one of the textbooks sanctioned by MOE. Such a small database excluded the analysis of some features, e.g. the use of generic masculine constructions (Tyarakanita et al. 2021). This indicates that larger-scale studies based on a broader corpus of contemporary, or previous, EFL textbooks in mainland China, would help to build a more comprehensive understanding of extent to which gender stereotypes are constructed in EFL textbooks and how this has changed over time.

Furthermore, the chosen textbook contained many images related to the text. According to Sunderland and McGlashan (2012), the meaning achieved by the picture mode is always intertwined with the meaning produced by the text. However, the study of visual and verbal interaction related to the issue of genders was outside the scope of the current research. A study including multimodal analysis may help investigate whether the genders stereotypes tend to be constructed implicitly through combined texts and images (Pakuła et al., 2015). This indicate that focusing on how the images and written texts in the English textbook interact multimodally in terms of gender representation can be valuable and important for future research, especially in today's visual-dominated culture (Pakuła et al., 2014)

5.2 Implications and application

This study considers that there are a number of ways of addressing gender stereotyping in EFL/ESL textbooks. In Hong Kong, printed school textbooks should be based on principles of gender equality: “there is no [not] any bias in content, such as over-generalisation and stereotyping.” (Education Bureau, 2012). However, mainland China contains no stipulation about gender equality for printed school textbooks, alongside the formal code of practice in some Western countries for textbook writers to create non-gender-biased teaching materials (Lee, 2014b).

This study therefore considers that, in order to promote gender equality and reduce gender stereotypes, there is a strong need for MOE to include gender equality principles in teaching materials and stipulate a more detailed formal code of practice for textbook publishers and textbook writers, e.g. equal visibility of characters of occupations and household responsibilities. I hope that textbooks will in future represent males and females as equal and less stereotyped, in order to promote the strengthening of gender awareness among the younger generation.

However, this recommendation, which considers affecting the MOE's guidelines on textbooks or the textbook publisher, can be seen as a long-term ambition. A more immediate method would be to consider how teachers deal with these gendered texts, as it has been argued that a gender-based text is not necessarily a vehicle for discrimination if the teacher is capable of using it in a critical manner (Pakuła et al., 2014). In the final section of this dissertation, I will present an example of how a teacher can 'save' a stereotyped text, as found in this textbook. The text is chosen from Unit Five.

The topic of Unit Five is careers, and my investigation of this unit found that the total number of males was greater than that of females for both 'types' and 'tokens' (twenty-one to twelve for 'types', and ninety-two to forty-six for 'tokens'). The chosen sample shows the stereotyped distributions of occupations to male and female characters and numeric male dominance (two males are assigned a sport related occupation and

scientist, while one female is assigned as a secretary) (see Figure A1). The purpose of this example is to show teachers that they can take active steps to ‘rescue’ texts continuing gender stereotyping. Due to limits of scope, the example of teachers’ active ‘treatments’ of gender-stereotyped text has been placed into Appendix 5.

However, the teacher’s treatment of the text from the perspective of gender equality relies on teachers becoming gender-sensitised, in order to identify gender bias and stereotypes. In addition, teachers should be given a reserve of corresponding strategies to handle contents containing gender stereotypes or bias. I therefore believe that there is a need to establish a gender equality training programme including the above strategies for both pre-service and in-service teachers in Mainland China.

In conclusion, the efforts of all stakeholders, from MOE to teacher, all play an important role in developing children’s concepts of gender, so contributing to building a more gender equitable society.

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Appendix 1

Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences (Male)	Relevant units	Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences (Female)	Relevant units
Father	11	Unit 2, 6 Unit 5 (7) Recycle 2 (2)	Mother	6	Unit 1, 5 Unit 4 (4)
Grandpa	4	Unit 1, 2, 3 Recycle 1	Grandma	2	Unit 3 Recycle 1
Uncle	3	Unit 5 (3)	Aunt	3	Unit 3 Unit 5 (2)
Brother	1	Unit 4	Sister	1	Unit 4
Total : 4	Total : 18		Total : 4	Total : 16	

Table 4b: Domestic roles of male and female characters in text (the number in the parenthesis represents the number of occurrences that larger than one).

Household responsibility for males	Numbers of occurrence (Male)	Relevant units	Household responsibility for female	Numbers of occurrence (Female)	Relevant units
Telling a story to family	1	Recycle 2	Telling a story to grandchildren	1	Unit 3
Talking to the family /friends	1	Recycle 2	Comforting children	1	Unit 6
Transforming a robot to grandchildren	1	Unit 1	Looking for her son	1	Recycle 1
			Making mooncakes	1	Unit 3
			Taking care of children	1	Unit 6
			Teaching drawing to her sister	1	Unit 4
Total : 3	Total : 3		Total : 6	Total : 6	

Table 4bi: Household responsibility for male and female characters in text

Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units	Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units
	(Male)			(Female)	
Businessman	2	Unit 5 Recycle 2	businesswoman	1	Unit 5
Fisherman	2	Unit 5 Recycle 2	Fisherwoman	1	Unit 5
PE teacher	1	Unit 5	Head Teacher	1	Unit 5
			Teacher	1	Unit 2
Scientist	1	Unit 5	Scientist	1	Unit 5
Coach	2	Unit 5 Recycle 2	Tour guide	1	Unit 1
			Secretary	1	Unit 5
Police officer	2	Unit 6 Recycle 1			
Factory worker	1	Recycle 2			
King	1	Unit 4			
Pilot	1	Unit 5			
Sports reporters	1	Unit5			
Total : 10	Total : 14		Total : 7	Total : 7	

Table 4c: Occupational roles of male and female characters in text

Adjectives associated with males	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units	Adjective associated with female	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units
ill	2	Unit 6 (2)	ill	1	Unit 6
Happy	3	Unit 6 (2) Recycle 2	Happy	1	Unit 6
Angry	1	Unit 6	Angry	2	Unit 6 (2)
Sad	1	Unit 6	Sad	1	Unit 6
Worried	1	Unit 6	Worried	1	Unit 6
Afraid	1	Unit 6			
Ashamed	1	Recycle 2			
Honest	1	Recycle 2			
Not well	1	Unit 6			
Old	1	Recycle 2			
Rich	1	Recycle 2			
Strong	1	Unit 6			
Total : 12	Total : 15		Total : 5	Total : 6	

Table 4d: Adjectives associated with male and female characters (the number in the parenthesis represents the number of occurrences that larger than one).

Male firstness	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units	Female firstness	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units
He or She	7	Unit 5 (7)	Grandma and Grandpa	1	Recycle 1
Father or Mother	4	Unit 5 (4)			
His or Her phone number	1	Unit 5			
Mike and Sarah	1	Unit 3			
Total : 4	Total : 13		Total : 1	Total : 1	

Table 4e: 'Firstness'

Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units	Domestic roles	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units
	(Male)			(Female)	
Father	3	Unit5 (2) Recycle 2	Mother	5	Unit4 Unit 6 (2) Recycle 1, 2
Grandpa	3	Unit 2, 3, 5	Grandma	1	Unit 3
brother	2	Unit 4 Recycle 2	Sister	1	Unit 4
Uncle	1	Recycle 2	Aunt	1	Unit5
Cousin	1	Recycle 2			
Total : 5	Total : 10		Total : 4	Total : 8	

Table 4g: Domestic roles of male and female characters in line drawings (the number in the parenthesis represents the number of occurrences that larger than one).

Household responsibility for male	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units	Household responsibility for female	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units
Taking children across the road	1	Unit 2	Comforting children	2	Unit 6 (2)
			Bring food and drink	1	Unit 6
			Being angry with children	1	Recycle 2
			Cooking	1	Unit 4
			Taking care of children	1	Unit 6
			Talking to children	1	Unit 6
Total: 1	Total: 1		Total: 6	Total: 7	

Table 4gi: Household responsibility for male and female characters in line drawings

Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units	Occupational roles	Numbers of occurrences	Relevant units
	(Male)			(Female)	
Police officer	2	Unit5 Recycle 2	Police officer	1	Unit5
Scientist	1	Unit 5	Scientist	1	Unit 5
Factory worker	1	Unit 5	Factory worker	1	Unit 5
Pilot	1	Unit5	Pilot	1	Unit 5
Businessman	3	Unit 5 (2) Recycle 2	Cook	1	Unit 5
			Lion tamer	1	Unit 5
Clerk	2	Unit1, 2	Teacher	1	Unit 2
Coach	2	Unit 5 Recycle 2	Ticket seller	1	Unit 3
			TV presenter	1	Unit 4
Fisherman	2	Unit 5, Recycle 2			
Fireman	1	Unit 6			
Magician	1	Unit 5			
Postman	1	Unit 5			
Taxi driver	1	Unit 2			
Traffic warden	1	Unit 2			
Waiter	1	Unit 1			
Total : 14	Total : 20		Total : 9	Total : 9	

Table 4h: Occupational roles of male and female characters in line drawings (the number in the parenthesis represents the number of occurrences that larger than one).

Appendix 2

Unit	Theme	Gender	Types	Tokens
Unit One	Find the road	Male	10	76
		Female	1	2
Unit Two	Ways to go to school	Male	7	36
		Female	6	45
Unit Three	Weekend Plan	Male	6	39
		Female	6	26
Unit Four	Hobby	Male	12	92
		Female	5	10
Unit Five	Career	Male	21	92
		Female	12	46
Unit Six	Feeling	Male	9	37
		Female	2	13

Table 4ai: Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens) represented in text in Unit 1-6

Appendix 3

Types of hobbies	Activities	Numbers of occurrences (Male)	Outdoor hobbies	Numbers of occurrences (Female)
	Flying kites	1		
	Playing football	2		
Outdoor	Doing kung fu	1		
	Going hiking	1		
	Swimming	2		
	Studying Chinese	1	Studying Chinese	1
	Singing	3	Singing	1
	Dancing	1	Dancing	2
Indoor	Reading books	2	Drawing	1
	Doing word puzzles	2		

Table 4aii: Hobbies for male and female characters in Unit 4



Appendix 4

Unit	Theme	Gender	Types	Tokens
Unit One	Find the road	Male	11	30
		Female	2	5
Unit Two	Ways to go to school	Male	11	24
		Female	8	29
Unit Three	Weekend Plan	Male	7	10
		Female	7	11
Unit Four	Hobby	Male	11	20
		Female	8	10
Unit Five	Career	Male	21	26
		Female	10	14
Unit Six	Feeling	Male	14	25
		Female	11	21

Table 4fi: Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters (types and tokens) represented in line drawings in Units 1-6


Appendix 5

Application: Example of teachers' active 'treatments' of gender-stereotyped text


 **Read and write** 

List five jobs. Compare with your partner. How many different jobs are there in both lists?

_____ (Title)

 Hu Bin likes sports. He is good at football, ping-pong and basketball. He often goes running after school. He wants to work in a gym.
Tip: If you like sports, you can be a coach, a sports reporter, or a PE teacher.

Sarah likes using computers, and she can type very quickly. She wants to work in an office.
Tip: If you can type quickly, you can be a secretary.




 Robin wants to be a scientist like Wu Yifan's grandfather. He studies very hard, and he wants to work in a university.
Tip: If you like science, you can be a scientist.

Figure A1: Line drawing with negative gender stereotypes

The text describes the interests of three characters, one of whom is female and two males, along with their personal characteristics. It then gives suggestions concerning their desired occupations.

Activity one:

-Teacher (T) asks students (Ss) if someone is good at football, ping-pong, and basketball, what this person can do in future? Ss answer using the structure “this person can be ...” (e.g. this person can be a PE teacher.)

-Ss discuss this in pairs and share their answers with the class.

-Then T asks Ss whether this person is better for a girl or a boy? T asks Ss to discuss the question in groups of four.

-T goes round the class, monitoring Ss’ discussion, while offering assistance, if required.

-Following the discussion, Ss are encouraged to volunteer to share their answers and T supplies detailed feedback on their conclusions.

This process is then repeated three times (i.e. with ‘if a person is good at’ and ‘whether this person is better for a girl or a boy’) until all three features described in these boxes have been discussed.

Activity Two:

- T asks Ss to write down a career they would like to pursue in future on a piece of

paper, without putting their names, and then mixes these notes together in a box.

-T chooses Ss (an equal number of boys and girls) to pick one of these suggestions and use the structure “if I am (the career in the note), I may need/be good at/have...”, in order to make a sentence. For example: “if I am a police officer, I may need strong body”.

-T gives feedbacks on Ss’ answers.

There are a number of rationales for undertaking this kind of practice. Sunderland (2000) argued that a teacher can use ‘subversion’ techniques to undermine gendered text containing traditional representations of gender roles. This can be undertaken explicitly or implicitly, including: (1) showing a lack of enthusiasm; (2) ignoring certain aspects; (3) offering a critique of this approach to gender; and (4) stimulating discussion (Sunderland et al., 2000).

In Activity One, the teacher ignores the stereotyped features assigned to each gender, focusing on the occupational information using ‘this person’ instead ‘he/she’. The teacher then uses a question to prompt the students to undertake further discussion and consider whether gender can be deemed a determining factor in a choice of career, so encouraging them to question the stereotypical portrayal in the text.

In addition, through repeated opportunities to use a structure such as “this person can

be ...”, students can learn new form of language embedded in this text (Pinter, 2017).

In Activity Two, the teacher addresses the stereotypical distribution of occupations to either males or females in the textbook, by creating activities showing these occupations as being equally appropriate for each gender. This is followed by giving the children equal opportunities to play these different occupational roles, which can convey a positive message indicating that these occupations are gender-blind.

Baltacı (2018) provided various methods to enable teachers to challenge gender stereotypes in the EFL classroom, arguing that creating opportunities for students to play reversed roles can show them that gender does not necessarily play a primary role. Muasya and Kazungu (2018) also argued that engaging young learners in various occupations can form a means of facilitating gender equality in these students and therefore their ambitions when it comes to a career.

Furthermore, Scrivener (2012) considered that teachers’ ‘work-specific’ feedback on their students’ actions and opinions is beneficial for promoting students’ further achievement. Such feedback can take the form of praise or encouragement in relation to specific content, the correction of language mistakes and pursuing questions capable of facilitating the conversation between teacher and students, in order to develop their thought processes (Harmer, 2015).

It needs to be acknowledged that students in primary school may experience issues when it comes to creating such a sentence, due to their limited vocabulary. However,

this can be addressed by the teacher introducing the relevant items of vocabulary and grammatical structures prior to the practice. This can then assist students to improve their engagement in this task, as well as benefiting from the practice (Anderson et al. 2002).