

Gender roles in English language textbooks in Japan

An intersectional perspective

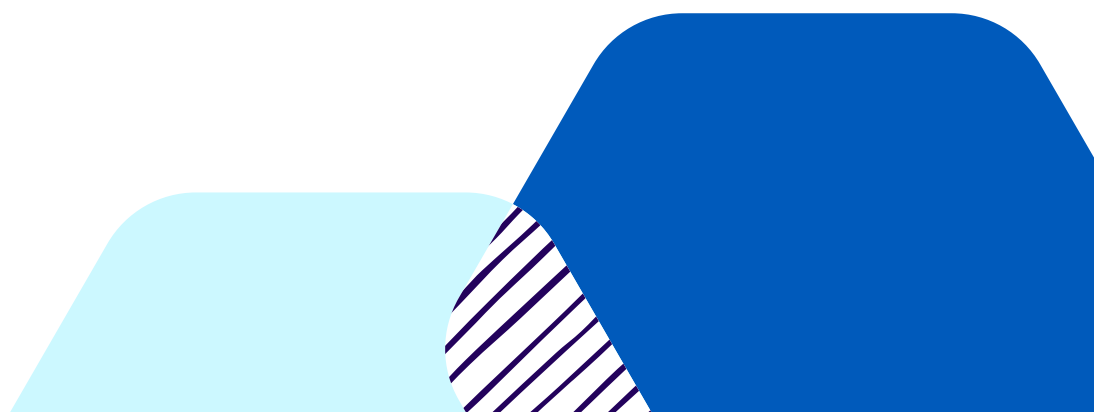
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Contents

Abstract	04
Acknowledgements	05
Authors	06
Executive summary	07
Textbook general content – key trends and findings	08
Linguistic analysis – key trends and findings	09
Recommendations	10
Background	12
Research questions	16
Literature review	17
Textbook gender research	18
Methods	19
Procedures	19
Results	20
Images and visibility	21
Character naming	24
Linguistic analysis	35
Conclusions	41
Recommendations	44
References	46



Abstract

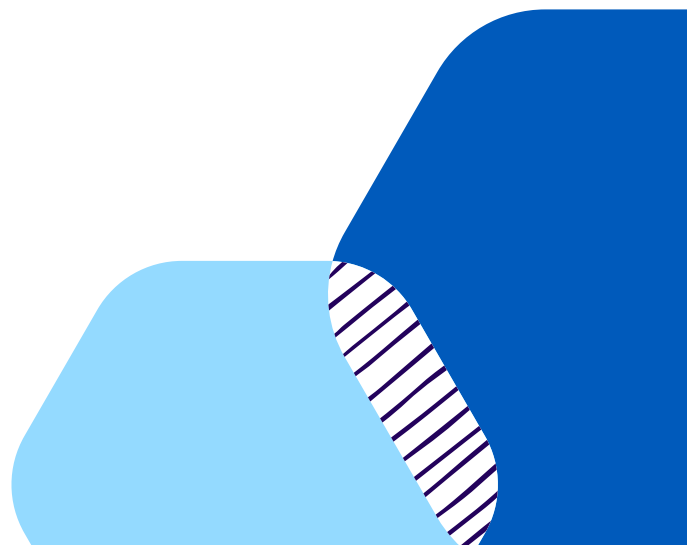
Textbooks exert a strong influence on learning among school pupils, second only to teachers, so it is reasonable to expect that textbook materials eschew biases or stereotypes and instead represent gender and gender roles in a fair and balanced manner. However, research indicates that textbooks around the world continue to exhibit patterns of systematic gender bias.

Ethnicity intersects with gender and, when out of balance, can potentially promote racial, national and gender inequalities; yet it is rare to find foreign language textbook analyses focusing on both gender and ethnicity as social, cultural and educational constructs. This type of research is of interest because textbooks can contribute to cultural prejudices and personal biases that learners may, unwittingly and unfortunately, absorb as a byproduct of study.

This paper reports on an analysis of images and dialogues taken from four popular junior high school textbooks

from the intersectional perspectives of gender and ethnicity. Although recently published English textbooks have arguably made progress in their awareness of gender-based stereotypes and other biases, and materials writers seem to be taking more care about the representation of gender roles as compared to previous surveys, progress remains uneven. The results of this intersectional analysis reveal that despite earnest efforts, some gender-based stereotypes and other biases appear to persist in recently published teaching materials. Based on findings of the textbook analysis, guidelines for teachers, teacher trainers, materials writers and other stakeholders are offered.

The findings of the research also led to the development of a separate reflection and evaluation tool (ACCESS) for teachers to support improved adaptation and supplementation of existing materials in areas of gender representation.



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Authors

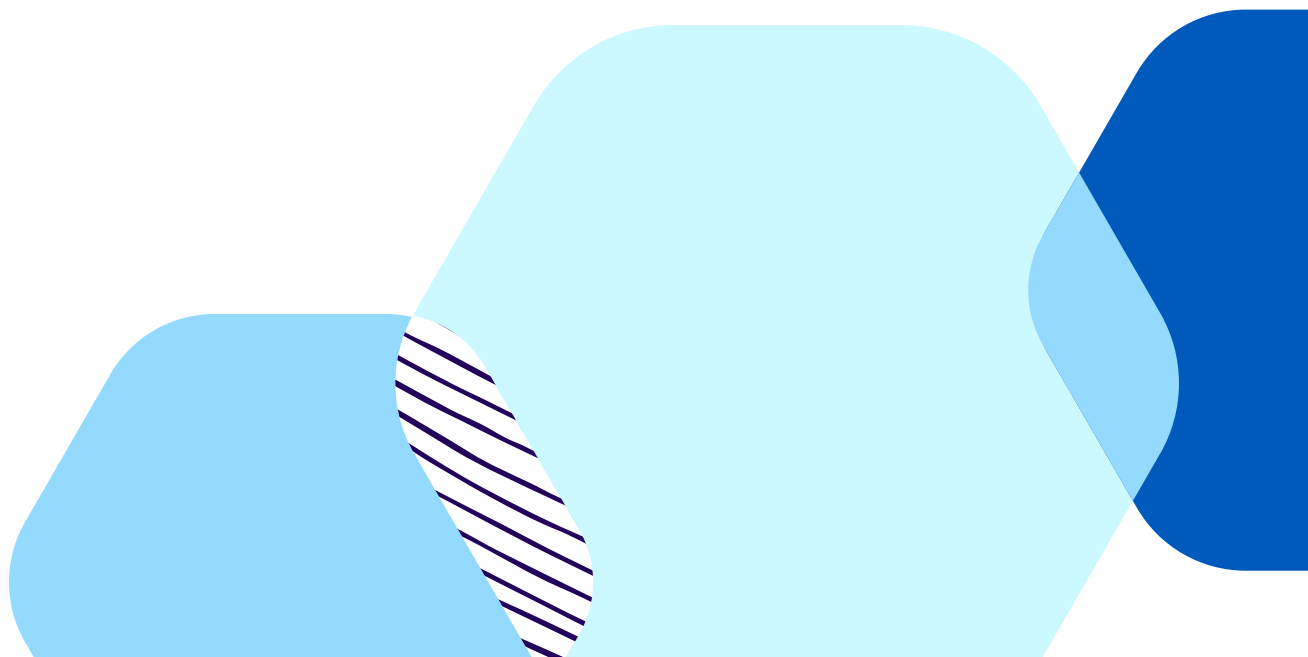
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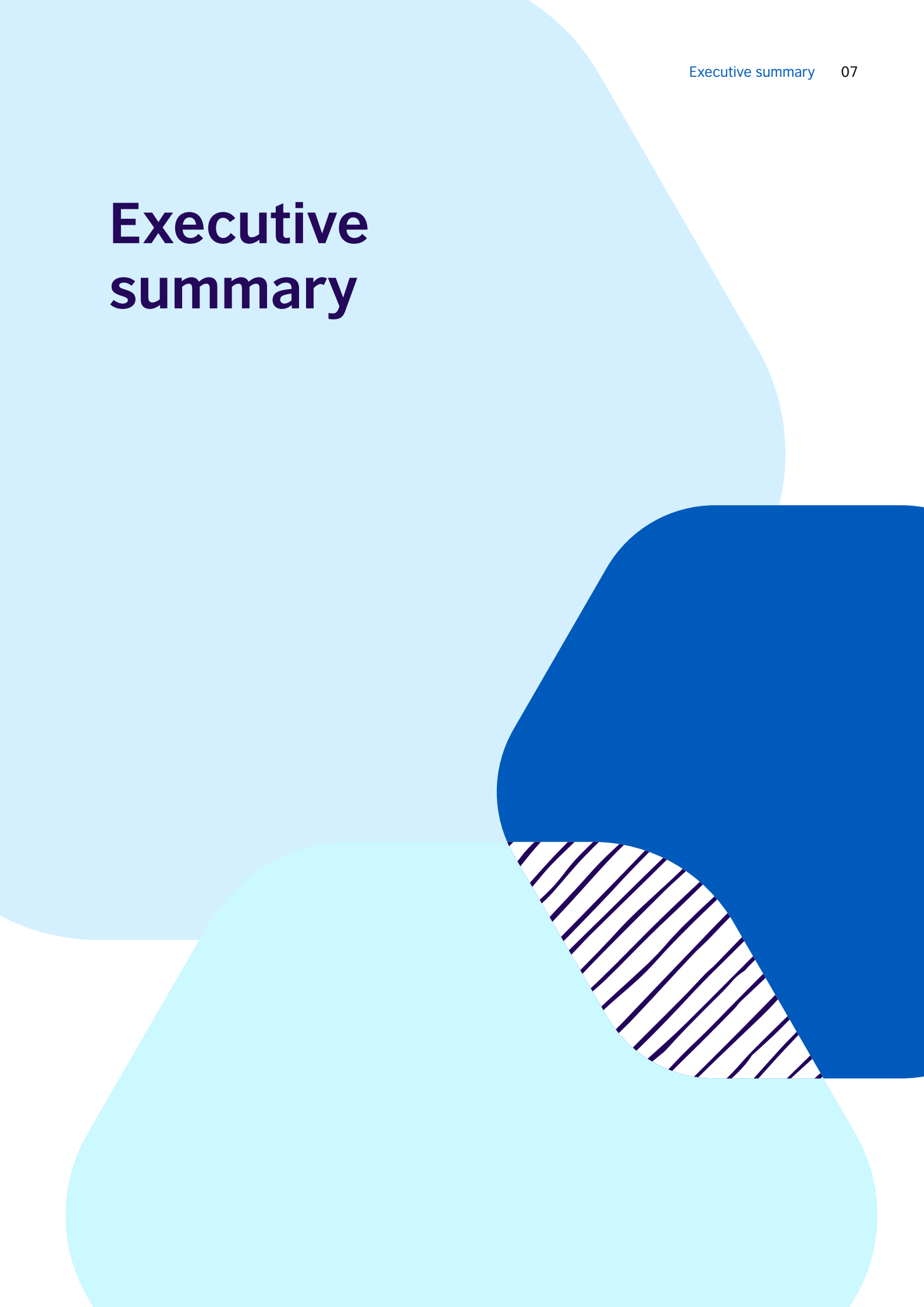
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Ginny Rowlands has over 30 years' experience in ELT, with 18 being in Asia. Her experience encompasses implementing and evaluating pre-service and in-service teacher professional development programmes, curriculum design and materials development, introducing change and managing transitional strategy. Ginny has a strong track record in leading and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion policy for the British Council, as well as ten years' responsibility for developing and managing safeguarding practices around discrimination, violence and harmful practices against girls and boys.



Executive summary



This study explores aspects of improving gender equality in the Japanese educational context, specifically English language teaching, by analysing the representation of women in four widely used English language textbooks as well as the intersection of race and other defining human characteristics.

The first-year volume in each of the following four best-selling junior high school-level textbook series were selected for analysis:

- *NEW HORIZON* (NH) English Course 1 (2020)
- *SUNSHINE* (SS) English Course 1 (2020)
- *NEW CROWN* (NC) English Series 1 (2020)
- *Here We Go!* (HWG) English Course 1 (2020)

The research questions for the study were:

1. How are gender and ethnicity portrayed verbally and visually in a selection of Japanese junior high school-level English language textbooks?
2. How balanced are the representations?
3. What does the intersection of gender and other variables (ethnicity, age, ability/disability) reveal?

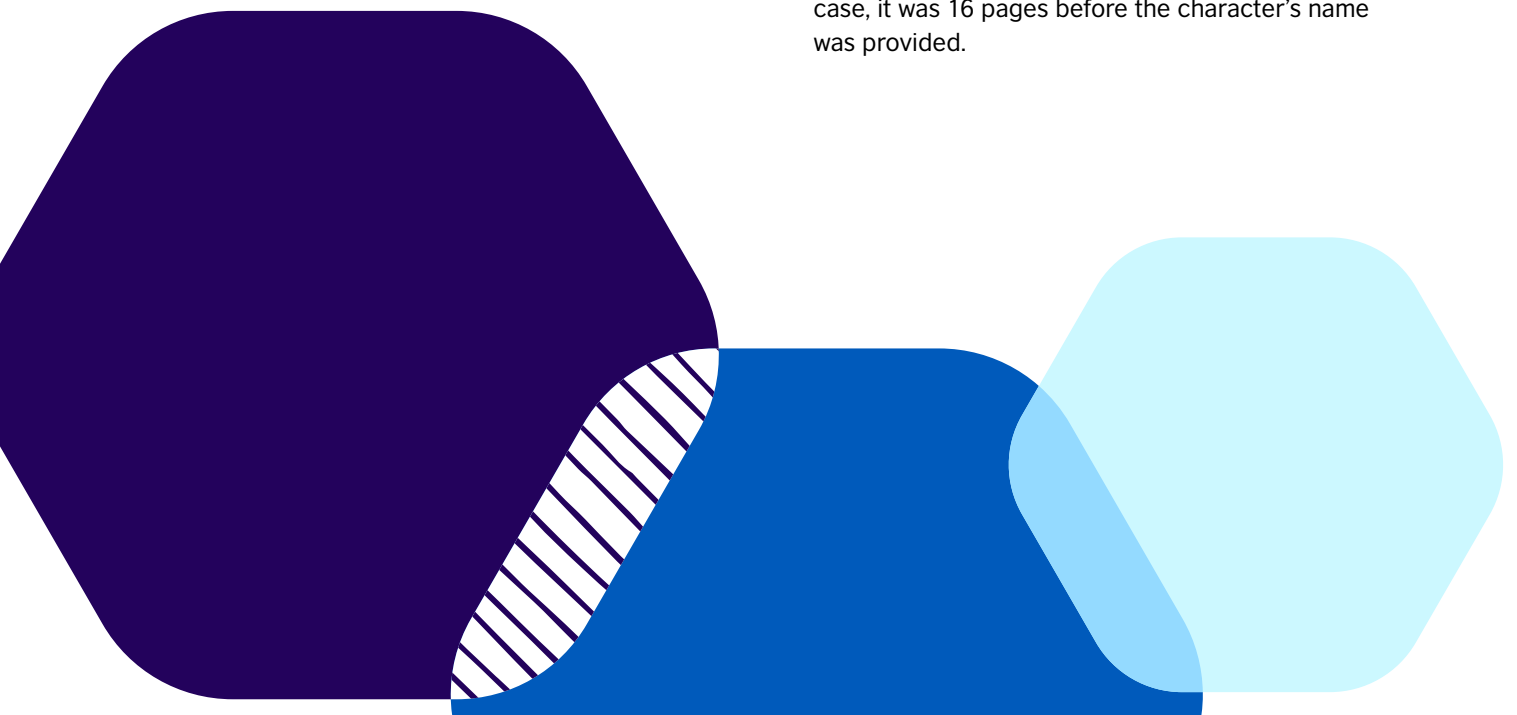
Textbook general content – key trends and findings

Images and visibility

Female images outnumber male images in three of the four textbooks (average of four textbooks: 49 per cent male; 51 per cent female). This closely resembles Japan's population balance (48.6 per cent male and 51.4 per cent female) at the time of writing. However, when intersected with ethnicity, the analysis found that Japanese male images outnumber Japanese female images in all but one textbook. It was also noted in one textbook, when Japanese and non-Japanese male and female characters were compared as separate groups, Japanese males still accounted for the majority of all images presented, highlighting significant visual representation of Japanese males, but not Japanese females.

Character naming

In three of the four books analysed, females with provided names slightly outnumbered males with provided names. However, when intersected with ethnicity, it was found that named female Japanese characters are under-represented overall. Within this context, a pattern also emerged in which initially unnamed male characters were named within approximately one or two pages of that character's first appearance, while in many cases an unnamed female character's name did not appear for several pages after their introduction. In one case, it was 16 pages before the character's name was provided.



Gendered roles

From the analysis it was noted that females are seen in fewer occupations than males overall.

In areas of sport, females were less visible than males, except in relation to what may be regarded as traditionally female sports such as volleyball and netball. Females were included less than males in depictions of team sports.

However, males were depicted as doing more domestic jobs or chores than females overall. For example, males were more commonly depicted doing certain household chores such as cooking, collecting water, tending to the garden, setting the table, taking out garbage, making the bed and doing laundry. General cleaning tasks were more evenly shared by both male and female characters alike.

Male celebrities, or 'people of note,' outnumber females of a similar status overall and cover a broader range of accomplishments.

Stereotyping

Characterisations that may be interpreted as female weaknesses were noted in all textbooks analysed. For example, in different situations, some women were depicted as lost, confused or physically weak (i.e. requiring assistance from a male).

Additionally, no mothers were depicted as having employment outside of the home. However, fathers were depicted in both traditional breadwinner roles and in doing domestic chores around the house.

Linguistic analysis – key trends and findings

Verbosity (amount of speech)

Generally speaking, female speakers spoke more than males in all four textbooks. However, when intersected with ethnicity, female non-Japanese characters appear to speak a disproportionately higher amount in three of four textbooks than other speakers. On average, female Japanese speak the least.

Turn allocation (how speaking turns and their order are written in the textbook)

Female Japanese characters initiate conversations the least. This may indicate that it is seen as more appropriate for boys or non-Japanese to start conversations than for Japanese girls.

Gender composition of interactional dyads (who speaks to whom)

Japanese females talking with other Japanese females was the rarest dialogue combination. Neutral dyads, where gender was not specified, were most common. These were often found in dialogue exercises with speakers denoted by letter A and B, with no gender indicated. This is considered a positive finding, as it allows for flexibility of speaker roles within the chosen context but may have some challenging pedagogical implications for teachers.

Gendered language, firstness and terms of address

In all four textbooks there were no obvious instances of gendered language (e.g. common masculine nouns have been replaced with gender-neutral forms such as policeman to police officer, mankind to humankind, etc.) or asymmetries in terms of address (e.g. the status-neutral address forms Mr and Ms as well the gender-neutral Japanese form *-sensei* to denote 'teacher' regardless of gender or ethnicity were consistently used).

Overall, there also appeared to be a good gender balance of firstness (the order of names or gendered pronouns in a sentence or utterance) indicated in all four textbooks.

Recommendations

A list of key recommendations that emerged from this research are summarised for two key stakeholder groups below.

Textbook writers and materials creators

Based on the analysis undertaken, it is recommended that textbook writers and materials creators consider the following recommendations in creating and adapting future materials:

- Include an ongoing gender audit during materials writing and checking as part of the editorial process, focusing primarily on gender representation and gender bias:
 - Count the number and nature of images depicting each gender, paying attention to the balance of ethnicity
 - Note naming patterns by gender and ethnicity. Is there a significant lag between the first appearance of the character and the character being named?
 - Is there a balance of named characters according to gender and ethnicity?
 - Consider whether an image shows an empowered female or reinforces stereotypical gender roles or perceptions
 - Check to see if there is a reasonable balance in terms of participation in different occupations, sports, leisure contexts and household duties
- Check the amount of speech allotted to each gender, and consider the quality of participation, i.e. who is asking the questions, providing solutions, how much knowledge are they highlighting?
- Check turn initiations allotted to each gender and aim to ensure balance
- Monitor for gendered language within activities and texts
- Create more oral practice dialogues that are independent of gender designations – in other words, create practice dialogues that any person could participate in freely
- Promote the inclusion of more contemporary female role models, from diverse sectors of society in textbooks and other teaching materials



Teachers and classroom practitioners

Further recommendations that can support teachers and classroom practitioners to either create or adapt existing materials also emerged from the research:

- Analyse dialogues in learning materials, paying attention to:
 - The amount of speech allotted to each gender
 - Turn initiations allotted to each gender
 - Use of gendered language
 - Look for character names (when they are missing) and bring them to the attention of students, possibly through lead-in exercises, i.e. don't wait for the textbook to present the name
- Find alternative, more gender-equal texts that can achieve the same learning goals, i.e. language, skills or otherwise. Also:
 - Create materials that celebrate the achievements of Japanese people, especially women
 - Make oral practice dialogues gender neutral where possible, while noting that having defined genders may offer pedagogical benefits
- Encourage discussion of gender bias with learners in the classroom:
 - Create contexts where Japanese characters can interact together using L2 (e.g. in a play, etc.) and ensure there is a mix of same and different gender combinations
 - Discuss how the 'textbook world' is similar to, or different from, their own classroom
 - Bring instances of clear gender bias to the attention of learners
 - Design activities that help learners notice instances of bias or good and bad representation
 - Explore the British Council toolkit designed in conjunction with this research study to learn how to use the strategies presented in the ACCESS framework as a guide

<https://www.britishcouncil.jp/programmes/english-education/updates/webinar-gender>

Background

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were called by former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon *'our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people ... are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success'* (UN, 2016). Among the 17 components of the SDGs, the fifth goal is to Achieve gender equality and empower for all women and girls. However, as of 2022, *'The world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030'* (UN, 2022). It is also important to note that gender equality is regarded as a human right and the UN Human Rights Conventions prohibit gender discrimination on any grounds. This prohibition includes *'the exclusion of persons due to real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and bodily diversity'* (Mollman, et al., 2015). The protection of human rights is a universal and global imperative, and yet universal protection continues to meet barriers at national, cultural and societal levels.

School-based education plays a large role in the intellectual development of each nation's young people, especially at the primary and secondary levels (Cornbleth, 1984). Yet lessons pertaining to societal norms, values and beliefs are often learned in unintended ways. This is referred to as the 'hidden curriculum' and is instrumental in *'the inculcation of values, political socialisation, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure-functions that may be characterised generally as social control and the reinforcement of existing social inequalities'* (Vallance, 1983:34).

Five decades ago, Robin Lakoff (1973) first asserted that a society's norms and values are present in school textbooks, and it is now accepted that textbooks exert a strong influence in learning, second only to the influence of teachers (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Asatoorian et al., 2011). It is estimated that between 70–95 per cent of classroom time is spent using textbooks (Benavot and Jere, 2022; Sadker and Zittleman, 2007). It is therefore only natural to expect that textbook materials eschew any 'hidden curriculum' of biases or stereotypes and instead represent gender and gender roles in a fair and balanced manner (Beebe, 1998; Sunderland and McGlashan, 2015; Lee, 2014).

An oft-cited quotation attributed to the Hong Kong Education Bureau (2014) emphasises this expectation when they request that:

‘[t]here is not any bias in content, such as overgeneralisation and stereotyping. The content and illustrations do not carry any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, race, religion, culture, disability, etc., nor do they suggest exclusion.’

(Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2014, n.p.)

However, textbooks around the world continue to exhibit patterns of systematic gender bias (Blumberg, 2015), which may gradually inhibit fair and equitable education for females. Blumberg’s 2008 report noted that females of all ages were outnumbered in representation by males and, when depicted, were more likely to be portrayed as passive observers in a domestic setting, or in occupations considered ‘traditional’ for women in contrast to exciting lives depicted for males.

Blumberg’s reports also underline the urgency for reform, noting that when there are no movements for change, gender bias and inequity are likely to get worse (Blumberg, 2015; 2007). According to a recent report by the World Economic Forum, ‘gender

inequality is strongly associated with income inequality across time and countries of all income groups’ (Jain-Chandra, 2015:01).

While schools primarily function to develop the intellect and life skills of students, their attitudes, beliefs and aspirations regarding future job choices and opportunities are also shaped by experiences and implicit messages they receive through their instruction and environment. It is at school that children and teens develop many social relationships and skills through the social interactions afforded by the school context. Self-knowledge, gender identity development and personal beliefs and attitudes are influenced by interactions with teachers and other students, in addition to the curriculum and the institutional practices of the school (Gill, et al., 2016).



At school, children and teens encounter pre-defined assumptions about skills, appearances and behaviours attributed to different genders, and these assumptions are often presented through the materials they receive. While such gender stereotypes may help them navigate social situations, they can also have a negative impact on their estimation of their own self-efficacy and the extent of their future aspirations (Bussey, 2011; 2014). Furthermore, Jones and Sunderland (1997:08) caution:

‘a textbook carries a unique authority which is created and maintained through its texts ... these are understood as the legitimate version of a society’s sound knowledge.’

Given the potential influence of textbooks in the lives of students, it is therefore important to monitor what they teach about gender and gender roles both explicitly (intended) and implicitly (unintended).

This study investigates how gender roles are represented in lower secondary English language textbooks in Japan, and from these findings offers suggestions to teachers who use them, as well as to other stakeholders.



Research questions

This research study examines visibility and linguistic features to answer the following research questions:

1. **How are gender and ethnicity portrayed verbally and visually in a selection of Japanese junior high school-level English language learning textbooks?**
2. **How balanced are the representations?**

The key analytical areas of focus were:

- **Visibility** of male and female characters as expressed by images, activities (occupations, sports, leisure) and through naming patterns
- **Linguistic features** in dialogues as expressed by verbosity (how much is said), initial turns (who starts the conversation) and dyads (who speaks with whom), as well as a look at gendered language (lexis), firstness (syntax) and potential asymmetry in terms of address

Data for these features was collected and analysed manually by the research team and extracted directly from the textbooks covered.

In order to accurately perceive gendered roles, gender visibility was categorised contextually, by gender, through the distribution of occupations and activities. Where there were units of specific note featuring historic/famous figures or sports celebrities, the gender visibility balance (numerical, status/power, etc.) was also investigated. Stereotyping and instances of hidden curriculum were also noted, identified and described. This was followed by an exploration of positioning and power relations as described through initial turn analysis.

Gender is not a distinct aspect of a human's identity, nor is it a static attribute: '... race, class and gender, for example, are not discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but rather build on each other and work together ...'

(Collins and Bilge, 2020:02). The term intersectionality conceptualises the various ways power, in/exclusion and status hierarchy are co-constructed via gender, race/ethnicity, class and other aspects of one's identity (Lykke, 2006). Namatende-Sakwa (2018:03) notes:

‘... the analysis of gender using international perspectives largely overlooks its intersections with identity categories like class, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality. Studies can become more complex, and rich by taking these interlocking systems of power into consideration.’

Thus, to establish whether there is a state of equity, or to more effectively detect evidence of any systemic bias, gender must be viewed in conjunction with other relevant contextual variables. This important consideration was addressed in this research through answering the following question:

3. **What does the intersection of gender and other variables (ethnicity, age, ability/disability) reveal?**

Literature review

It is important to clarify two key terms at the outset: gender and intersectionality:

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) differentiated gender from sex: a biological state determined by chromosomes. Gender is a social construct that considers people who cannot be classified exclusively into either sex. It is a fluid continuum of a range of femininities and masculinities that can vary within individuals (by setting and context), and between communities and societies (Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2002). Gendered differences in behaviour can have a multidimensional mix of environmental, social and cognitive causes (Hines, 2011).

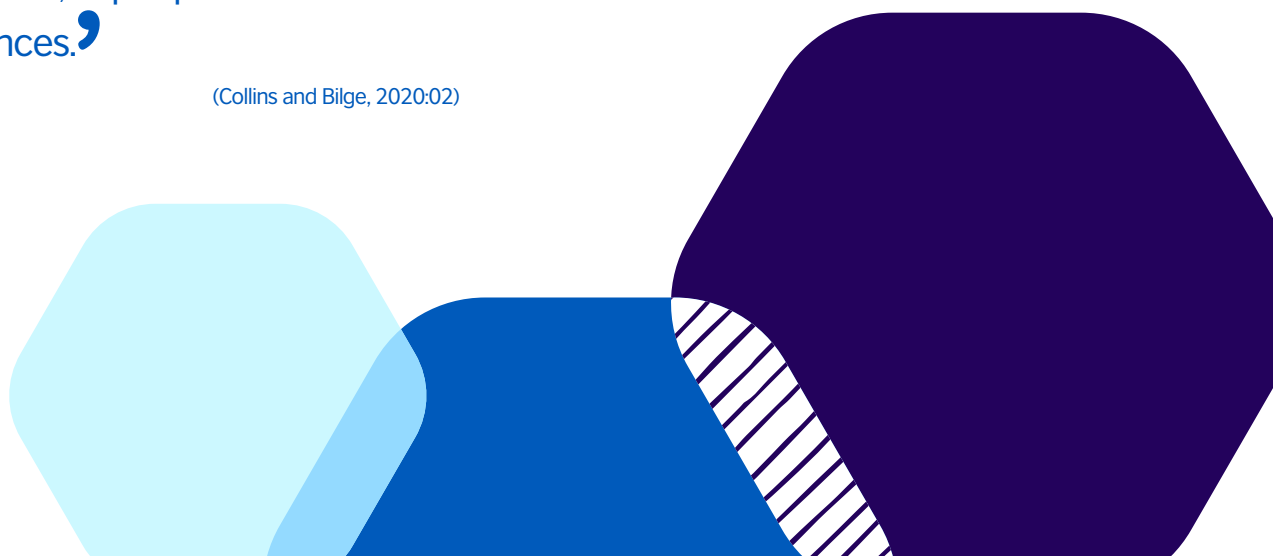
However, gender does not stand alone. It is an important part of identity and, where identity, power relations and linguistic practices intersect with a combination of factors, including but not limited to race and class, each play a role in the individual experience. As an analytical tool, an intersectional perspective allows researchers to view:

‘... categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another. Intersectionality is a way of understanding and explaining complexity in the world, in people and in human experiences.’

(Collins and Bilge, 2020:02)

The term intersectionality conceptualises how the various ways power, in/exclusion and status hierarchy are co-constructed via gender, race, ethnicity, class and other aspects of one's identity (Lykke, 2006). As a framework, intersectionality not only raises awareness in general, but it also provides those most affected with the tools to understand and then combat their own oppression. As Collins and Bilge (p.192) note:

‘Everyone benefits from a better understanding of the dynamics of intersecting social inequalities, as well as the kinds of critical thinking and problem-posing skills that can remedy them.’



Textbook gender research

Five decades ago, textbook research revealed systematic biases in which 'women are often less visible than men, are often the butt of many jokes and are often placed in stereotypical roles and assigned stereotypical emotional reactions' (Hartman and Judd, 1978:383). Although progress has undoubtedly been made, even in recent years, it appears that countries are still falling short in developing textbooks free of gender-based stereotypes (Bhattarachaiyakorn and Boonthong, 2017; Kuoksa, 2019).

According to the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM), published by UNESCO, in secondary school English language textbooks published in Punjab province, Pakistan, females appeared in only 24 per cent of the text and images, while representing a far larger part of the local populace. Similarly, a 2015 UNESCO GEM report found that 57 per cent of the characters represented in Australian textbooks were men (cited in Benavot and Jere, 2022).

Furthermore, in 2020 gender stereotypes found in textbooks produced in Comoros, East Africa, were attributed to a lack of sensitivity training for textbook developers (Ballini, 2020). A UNESCO report (2020:41) notes that 'women did not participate in textbook development or review, training in processes was lacking and authorities showed little commitment to challenging discriminatory social and gender norms,' which has contributed to the continued presence of stereotypes even in countries committed to equality (Melesse, 2020; Mulugeta, 2019).

Other recent research indicates mixed but hopeful results. Lee and Mahmoudi-Gahrouei (2020) found fair distributions of text among males and females as well as the use of gender-neutral vocabulary in Iranian textbooks even though female visibility remained low.

Fithriani (2022) examined textbooks used in Indonesia (one produced locally in 2012, and another produced internationally in 2006). According to the research, the internationally produced textbook had a balanced gender distribution, depicting males and females equally in domestic situations. This contrasted with the more recent locally produced textbook that portrayed females predominantly at home. In addition, the locally produced textbook reinforced stereotypes such as the male breadwinner and stay-at-home mother, whereas the internationally produced textbook challenged these gender stereotypes by, for example, depicting a female in a traditionally masculine job (airline pilot). However, the paper also noted that this apparent gender equality comes at a cost: the female pilot is depicted as a single woman with no familial responsibilities, suggesting that for women to take on such male-dominated occupations they may also have to forgo marriage and motherhood.

On this point, it is worth noting that Sadker and Zittleman (2007:273) warn us not to be fooled by 'an illusion of equality' and digging deeper into these potential 'illusions' is where an intersectional perspective can be of value.



Methods

The first-year volume in each of these four popular lower secondary-level textbook series were analysed:

- *NEW HORIZON* English Course 1 (2020)
- *SUNSHINE* English Course 1 (2020)
- *NEW CROWN* English Series 1 (2020)
- *Here We Go!* English Course 1 (2020)

At the time of writing, each textbook series was popular and sold well in their respective markets across Japan. The first-year focus was chosen, as characters established in year 1 are continued throughout each series, and the gendered images on materials such as vocabulary cards are replicated annually with little or no change.

Procedures

Each textbook was manually examined, page by page, by the research team to detect images and texts relevant to the research questions. Each instance of a particular property was counted manually and presented in results tables in the main body of the report as raw counts and/or percentages. Please note that due to rounding, some percentage totals may be higher or lower by one per cent (e.g. 99 per cent or 101 per cent). Dialogue texts were compiled separately for later text/discourse analysis and inclusion.

Statistical significance was calculated using a standard chi-square test. A chi-square test is a hypothesis testing method that checks if observed frequencies in one or more categories match expected frequencies (Statistics Knowledge Portal, 2023).



Results

According to the most recent census data, the current² estimated population of Japan is 125,502,000, of which 61,019,000 (48.6 per cent) are male and 64,483,000 (51.4 per cent) are female. Thus, if textbooks are to reflect the reality of students' lives, it would be reasonable to expect a roughly equal or even slightly higher representation of females in their textbook content.

² Based on the Census Bureau of Japan updated figures as of October 1, 2021. <https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/jinsui/2021np/index.html>

Images and visibility

Visibility (or invisibility) is expressed quantitatively as the overall gender visibility balance of females and males represented through examination of images in the textbook. As noted by Holopainen (2018:27), the analysis of visuals can be complex since some images are ‘too far in the background, blurred out or behind other characters in big groups’. Therefore, in the case of images with large crowds only the human shapes identifiable at the front of a crowd were counted.

Junior high school textbooks consistently present and represent male and female genders with conventional gender signs such as clothing, haircuts or behaviour. On the images of characters, commonly girls wear skirts and have longer hair with hair clips, while boys have short hair, trousers or shorts. There appears to be few attempts to introduce non-binary or gender-neutral images. In cases where gender signs were obscured by clothing or a limited view, the designation was undetermined or neutral (N).

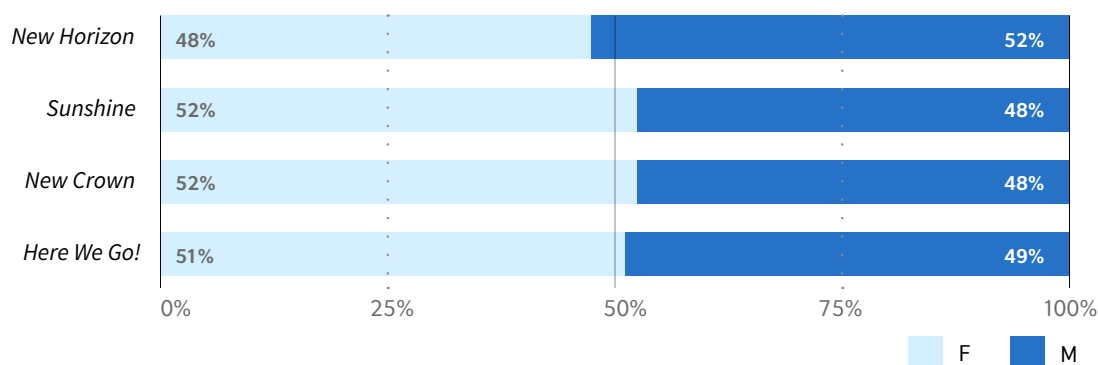
Each textbook has its own layout style and density of images, which accounts for the number of images being different even though the overall number of

textbook pages may be similar. For example, in one textbook (*New Crown*), a repetition drill might be accompanied by eight images depicting humans using the target language, whereas in a comparable task in another textbook (*Sunshine*) there were only four images for the same purpose. Each instance of a human image on each page was counted and categorised by gender and ethnicity. Ethnicity was determined through character names, character descriptions (e.g. explicit statements like ‘Meg is from New Zealand’) and/or hair colour. (Note: As the images in the textbooks under consideration are all subject to copyright, any discussion of specific images in this paper is supported by a verbal description only.)

On visibility, initial data appeared positive (see Figure 1): the number of female images in three of the four textbooks under investigation is greater than the number of male images presented, and the related percentages approximately reflect those within the national population³.

In all but *New Horizon*, women are represented slightly more frequently overall. Taking into consideration the current national population balance, the three textbooks with a slightly higher proportion of female images can be said to closely resemble current reality.

Figure 1: Visibility distribution (without N)



³ Calculations in Figure 1 exclude a small number of human images in which gender signs were not visible. Percentages are NH, F=48 per cent, M=52 per cent; SS, F=52 per cent, M=48 per cent; NC, F=52 per cent, M=48 per cent; HWG, F=51 per cent, M=49 per cent



When examining gender balance, visibility is one of the most straightforward measures available. Previously summarised textbook research indicates females are more likely to be outnumbered by males (Coles, 1977; Hellinger, 1980; Porreca, 1984) and Sunderland (1994):05 explains how potential female invisibility through this kind of visual imbalance is problematic to the self-image and confidence of female students:

‘When females do not appear as often as males in the text (as well as in the illustrations, which serve to reinforce the text), the implicit message is that women’s accomplishments, or that they themselves as human beings, are not important enough to be included.’

By introducing the variable of ethnicity (see Table 1), it is possible to also see how many of each gender are Japanese and how many are non-Japanese. In the table the raw manual counts of each category from each textbook are shown in the top of each cell. Below each raw number the percentages within that textbook are expressed. The same convention is used throughout the report.

Table 1: Visibility distribution by gender and ethnicity in all images

	Female Japanese (FJ)	Female Non-Japanese (FnJ)	Male Japanese (MJ)	Male Non-Japanese (MnJ)	N	Sub total
<i>New Horizon</i>	276 34%	105 13%	328 41%	92 11%	7 1%	808
<i>Sunshine</i>	156 31%	103 20%	159 32%	82 16%	4 1%	504
<i>New Crown</i>	316 25%	283 23%	297 24%	260 21%	85 7%	1,241
<i>Here We Go!</i>	194 22%	245 29%	241 28%	173 20%	10 1%	863
Avg	235.5 28%	184 22%	256.25 30%	151.75 18%	26.5 2%	

 most visible  least visible



Notably from the figures collated, only one textbook (*New Crown*) had a roughly equal representation by gender and ethnicity (FJ: 25 per cent, FnJ: 23 per cent, MJ:24 per cent, MnJ: 21 per cent), with Japanese females visible slightly more than others.

However, Japanese males are more visible than Japanese females in three of the four textbooks (*New Horizon, Sunshine, Here We Go!*). In relation to differences in ethnicity, it was also noted that Japanese female images were more frequent (and therefore more visible) than non-Japanese female images in three textbooks (*New Horizon, Sunshine, New Crown*). This is potentially a positive sign in terms of greater representation of the Japanese female group, although other factors such as context and how Japanese females are presented are also important to consider.

Overall, non-Japanese males appeared the least in all four textbooks. As the textbooks are written for Japanese learners, this is also regarded as a positive indication, as it suggests that images and representations of Japanese characters outnumber those of non-Japanese characters overall. This greater representation may offer positive, relatable role models, support autonomy and highlight to Japanese students that using the English language does not necessarily need a foreign interlocutor.

Character naming

To further explore the representation of different genders, each textbook was manually examined, page by page, to detect the first appearance of a character. The surrounding text was also examined to determine if the character had been named. If no name was associated with the character, each subsequent appearance of that same character was also examined to establish if, and when, a name was attributed. The key reason for focusing on this aspect is that when a character is named or unnamed it can attach a certain level of prominence and importance to that character and, by extension, their gender. When a character has an identifiable gender, having a name means having an identity and confers some importance or value to the character.

To be nameless is to be less visible, and by implication less important. Patterns of gender-based differences in naming (and namelessness) have been identified in other research and considered to be problematic in relation to balancing gender representation (Goyal and Rose, 2020; Fatemi, et al., 2011; Laakkonen, 2007).

However, it is also important to note that there are certain cases in which namelessness can be considered a positive feature. In cases where a dialogue part is indicated by letters or numbers (e.g. speaker A, speaker B) and no human/gendered image is associated with the speaker⁴, gender and ethnicity cease to be an issue as, in most cases, any person, of any gender, can take either dialogue part without fear of stigma or awkwardness. Such dialogues designated as neutral (gender and ethnicity free) can therefore offer participation opportunities for all.

With the idea of neutrality in mind, it is notable, and merits acknowledgement, that in two textbooks (*New Horizon* and *New Crown*) there are more unnamed characters (both male and female) than named characters (see table below), many of whom served to introduce model dialogues for gender-neutral oral practice. Such practices may allow for more flexibility in classroom activities.

Table 2: Naming distribution by gender

	F +name	M +name	F -name	M -name	N -name	Sub-total
<i>New Horizon</i>	126 15%	130 16%	258 32%	287 36%	7 1%	808
<i>Sunshine</i>	136 27%	132 26%	123 24%	109 22%	4 1%	504
<i>New Crown</i>	243 19%	211 17%	356 29%	346 28%	85 7%	1,241
<i>Here We Go!</i>	275 32%	240 28%	164 19%	174 20%	10 1%	863

 more

⁴ The gender-neutral oral practice dialogues sometimes had images of a male and female speaker with the first model set, but it was understood that the A & B designation implied the speaker parts were interchangeable.

In relation to character roles, most of the named roles were students. Overall, and with the exception of one textbook (*New Horizon*), females with names slightly outnumbered males with names. Even though the differences are not large, they are significant (chi-square=171.049142, df= 9, p=0.000).

When viewed through a gender and ethnicity lens (see Table 3), it was notable that unnamed Japanese characters strongly outnumbered unnamed non-Japanese characters in three textbooks (*New Horizon*,

Sunshine and *New Crown*). However, as noted previously, this is mitigated somewhat by the significant use of images depicting nameless (anonymous) classroom students for model dialogue exercises in these books.

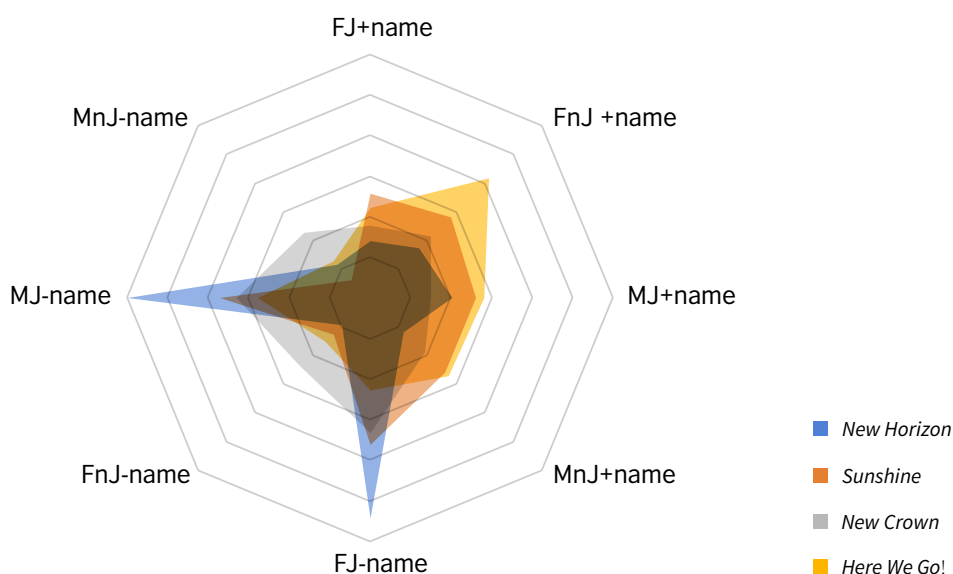
By indicating nameless and genderless model dialogue speakers by letters A and B, participation opportunities for all learners are generally ensured. This point also relates to a later topic regarding the composition of the dialogue pairs (dyads).

Table 3: Naming distribution by gender and ethnicity

	F-J +name	F-nJ +name	M-J +name	M-nJ +name	F-J -name	F-nJ -name	M-J -name	M-nJ -name	N -name	Sub-total
<i>New Horizon</i>	56 7%	70 9%	82 10%	48 6%	219 27%	39 5%	241 30%	46 6%	7 1%	808
<i>Sunshine</i>	65 13%	71 14%	66 13%	66 13%	91 18%	32 6%	93 19%	16 3%	4 1%	504
<i>New Crown</i>	110 9%	133 11%	93 7%	118 10%	206 17%	150 12%	204 16%	142 11%	85 7%	1,241
<i>Here We Go!</i>	96 11%	179 21%	14 14%	118 14%	98 11%	66 8%	119 14%	55 6%	10 1%	863

highest ranking in each textbook less than 10 per cent

Figure 2: Naming distribution by gender and ethnicity (excluding N; F = female, M = male, J = Japanese, nJ = non-Japanese)





The differences in naming distribution by gender and ethnicity are significant whether the category N (Neutral) is included or excluded.

In the textbooks analysed, it was noted that non-Japanese mothers and fathers were named, but Japanese mothers and fathers were generally not. Grandparents, regardless of ethnicity, were also generally unnamed. In relation to roles, there appeared to be an even distribution of nameless male and female clerks, receptionists and servers, suggesting a more balanced representation overall.

To ensure different aspects of visibility were thoroughly considered, it was regarded as important to note not only what is seen in the textbooks, but also what is missing (i.e. omission). In textbook contexts, omission can come in many forms. It may, for example, mean no inclusion at all, or it may mean greater under-representation of certain figures or groups than might normally be expected. Several studies have noted the dearth of females as characters, or females as the focus of the textbook units/stories (Porreca, 1984; Thompson, 2006; Mukundan and Nimehchisalem, 2008). Such trends may also lead to a lower comparative verbosity due to a lack of female participation within dialogues (see the section, Linguistic analysis).

Each textbook has its own unique perspectives, themes and its cast of named characters, which may account for some of the variability in visibility and naming patterns (see Table 4) observed. However, some common features of the textbooks analysed include:

- All four textbooks use a female ALT (a language teacher who is not Japanese) as a main character. This explains, to some extent, the higher number of non-Japanese females in the main character casts.
- Even though all of the textbooks have Japanese male English teachers, they are only introduced as main characters in two books: *New Horizon* and *New Crown*. In the other two they are secondary characters (i.e. small, infrequently appearing, characters playing supporting roles in contrast to the six main characters that were introduced at the beginning of each textbook).
- **Female Japanese main characters are under-represented overall. The Japanese female main characters are primarily students and there are no Japanese female English teachers as main or secondary characters in any of the four textbooks.**

Table 4: Main and secondary characters by gender and ethnicity⁵

	Main				Secondary			
	FJ	FnJ	MJ	MnJ	FJ	FnJ	MJ	MnJ
<i>New Horizon</i>	1	2	3	1	5	6	5	10
<i>Sunshine</i>	3	3	2	3	4	4	4	5
<i>New Crown</i>	3	3	2	3	4	4	4	5
<i>Here We Go!</i>	1	2	1	2	2	3	3	2
Total	6	10	8	8	13	15	13	20

■ highest ranking ■ less than 10 per cent

In relation to the naming of characters, it was noted that often an image of a hitherto unnamed character appeared in the textbook and then, in a subsequent page, their name was finally introduced. This, of course, could be a simple, unintentional editorial slip. **However, a pattern appeared to emerge in which male character names were regularly introduced within a page or two of the male character's first appearance, whereas many female character names did not appear until much later** (in one case, there were 16 pages between the first appearance and the introduction of the name of the female character).

Gender roles ascribed to characters

To add further insight on assigned roles, the research analysed what different characters were doing (or not doing) within the textbook scenes and dialogues. Each textbook was examined, page by page, seeking images of characters engaged in activities and, in the case of vocabulary-related images, labelled with a text description of the activity.

In this study, images of characters engaged in occupations, sports, leisure activities and domestic jobs around the home were identified and then counted. Table 5 presents the number of males and females associated with each observed occupation. From the table we can see that overall females are seen in fewer occupations than males.

The numbers alone do not tell the whole story here. For example, from the data set the occupation 'doctor' appears to be evenly distributed; however, **it was noted that all three female doctors presented are non-Japanese women, which implies that**

such an occupation may be acceptable for non-Japanese females, but not necessarily acceptable for Japanese females.

Table 5: Distribution of occupations by gender

Occupations	F	M	N
Astronaut	1	1	1
Baker	1	1	0
Baseball player	0	1	0
Comedian	0	1	0
Cook	1	0	0
DJ/TV/radio presenter	2	4	0
Doctor	3	3	0
Driver	0	3	0
Farmer/gardener	2	0	0
Firefighter	0	1	0
Flight attendant	2	0	0
Florist	0	1	0
Game designer	0	1	0
Illustrator/artist	3	0	0
Monk/priest	0	1	0
Nurse	1	1	0
Pilot	1	0	0
Police officer	1	2	0
Receptionist	2	0	0
Scientist	1	0	0
Server/clerk	5	3	0
Singer/performer	1	15	0
Teacher	25	39	0
Tour guide	1	0	0
Veterinarian	3	2	0
Combined	56	80	1

⁵ Each character was counted only once (type) rather than every instance of appearance (token).

The occupation 'teacher' accounts for the highest frequency of appearance in all textbooks. This might have been expected, as most scenes are depicted in a school environment and learners are often introduced to teacher characters and other role models in this context.

It was notable that a significant majority of teachers were male in contexts presented across the textbooks. A division of labour in education is clearly seen in the data obtained from the most recent (2020) Japanese census (https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?stat_infid=000032266822) listing common occupations sorted by gender. Although the census data indicates a slightly higher presence of females in teaching overall, those higher numbers largely fall into the categories of kindergarten, elementary and special support (see Table 6). From junior high onwards, male teachers do proportionally have more positions.

Therefore, it appears that, across all four textbooks, the number of male and female teachers depicted, given that the context of this research is junior high, follows the country's data trend.

Table 6: Gender of teachers by school divisions

Occupations	F(%)	M(%)
Teacher	52	48
Kindergarten teacher	95	5
Elementary school teacher	63	37
Junior high school teacher	44	56
High school teacher	35	65
Special support schoolteacher	62	38
University teacher	31	69
Other teacher	42	58

To estimate current gender distributions in the job market, the 2022 Japanese census data was consulted (https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?stat_infid=000032266822). The textbook corpus data was examined to determine what percentage of males and females doing each of the jobs were depicted in the textbooks.

For the purpose of analysis, if a job was listed by the census as over 60 per cent male it was placed in a 'male-dominated' cluster and those over 60 per cent female were placed in a 'female-dominated' cluster. Jobs were considered to be gender neutral if neither gender constituted 60 per cent or more in the census data. Table 7 summarises the identified gender distribution in the textbooks clustered by neutral, male-dominant and female-dominant occupational roles.

Through this analysis, across all textbooks, females were seen to do fewer jobs than males, especially in careers deemed 'neutral' or 'male dominant'. Examples of neutral jobs included teacher, tour guide, shop clerk (including florist) and illustrator (although it should be noted that all of these occupations do show slightly higher female numbers, nearing 60 per cent). Females exceeded males at a rate of more than two to one in jobs that are recorded as female dominant according to census data (e.g. receptionist, nurse, cook, baker).

Table 7: Gender distribution in the textbook corpus clustered by neutral, male-dominant and female-dominant occupational roles as identified through census data

	Female in textbook	Male in textbook	Unknown	Total
Census data neutral	36	47	0	83
Census data male dominant	15	31	1	47
Census data female dominant	5	2	0	7
Total	56	80	1	137

Overall, none of these differences are statistically significant (chi-squared = 6.14, df =4, p=0.189), indicating that the proportions of jobs allocated in the textbooks broadly resemble the reality of the Japanese workplace.

As highlighted previously, at school, children and teens encounter pre-defined assumptions about skills, appearances and behaviours attributed to different genders. While such gender stereotypes may help them navigate social situations, these can also have a negative impact on their estimation of their own self-efficacy and the extent of their future aspirations (Bussey, 2011, 2014).

An argument can therefore be made for promoting images and textual depictions of women in less stereotypical roles, to empower students to have more aspirational goals that can surpass the current reality. **Seeing Japanese female characters depicted in a wider range of roles may also provide relatable role models and inspiration that encourages students to believe they can attain similar goals**. However, this may not be a simple undertaking, as gender alone is not the only consideration.

Returning to the occupation of 'doctor' as an example, the female doctors presented in textbook images were primarily non-Japanese women. If Japanese female students do not see 'themselves' or their ethnicity represented within the images, they may subsequently have less inclination to see their future self in such a position. As a result, any 'encouraging effect' of increasing the number of females in similar positions might be lost.

Similarly, it is notable that within the textbooks overall, females exceed males at a rate of more than two-to-one in jobs seen as stereotypically female (e.g. receptionist, nurse, cook, baker). This may also serve to reinforce lower job expectations, and potentially lower self-esteem, among female students.



Sports and leisure contexts

In the textbooks analysed, females are less visible than males in sports overall (see Table 8). Except for volleyball and netball, females were outnumbered by males in all team sports. Research has previously shown identifiable gender-based differences in participation patterns in sports (Schmalz et al., 2006); males are often directed towards competitive team sports whereas females are more likely to play individual sports (Colley, et.al., 2006). This appears to construct a stereotype of females being less active than males, or less willing to work for others. However, such a stereotypical presentation did not feature throughout. For example, instances where males and females were engaged in stereotypical sports and leisure activities (see Example 1) were noted across the four textbooks, but there were also instances of aspirational efforts to encourage female participation in a wider range of sports in which they may not currently have significant involvement (see Example 2).

Example 1

On pages 88–89 of *New Crown*, an email from Lisa, who lives in the US, is presented with real photos. It describes how she spends her time after school. While Lisa volunteers to read to young children, her friend Kevin plays American football in the fall and does track and field in the spring.

The juxtaposition of these descriptions and photos in side-by-side pages draws attention to what would appear to be imbalanced and stereotypical examples of male–female activities in which the male is physically active (sports/contact sports) while the female is less physically active (reading) and maternal.

Reading to young children and playing sports are activities, when considered separately, that could ostensibly be carried out by students of any gender. As such, they could be seen as realistic examples of student activities. However, when they are presented side-by-side on sequential pages as examples of pastimes done by specified characters, a comparison is invited. As it turns out, these two activities are not balanced in terms of level of physical activity. If each student had been involved with different active sports or each had been engaged in different kinds of volunteer service, for example, the paired representations would not have carried such underlying gender stereotypes. If the students had been engaged in different kinds of volunteer service, that would also have offered an aspirational component of how we might wish the world could be, and possibly offer a valuable role model example.

Example 2

On pages 6, 79 and 117 (*New Crown*), a Japanese female character, Hana, is a member of the soccer club. This is still quite a rare occurrence in a typical public junior high school in Japan. According to the Japan Junior High School Athletic Federation, in 2021 the number of member schools of boys' soccer clubs nationwide was 6,602, with the participation of 167,256 students, while the number of schools with girls' soccer clubs was 68, with 5,660 students.

In the case of Example 2, depicting a female character playing soccer is a welcome recognition and encouragement of the participation of females in, what has until recent years been, a largely non-traditional female sport. This might be considered 'aspirational' in the sense that it shows a female character pushing a previously gendered 'boundary'.

Table 8: Sports by gender

Sports	All textbooks combined		
	F	M	N
Badminton	5	5	0
Baseball	1	12	0
Basketball	26	41	0
Cricket	0	2	0
Cycling	0	5	0
Equestrian	1	0	0
Football	2	6	0
Judo	2	3	0
Jump rope	2	0	0
Kendo	0	0	3
Netball	6	0	0
Rugby	0	5	0
Running	10	7	0
Skating	4	2	0
Skiing	8	0	0
Soccer	10	39	0
Softball	2	0	0
Swimming	5	7	0
Table tennis	1	1	0
Tennis	13	9	0
Track & field	4	6	0
Volleyball	3	2	0
Combined	105	152	3

Household duties

According to Table 9, male characters are depicted in greater numbers doing household chores such as cooking (M=14;F=12), collecting water/tending to the garden (M=6;F=1), setting the table (M=1;F=0), taking out garbage (M=1;F=0), making the bed (M=2;F=0) and doing laundry (M=14;F=0). Cleaning, an activity often associated with female protagonists, was evenly shared by male and female characters, while 'walking the dog' was dominated by female characters in all four textbooks.

Depictions such as these are far from reality. According to a national survey conducted every five years by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2020), on average, Japanese women spent seven times as many hours as their spouses on household chores. In the case of women who work full-time hours outside the home, their time spent on household chores was five times that of their husbands. While taking out the garbage was reported as something males did relatively consistently, the job of sorting trash and preparing it to be taken out was largely left to females, as was the 'invisible work' of meal planning and monitoring the stock of food and daily necessities.

Showing males doing a larger proportion of household tasks may indicate raised awareness on the part of the content creators of the desirability to depict males being more active in the home environment. However, as indicated in the data,

while this is a welcome inclusion, editors and writers also need to be aware of over-compensating and moving towards an opposite extreme.

It is important to note that monitoring the balance of males and females and **aiming for an even distribution of those conducting various tasks, including 'invisible tasks' such as planning meals and ordering food, could still promote progressive and positive role models.** Ultimately, a 50:50 split would be an ideal balance across all chores.

Table 9: Household duties

Household activities	F	M	N
Cooking	12	14	0
Cleaning	8	8	0
Collecting water/gardening	1	6	0
Setting table	0	1	0
Shovelling snow	0	0	1
Visiting grandparents	2	1	0
Walking dog	8	3	0
Taking out garbage	0	1	0
Making bed	0	2	0
Doing laundry	0	14	0
Combined	31	50	1

Leisure contexts

Leisure contexts were differentiated from sports and were counted using the same method as outlined above (see table below).

Table 10: Leisure contexts⁶

Leisure activities	F	M	N
Music	39	44	0
Singing	13	5	0
Dancing	16	13	0
Theatre/drama	2	3	0
Drawing/art	7	5	0
Swimming/surfing	6	6	0
Camping	4	4	0
Fishing	1	8	0
Scuba diving	0	3	0
Shopping	8	7	0
Eating	34	48	0
Drinking	9	10	1
Sleeping	6	3	0
Reading	12	15	0
Climbing	2	5	0
Watching TV/gaming	8	70	1
Travelling	9	3	0
Concerts/museums	9	5	0
Bath/onsen (hot spring)	1	9	0
Kayaking	0	1	0
Chess/shogi	0	2	0
Writing letters	1	1	0
Telephoning	3	1	0
Public speaking	0	1	0
Combined	190	272	2

Within the textbooks covered in this research, males and females are involved within the performing arts (drama, dance) and music in largely similar numbers. However, males accounted for the largest number of depictions of participating in ‘leisure activities’ overall (M= 272; F=190). This appears to enforce a stereotype of males being more active (involved in doing things) than females or having more leisure time to enjoy. Males were also depicted as watching TV and gaming at a rate of nearly 10 to 1 compared with females, which also appeared to offer a stereotypical, and somewhat negative, view of male activity.



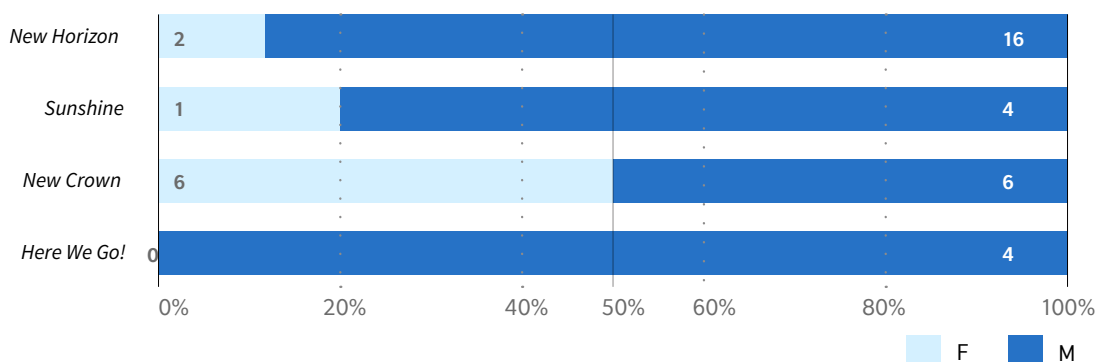
⁶ Activities done outside of school during free time were considered leisure contexts

Famous people

Among the four textbooks, a number of famous people were mentioned or depicted in images: Albert Einstein (science); Michael Jackson, the Beatles, Richard and Karen Carpenter (music); Charlie Chaplin (film); Natsume Soseki (literature);

Santa Claus (folk traditions); Ohtani Shohei (baseball); Amimoto Mari (paralympian/athletics), Chokai Renshi (paralympian/athletics); Naomi Osaka (tennis); Hirano Miu (table tennis).

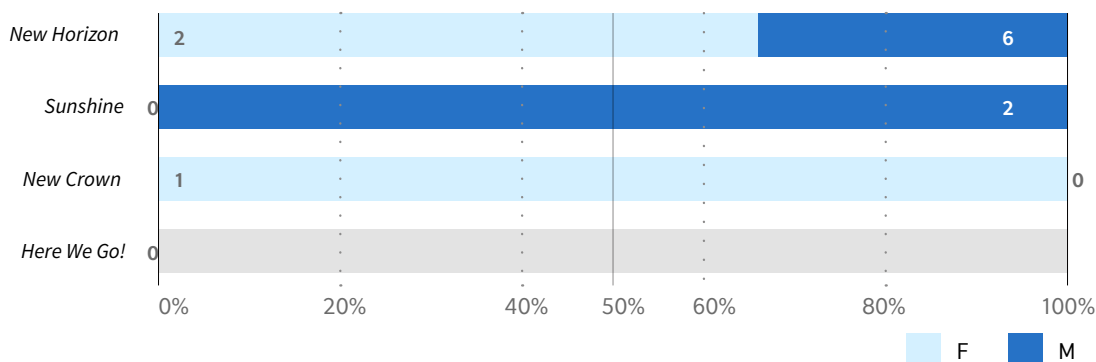
Figure 3: Distribution of famous people by gender



In Figure 3, it is clear that the depictions of male famous people (dark blue) outnumber those of females in all except one textbook (*New Crown*). Non-Japanese males account for most of the famous people depicted and span a wide range of accomplishments in different fields. In contrast, female

Japanese famous people appear to be restricted to sports figures, while Japanese male famous people are largely depicted in areas of sports and literature. The inclusion of local celebrities was also examined within the textbook (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Distribution of Local celebrities by gender



If ethnicity is considered, only one local Japanese female celebrity was depicted across all four books, with all other female celebrities being of non-Japanese ethnicity. On the other hand, and notably, male celebrities are more evenly split between Japanese

and non-Japanese ethnicities. Reasons for this are unclear, but this once again highlights lower representation of Japanese females, in this case as people of note or celebrity.

Stereotyping

If one considers the four textbooks analysed in the context of an equality discourse (Marshall, 2004), it is important to also look at images and how those images might show one gender more positively than another. Gender ‘positioning’ through textbook images has been investigated by Fairclough (1989) and Berger (1972) and, according to Giaschi (2000:33), ‘individuals or groups of individuals are positioned by discourse as “inherently inferior”, “in control”, “weak”, “strong” and so forth’.

The stereotype of women as being weak or inadequate was reinforced within presented scenarios in which females were lost, weak and too afraid to speak. In one case a whole unit was devoted to a female student suffering from a mystery illness. Other examples of such representations include: a Japanese female student who is shown to be afraid to speak up during class and is urged to be brave (*New Horizon*, page 38), and a non-Japanese mother is depicted as being weak (i.e. too weak to mash potatoes), so she calls for assistance from her son (*Sunshine*, page 99).

While certain depictions may not be intentionally stereotypical, repeated characterisations will arguably strengthen such stereotypes, and can potentially have a negative impact. If such scenarios are considered necessary for pedagogical reasons, a gender balance of who is depicted as needing assistance or vulnerable is clearly preferable.

Linguistic analysis

Visibility of female and male characters can also be assessed linguistically. The following tables use a linguistic corpus consisting of dialogues and model sentences to examine verbosity (how much is said), the identity of the speaker in initial turns and the make-up of the interaction.

Verbosity

The stereotype that women talk more than men was debunked by empirical research many decades ago (James and Drakich, 1993). However, research has found that verbosity, or the amount said, is among several indicators of dominance in interaction (Berger, 1994; Holmes, 1998). Furthermore, an unequal depiction of speaking opportunities by female and male characters might also result in reduced opportunities for participation in certain speech activities (Sunderland, 1998) in the classroom.

In this investigation, the number of words uttered in dialogues were manually counted and tabulated by gender and ethnicity. Data regarded as neutral is where no gender was assigned to turns (i.e. Speaker A and B). In Table 11, we see that, when only gender was considered, it was noted that female speakers did speak more than males in all textbooks.

The analysis also noted that two textbooks (*New Horizon*, *Sunshine*) have nearly twice as many words in dialogues as the others, although this can be accounted for by differences in layout and overall text density. This means, in the case of textbooks with more words, there are often a larger number of dialogues with slightly longer turn lengths. It should also be noted that the data compiled for linguistic analysis here did not look at reading passages, email texts, letters or monologues.

Table 11: Verbosity by gender

	Female	Male	Neutral	Sub-totals
<i>New Horizon</i>	1,105 42%	1,076 41%	442 17%	2,623
<i>Sunshine</i>	949 43%	788 36%	452 21%	2,189
<i>New Crown</i>	352 35%	310 31%	350 35%	1,012
<i>Here We Go!</i>	514 46%	427 39%	165 15%	1,106

When ethnicity and gender are considered together (Table 12), the picture is more complex; on average, female Japanese characters speak fewer words than all other characters. They never speak the most in any dialogues, in any of the four textbooks. Female non-Japanese characters speak a disproportionately higher amount than other characters in three out of four textbooks, with male Japanese characters speaking the most in one textbook.

Therefore, **when viewed intersectionally, there is an apparent imbalance in the representation of female Japanese characters and, by extension, role models for female Japanese learners.** The pattern of female non-Japanese speakers speaking more than all other speakers holds true when the four textbooks are averaged. Given this representation, the higher amount of speech by non-Japanese female characters may deflect attention from a lack of speech equity for Japanese females, as on the surface it appears that females, as a group, are adequately represented. However, as noted, Japanese female characters, while represented, appear to be offered fewer chances to participate in English dialogues overall.

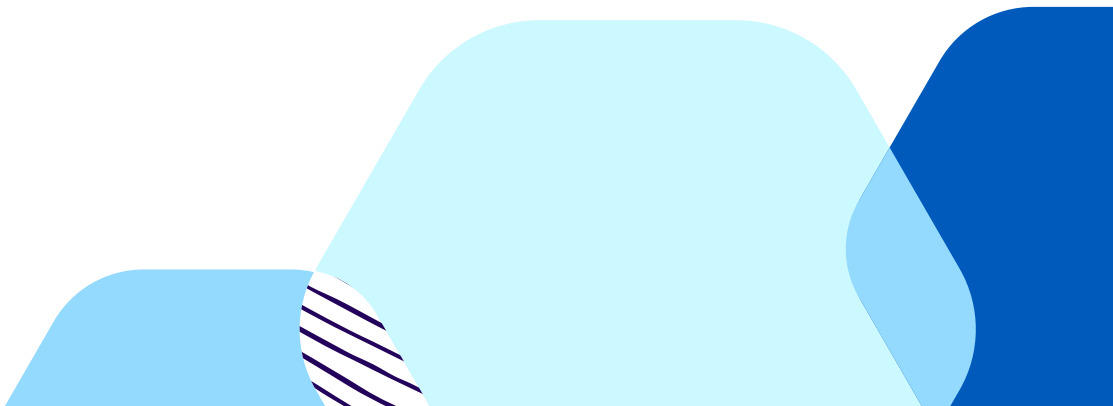
In contrast, Japanese males speak more than non-Japanese males on average, but slightly less in three of the four books analysed. Skewing the data slightly, it was noted that in the case of one textbook (*New Horizon*), Japanese male characters speak more than twice as much as the non-Japanese males. If the other three books are considered in isolation, then the balance would swing with non-Japanese males then averaging a much higher representation, and Japanese males averaging a smaller percentage similar to that of Japanese females.

This highlights just why a gender-across-ethnicity comparison matters, as viewing representation only through a gender lens potentially obscures imbalances present. A wider sample of textbooks may offer more insight into such balances in representation of gender and ethnicity, but we can see here that across the majority of textbooks analysed (i.e. three of the four), representation of Japanese characters through verbosity is apparently lower than for non-Japanese characters.

Table 12: Verbosity by gender and ethnicity

	F-J	F-nJ	M-J	M-nJ	N	Sub-totals
<i>New Horizon</i>	389 15%	716 27%	761 29%	315 12%	442 17%	2,623
<i>Sunshine</i>	442 20%	507 23%	318 15%	470 21%	452 21%	2,189
<i>New Crown</i>	111 11%	241 24%	111 11%	199 20%	350 35%	1,012
<i>Here We Go!</i>	165 15%	349 32%	207 19%	220 20%	165 15%	1,106
Avg	276.75 16%	453.25 26%	349.25 20%	301 17%	352.25 21%	

most verbose least verbose



Turn initiation

Dominance and power can be asserted in conversations in a number of ways, but among the most effective include asking questions, initiating the conversation, or both (Fishman, 1990). Samadikhah et al. (2015) analysed 'male-firstness' in social interactions as an indication of power and their approach was later used by Goyal and Rose (2020:09) who measured 'social power provided to each gender according to speech initiation (who starts the conversation), number of words spoken (who speaks more) and turn length (who speaks longer)'. They found that, overall, males initiated conversations much more frequently than females.

Research on Persian EFL learners by Pakzadian and Tootkaboni (2018) found that male interlocutors frequently initiated topics or attempted to shift the topic to their advantage by asking questions. In Farooq's (1999) study of one English language learning text used previously in Japan, despite an overall balance between males and females in terms of verbosity, male characters initiated 63 per cent of all male–female dialogues and provided 89 per cent of the follow-up moves; a finding that was similar to results reported by Ansary and Babaii (2003), Stockdale (2006) and more recently by Svein (2018), although in the latter study, the difference was

smaller. This finding is also supported in Tatsuki (2010a&b) where males significantly outnumbered females as the initiators of interactions. Such imbalances may have negative consequences as 'a male-dominated text might suggest that boys have a right to be verbally dominant in the classroom and further that girls should say less in the classroom compared to boys' (Johansson and Malmjö, 2009:13).

In this study, it was found that in the context of initial turn allocation, when considered by gender alone, females initiated more conversations than males in two textbooks (*New Horizon* and *Here We Go!*), the same number in one textbook (*Sunshine*) and less than males in one textbook (*New Crown*) (see Table 13).

However, when considered intersectionally, it was found that female Japanese characters initiated fewest conversations on average (averages: FJ=14 per cent, FnJ= 21 per cent, MJ=18 per cent, MnJ=16 per cent, Neutral=31 per cent). Excluding neutral dialogues, which accounted for the greatest number of initiations across all books, female non-Japanese characters and male Japanese characters were most frequent in initiating conversations.

Table 13: Gender of initial turn speaker

	F-J	F-nJ	M-J	M-nJ	N	Sub-totals
<i>New Horizon</i>	17 19%	19 22%	27 31%	4 5%	21 24%	88
<i>Sunshine</i>	11 16%	12 17%	12 17%	11 16%	24 34%	70
<i>New Crown</i>	4 7%	9 16%	4 7%	11 20%	28 50%	56
<i>Here We Go!</i>	6 15%	12 31%	6 15%	9 23%	6 15%	39

■ most ■ least

Turn-management and power are arguably more important to examine than verbosity alone. The speaker who initiates a conversation often controls the setting of the topic and is possibly in a stronger position to control the direction of the interaction, set the tone, set the pace and control the interaction as a whole.

It was noted that **female Japanese characters initiated fewer conversations than female non-Japanese characters in every textbook, indicating that female non-Japanese characters may be in a more dominant position within presented dialogues and storylines.** The female foreign characters are usually featured more centrally in stories and the Japanese female characters often play supportive roles (a key exception being the main story line in the *Sunshine* textbook).

Gender composition of interactional dyads

Besides verbosity and turn allocation, the composition of interactional dyads, triads and groups is also important to consider, as dialogues in textbooks often provide models for practice in classroom lessons. If these dialogues are expected to serve as models (possibly to be acted out by students), assuring gender equality and equal representation is important to guarantee fair and balanced practice opportunities (Lehiste, 2013). If one gender has fewer words, or does not ask as many questions, they will not only have fewer opportunities to practise, but they may also become demotivated in respect to learning.

Excluding gender-neutral texts, mixed-gender conversations (Table 14) were the most frequent speaker interactions across all textbooks, whereas same-gender interactions, no matter whether female–female or male–male, were the least frequent.

It is unclear why mixed-gender dyads are preferred across the textbooks analysed. However, the reality is that girls will talk to girls, and boys will talk to boys, so there is arguably still scope for finding balance within conversational settings and their participants.

Table 14: Composition of interactional dyads by gender

	F to F	F to M	M to M	N	Sub-totals
<i>New Horizon</i>	7 8%	53 60%	5 6%	23 26%	88
<i>Sunshine</i>	1 1%	42 60%	1 1%	26 37%	70
<i>New Crown</i>	2 3%	27 44%	1 2%	31 51%	61
<i>Here We Go!</i>	12 31%	11 28%	8 21%	8 21%	39
Totals	22	133	15	88	

■ most ■ least



When gender and ethnicity was taken into consideration (Table 15), Japanese females talking with other Japanese females turned out to be the rarest combination. In fact, when gender and ethnicity are the same, there are few instances of these dyads across all of the textbooks.

After neutral dyads, the most frequent combination found in the analysis was female non-Japanese with male Japanese characters. In the few same-gender dyads observed, the speaker pairs were most often composed of a male Japanese teacher and male Japanese student.

Table 15: Composition of interactional dyads by gender and ethnicity

	FJ-FJ	FJ-FnJ	FnJ-FnJ	FJ-MJ	FJ-MnJ	FnJ-MJ	FnJ-MnJ	MJ-MJ	MJ-MnJ	MnJ-MnJ	N	Total
<i>New Horizon</i>	0	6 7%	1 1%	11 13%	6 7%	30 34%	6 7%	2 2%	2 2%	1 1%	23 26%	88
<i>Sunshine</i>	0	1 1%	0	6 9%	17 24%	10 14%	9 13%	0	0	1 1%	26 37%	70
<i>New Crown</i>	1 2%	0	1 2%	10 16%	1 2%	9 15%	7 11%	0	0	1 2%	31 51%	61
<i>Here We Go!</i>	1 3%	9 23%	2 5%	2 5%	1 2%	4 10%	4 10%	1 3%	4 10%	3 8%	8 21%	39

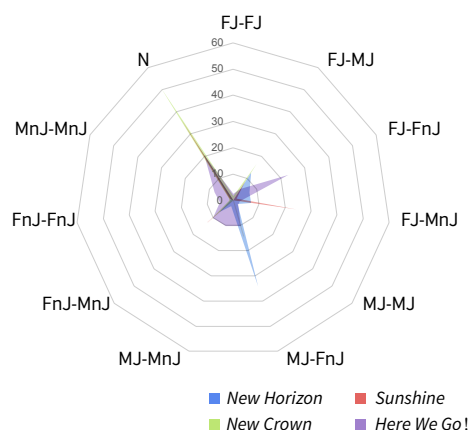
most least

Although it is sometimes suggested that teachers can swap roles (Sano, et al., 2001), research indicates that while girls are often willing to read a male part, boys are not usually so willing to read a female role (Sunderland, 2000); therefore the assigned roles carry significance in terms of speaking opportunities in an English language learning setting.

Figure 5 presents a visual picture of the *Distribution of dyads by gender and ethnicity*. The ‘spikes’ in the graph indicate that there are certain combinations of speakers that are highly favoured by some textbooks over others, and some that are completely absent. For example, instances of Japanese males talking to Japanese males and Japanese females to Japanese females are largely absent in three of the four textbooks. This might be explained by the desire to promote intercultural communication, and a realistic approach to using what is a second language in Japan, but reasons for this omission across all textbooks cannot be verified.

The other ‘spikes’ seen in Figure 5 varied across the textbooks. For instance, female non-Japanese–male Japanese dyads predominated interactions in *New Horizon*, while female Japanese–male non-Japanese dyads predominated in *Sunshine*.

Figure 5: Distribution of dyads by gender and ethnicity



Notably, *Here We Go!* included a strong number of same-gendered interactions to balance the mixed-gender dyads and included several multiparty conversations (three or more people interacting together). This was an approach that appeared to better address authenticity in conversations and is arguably progressive in comparison with the interactions found in other textbooks.

New Crown included a large number of interactions with speaker parts marked as A or B, and with no accompanying gendered images. This allowed for easier switching roles without gender-based stigma and may also be regarded as a progressive step in contrast with other textbooks analysed.

Gendered language, firstness and terms of address

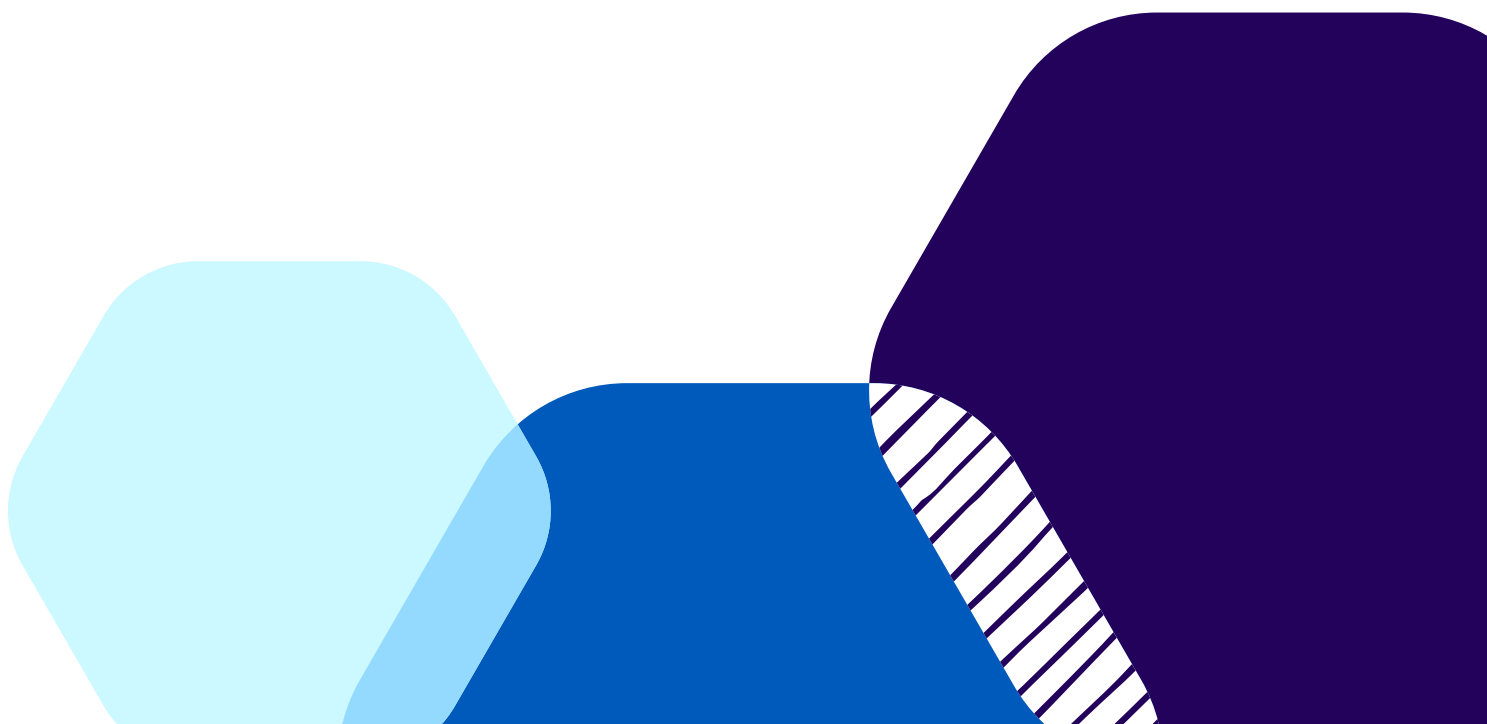
The use of gendered language, lexically and syntactically, was one of the earliest criticisms in textbook analysis and has figured strongly in recommendations to publishers for the past four decades (Lee and Collins, 2008). When masculine nouns and pronouns are used more generally to refer to people in different contexts (e.g. policeman), women can become invisible as a result. In recent years, there have been moves to replace masculine nouns with gender-neutral forms (e.g., policeman to police officer, mankind to humankind) and pronoun pairs (he to he/she, he or she; him to him/her, him or her; and more frequent use of the genderless 'they') to promote inclusivity (ibid, 2008). Notably, there were no instances of gendered language found in the textbooks analysed.

Asymmetries in terms of address can occur since the male address title 'Mr' is considered neutral, as it can be used independently and regardless of marital status. However, the 'Miss/Mrs' pair is intended to explicitly differentiate a female's status based on whether she is married or single. To redress this

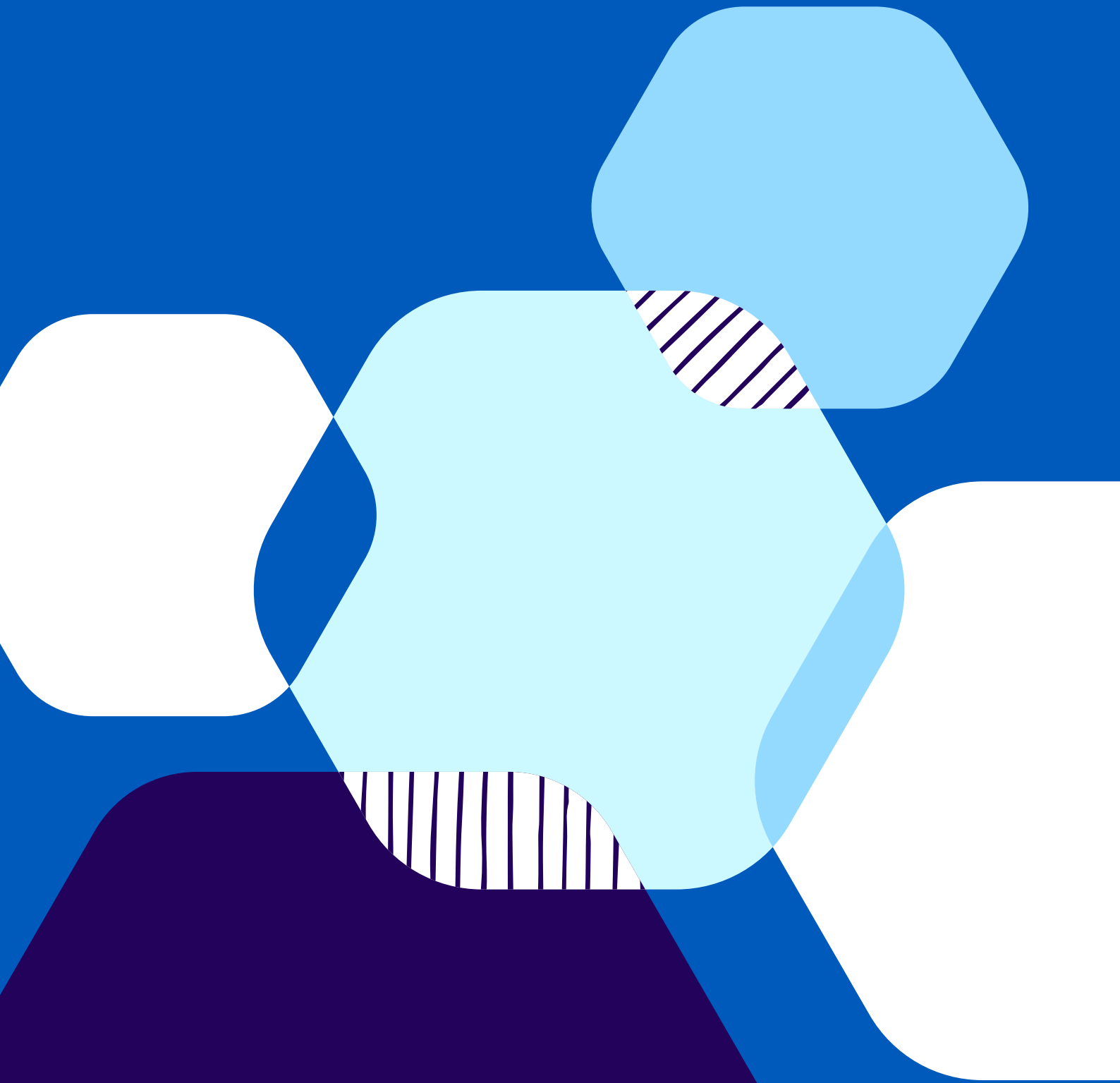
asymmetry, 'Ms' has been widely accepted as a neutral replacement (Atkins-Sayre, 2005; Winter and Pauwels, 2007) and this term was widely used within the textbooks analysed. There were no asymmetries in terms of address noted in any of the four textbooks. Teachers were referred to as Mr/Ms or last-name-sensei regardless of ethnicity.

Of final note, **firstness refers to the order of appearance of women and men when both are referred to in a single phrase.** Porreca (1984:706) states, 'the order of mention, termed firstness' can be assessed when two gender-specific nominal items or phrases (e.g. mother and father or he/she) occur in a text; a higher status can be assigned to the one appearing in the first position. The male-firstness practice can be traced back to at least the 16th century: 'let us kepe(sic) a natural order, and set the man before the woman for maners(sic) Sake' (Wilson, 1553:189, in Bodine, 1975, cited by Eckert and McConnell, 2013:22), the reason presented being that, '[t]he Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine' (Poole 1646:21, cited in Bodine 1975:134).

An analysis of firstness (the order of names or gendered pronouns) indicated a good gender balance in all four textbooks.



Conclusions



This analysis of four textbooks looked at three main research questions:

1. How are gender and ethnicity portrayed verbally and visually in a selection of Japanese junior high school-level English language learning textbooks?
2. How balanced are the representations?
3. What does the intersection of gender and other variables (ethnicity, age, ability/disability) reveal?

In the analysed textbooks used for English language teaching in Japanese junior high schools, the researchers found instances of gender bias and gender stereotyping in the following areas:

- Visibility as expressed by images, activities (occupations, sports, leisure), naming
- Linguistic features in dialogues as expressed by verbosity (how much is said), initial turns (who starts) and dyads (who speaks with whom)

The researchers found no significant issues or examples of gender bias in the following areas:

- Gendered language (lexis), firstness (syntax) and possible asymmetry in terms of address.

Key findings in relation the research questions are noted below.

Visibility as expressed by images

To recap, it was noted that Japanese male images outnumber Japanese female images in all but one textbook. Japanese males also outnumber non-Japanese male images in all textbooks analysed. This may be regarded as a culturally positive outcome for images of Japanese characters to outnumber those of non-Japanese characters, as the textbooks are written for Japanese learners and seek to offer relevant, authentic representations and role models. However, in contrast to the male Japanese representation, it was found that female Japanese main characters are under-represented, and are the most frequently unnamed characters across the four books, suggesting lesser attached importance. This contrasts with strong representation of non-Japanese females.

In relation to character naming, male character names are commonly shown within a page or two of the male character's first appearance whereas female character names often do not appear for several pages; again, suggesting lesser importance being attached to female characters, in particular Japanese females.

Regarding activities (occupations, sports, leisure), females are found in fewer occupations than males overall. However, analysis using the frequencies of female- and male-dominant occupations noted in Japanese census data published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (e-Stat, 2020) indicated that the proportionality of jobs allocated in the textbooks resembles the reality of the current Japanese workplace. However, a realistic depiction of employment in Japan is not the desired outcome for all and is arguably less than encouraging for female students, as it simply maintains the status quo. Therefore, it is important that a balance between realism and aspiration should be encouraged when considering allocation of roles and character development in the textbooks.

In relation to the inclusion of reference to people of note in textbook content, non-Japanese males accounted for most of the famous people depicted and span a wide range of accomplishments. Famous Japanese females appear to be restricted to sports figures, primarily in individual sports, while famous Japanese males are depicted in both sports and literature, providing more scope to highlight their achievements and successes.

In relation to familial contexts, mothers depicted in all four textbooks are seen cooking or cleaning at some point in a domestic setting. None were depicted as having employment outside of the home. However, according to labour force survey statistics collected by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, there were three times as many dual-income households as there were households consisting of an employed husband and a wife without paid work as of 2021 (Gender Equality Bureau, 2022), suggesting continued misrepresentation and lingering, traditional perspectives when depicting matriarchal representation.

On the other hand, fathers were depicted both in traditional breadwinner roles and in doing domestic chores around the house. Of course, it can be interpreted as a positive development to see men in such 'non-traditional' roles; however, this does not appear to apply in reverse to female counterparts.

Linguistic features in dialogues

Based on the analysis of all four textbooks, female speakers (when viewed as a whole, including non-Japanese speakers) spoke more than males. However, female Japanese characters speak significantly fewer words than any of the other characters in any of the four textbooks, highlighting a clear disparity. When verbosity is viewed intersectionally, there is an evident imbalance in representation from a female Japanese learner perspective.

Moreover, based on the analysis, female speakers were noted to initiate conversations the least, indicating less power or lower assertiveness. Japanese females talking with other Japanese females also accounted for the rarest combination of dialogues and discussion, whereas the most frequent speaking dyad combination noted was female non-Japanese characters with male Japanese characters.

Only one textbook (*New Crown*) prominently included a large number of interactions with no designated gender or ethnicity. This was largely in the form of model interactions with speaker parts marked as A or B and no accompanying gendered images. This allowed switching of roles for practice, without the otherwise likely cultural stigma for students, who may be given opposite gender roles.

A look at gendered language (lexis), firstness (syntax) and possible asymmetry in terms of address uncovered no significant problems and may highlight some awareness of these issues already present in textbook content creation.



Recommendations

From the findings a series of recommendations are put forward. These have been arranged to appropriately inform two specific groups of stakeholders that share an immediate relevance to the subject areas and materials analysed:

- Textbook producers and materials creators
- Classroom English teachers.

English language learning materials writers, illustrators, textbook committees/series editors

It is recommended that they:

- Include an ongoing gender audit during materials writing and checking as part of the editorial process, focusing primarily on gender representation and gender bias:

- Count the number and nature of images depicting each gender, paying attention to the balance of ethnicity
- Note naming patterns by gender and ethnicity. Is there a significant lag between the first appearance of the character and the character being named?
- Is there a balance of named characters according to gender and ethnicity?
- Consider whether an image shows an empowered female or reinforces stereotypical gender roles or perceptions
- Check to see if there is a reasonable balance in terms of participation in different occupations, sports, leisure contexts and household duties

- Check the amount of speech allotted to each gender, and consider the quality of participation, i.e. who is asking the questions, providing solutions, how much knowledge are they highlighting?
- Check turn initiations allotted to each gender and aim to ensure balance
- Monitor for gendered language within activities and texts

- Create more oral practice dialogues that are independent of gender designations; in other words, create practice dialogues that any person could participate in freely
- Promote the inclusion of more contemporary female role models, from diverse sectors of society in textbooks and other teaching materials

Teachers and classroom practitioners

Further recommendations that can support teachers and classroom practitioners to either create or adapt existing materials also emerged from the research. It is recommended that they:

- Analyse dialogues in learning materials, paying attention to:

- The amount of speech allotted to each gender
- Turn initiations allotted to each gender
- Use of gendered language
- Character names and when they are missing bring them to the attention of students, possibly through lead-in exercises, i.e. don't wait for the textbook to present the name

- Find alternative, more gender-equal texts that can achieve the same learning goals, i.e. language, skills or otherwise. Also:

- Create materials that celebrate the achievements of Japanese people, especially women
- Make oral practice dialogues gender neutral where possible, although not always as having defined genders can have pedagogical benefits
- Create contexts where Japanese characters can interact together using L2 (e.g. in a play, etc.) and ensure there is a mix of same and different gender combinations

- Encourage discussion of gender bias with learners in the classroom:

- Discuss how the 'textbook world' is similar to, or different from, their own classroom
- Bring instances of clear gender bias to the attention of learners
- Design activities that help learners notice instances of bias or good and bad representation

- Explore the British Council toolkit designed in conjunction with this research study to learn how to use the strategies presented in the ACCESS framework as a guide.

<https://www.britishcouncil.jp/programmes/english-education/updates/webinar-gender>

Limitations and future directions

This research considered only the first-year books of four separate English language teaching textbook series created for Japanese students in the junior high division. There are numerous other English language teaching textbooks available in Japan, and therefore these findings are intended to be presented as a case study only, with both insight and recommendations being largely indicative in nature.

However, it is also felt that this study can provide a valuable snapshot of current practices and material contexts that can have positive implications beyond the scope of the four textbooks analysed.

It is recognised that certain aspects of the data recorded may be subjective, and the criteria for analysis was selected independently by the research team. Additionally, manual counts were not reviewed or checked externally. In terms of the content analysed within each textbook, this was also limited to specific text types where interaction is prominent. The study did not consider representation in reading passages, email texts, letters or monologues.

Conclusions drawn, and subsequent recommendations, are based on findings noted above but, given the limited scope of a single textbook from each series, any wider implications or actions initiated based on this study would benefit from a deeper analysis of other materials used by Japanese teachers in basic education English language instruction.

Future research should seek to increase the scope and scale of analysis. For example, textbooks over all divisions (elementary, junior and senior high) should be considered. Also, in addition to selecting high-market share textbooks (which may mean textbooks popular in larger cities), it is also important to consider the quality of textbooks used in other, smaller regions, to ensure that students in rural areas are also encountering bias-free, gender-supportive materials.

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