



Language Function on Gender Representation in the English Textbooks of Indonesian Junior High Schools: Shaping Students' Social Awareness and Identity

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Abstract: The linguistic functions used in textbooks strengthen students' understanding of how gender representation is expressed. This study aims to examine the power of gender-based language functions in an English book. This manuscript incorporates a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through content analysis in examining gender representation and the variety of language functions. Data were analyzed in three stages: identification, categorization, and interpretation, aimed at determining the patterns of gender representation and the use of language functions in textbooks. The results showed that males were represented at a higher rate (54.13%) than females (45.87%) based on criteria for measuring gender representation, including pictorial illustrations, characters, gender mentions, role models, activities, and patterns of referencing females and males. A number of the six types of language functions used by the authors in their books, namely Referential, Emotive, Conative, Phatic, Metalingual, and Poetic, represent the highest female gender compared to the other five types. These findings conclude that language functions play a substantial role in shaping gender representation, promoting established beliefs about the roles of men and women. This study broadens applied linguistics in education by showing how textbook constructs of language proficiency shape students' perspectives on social consciousness and gender identity.

Keywords: english textbooks; gender representation; language functions; social awareness

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INTRODUCTION

The linguistic functions implemented in textbooks have the potential to influence students' perspectives of a variety of human aspects, such as how gender is represented. These concepts encompass sentence constructions, interpersonal scenarios, and word selection, all of which can transmit unconscious or conscious signals regarding gender stereotypes and personal identities (Korochkina & Kovalenko, 2022; Putri et al., 2024). The language used in textbooks is a critical tool for analyzing both the representation and construction of gender stereotypes in English Language Teaching contexts. Intentional gender signals disguised in the textual aspects of the textbook, such as pronouns, verb tenses, and speech mannerisms, can be revealed through an analysis of how language functions (Chan, 2018; Górski & Eder, 2023).

Textbooks are vital sources of knowledge, providing the essential instruments for classroom instruction and learning. The textbook fulfills a variety of functions, such as providing resources for materials for presenting, exercises for students to practice, and dialogues, modeling, thoughts for language instruction tasks, plans of study, autonomy in learning, containing language skills and components, expressing societal, cultural, and moral values, as well as supporting teachers' professional development (Putri et al., 2024; Rika et al., 2025). Analyzing what the books provide ensures that those messages are thoroughly relevant, truthful, balanced, and accessible (Erlina et al., 2022; Vitta, 2021). This argument supports the premise that English textbooks serve as instructional media, promoting students' English language acquisition (Sharhan & Janfeshan, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). Textbooks that include exercises focusing on listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, at the end of each sub-chapter strengthen English language acquisition.

Additionally, English textbooks convey social norms of verbal and nonverbal language use through visuals presented by the author. One social aspect inherent in language is gender, as evidenced by word choice, forms of speech, character roles, and interaction patterns in the text, which often contain certain gender constructions, both explicit and implicit (Erlina et al., 2022; Vitta, 2021). Language is never neutral; consequently, gender-based language functions have significance in language learning. Power, culture, and beliefs shape how people view themselves and others through language. Thousands of students use textbooks, which can indirectly shape their views of gender roles through visual representations, communicative roles, activity choices, and who gets to speak more or dominate in dialogues, exercises, and independent practice

assignments. A gender-oriented review of how language functions in textbooks is urgent and compelling to determine whether the material offered in learning promotes gender equality and justice or perpetuates biases.

In today's educational environment, which promotes multicultural understanding and critical thinking, studying how language functions in relation to gender is becoming increasingly important (Rocha et al., 2025; Sulis & Gheno, 2022). Students are not only expected to be proficient in English, but also to be able to assess and understand how social values are represented in language. By analyzing gender-based language functions, researchers can reveal how illocutionary acts, conversational patterns, and the distribution of communicative roles (e.g., giving instructions, asking for opinions, expressing emotions, or leading discussions) differ across genders. In light of these findings, new perspectives might be gained on whether English textbooks have provided equal communication space or still reflect a certain gender dominance. As a result, authors and publishers of English textbooks should ensure their content provides a more accurate and balanced portrayal of male and female roles, and adopt gender-neutral terms to promote social awareness and inclusivity.

Several previous studies have examined the topic addressed in this research; however, the distinct focus adds urgency and relevance to this study for public spaces. Ekasiwi & Ena (2022) found that the textbook's content represented men more than women, as indicated by the images used. Their study focuses solely on gender representation through visual variety in English textbooks, whereas this study examines the variety and utility of language functions used and the socio-cultural substance of gender representation. Then, Fauziyah et al. (2025) saw that the pictures and words employed strongly indicated that women were in charge. This is likely considering the authors tried to avoid showing discrimination based on sexual orientation and were unaware that there were already more women than men. However, the textbook fails to provide a fair representation of gender; the authors knew about the issue of gender prejudice in the Indonesian context. Besides that, (Fauziyah et al., 2025) does not explore how gender-based language functions are expressed, as is the focus of this manuscript. Amalia et al. (2024) also found that the numerical representation of females in the English book is less than that of males in all aspects. However, like the two previous studies, it focused only on gender representation in textbooks, without examining the use of language functions in relation to it. This shortcoming in previous studies underscores the urgency of this research gap.

This current research offers real-world effects curriculum designers and textbooks authors, particularly those creating English textbooks for foreign or second language learners, who are the primary referent in language acquisitions process. the results of this analysis can provide a basis for improving the content of textbooks and educational material developed by educators, such as teachers, professors, instructors, and writers in order to foster inclusiveness, raise the consciousness regarding gender issues, and ensure consistency with the principles of equal education opportunities in Indonesia and among English teachers throughout the world. Consequently, research into the fundamental functions of gender-based language in English textbooks extends beyond purely linguistic implications; it also contributes to fostering a more egalitarian learning environment and to promoting the development of critical, socially aware student character.

According to the above considerations, gender issues may be evident in textbook content that requires a solution. People in general are increasingly aware of gender equality. Moreover, gender representation is a frequently examined element in textbook analysis, and textbook depictions of gender can shape students' perceptions of societal gender roles and identities (Empalmado et al., 2024; Noor et al., 2024). Consequently, authors of ELT textbooks or other relevant authors must consider several factors in constructing the teaching material process, including the balance of roles in various dialogues, the balance in the use of male and female name representations, age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, proficiency levels, objectives, and students' cognitive abilities. Given the vital role of textbooks in the teaching of English, their various impacts can shape students' understanding of national cohesiveness and equal treatment in society (Bibi et al., 2022; Komilova, 2022).

It is essential to understand the role of language in shaping gender representation in English courses to identify subconscious prejudices that may influence students' perspectives on masculinity (Awal, 2024; Dalle et al., 2023). Language functions, including expressive, directive, referential, and interactional, influence characters' communication, behavior, and perception throughout texts. The continuous adoption of directional language by male characters and expressive language by female characters may reinforce historical gender stereotypes, representing men as powerful and women as compassionate. By studying these functions, English researchers and educators can discern patterns that both encourage and resist assumptions about gender (Ruiz-Cecilia et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2023). The aforementioned awareness improves the precision of gender representation analysis, promising that textbooks convey a diverse narrative by assigning gender characters equal roles and power. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the impact of language functions on instructional content to create more equitable educational resources that inspire all students to envision gender identities that are more expansive and non-stereotypical. The research questions of the present study, based on the theoretical framework presented, are: 1) What type of gender representation is dominantly used by the author in the English textbook of Indonesian Junior High School? and 2) What types and how are language functions used to represent gender in the English textbook of Indonesian Junior High School?

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative design, utilizing theme and discourse analysis methods. These methods enable researchers to discern, examine, and communicate the patterns that emerge from the gathered data (Naeem et al., 2023). A theme or Content analysis method was used to analyze written or visual data, such as texts in books and articles, and visual images. Meanwhile, the discourse analysis method was used to examine how language functions were used in the textbook. These two methods align with this study's aims, namely to examine the power of gender-based language functions in English for Nusantara, specifically for Eighth Grade Junior High School students. The research object was the English textbook "English for Nusantara" for eighth-grade junior high school students, selected using a purposive sampling technique. Researchers use several criteria as a consequence of selecting this technique, such as qualified writers and rather than just single authors, published by the relevant Ministry, becoming a mandatory handbook for teachers and students, the number of pages meeting specific standards, fulfilling several components as a national mandatory book, and in line with the orientation of the national curriculum.

The book was authored by Ika Lestari Damayanti and friends, and it was launched in 2022 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi*). The textbook had 311 pages, divided into five chapters, each complete with a description of learning objectives and practice questions, and was made available to the public under an open-access license. There were numerous components, including English language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) and language components (Pronunciation, Grammar, and Vocabulary). Following the widespread implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, the textbook was selected as the appropriate resource. In light of this, it was expected that the findings of this research would be beneficial to students in Junior High School and beyond, particularly in Indonesia's cultural context.

Moreover, the data collected from *English for Nusantara* for Eighth Grade Junior High School were further analyzed in three stages: first, an identifying stage, which focused on locating and selecting gender representation and how language functions are used. Second, the categorizing stage focuses on aspects of gender representation and the types of language functions used, while the interpreting stage concentrates on understanding patterns of gender representation, such as whether certain professions or traits are more frequently associated with men or women. Theory by Longson (2024) is used to interpret gender information in textbooks by analyzing the frequency of their mentions, the number of pictures of women and men, the characterization of appearance, their role as role models, and the categories of tasks performed by each gender. Third, the researchers adapted Jakobsons' (1960) theory to figure out the extent to which the language functions within the text either promote or challenge preconceived perspective about gender as cited by (Kanaza, 2020) in interpreting types and how language functions used by authors, including the referential function (facts or descriptions about gender found in the book of English for Nusantara for Eighth Grade Junior High School), the expressive function (attitudes or emotions toward gender), the directive function (instructions or commands reflecting gender roles), and the phatic function (social interactions involving gender). This analysis not only looks for noticeable trends but also explores the context and messages conveyed by the textbook's text regarding its representation of gender. These interpretations are then used to draw conclusions aligned with the stated research objectives.

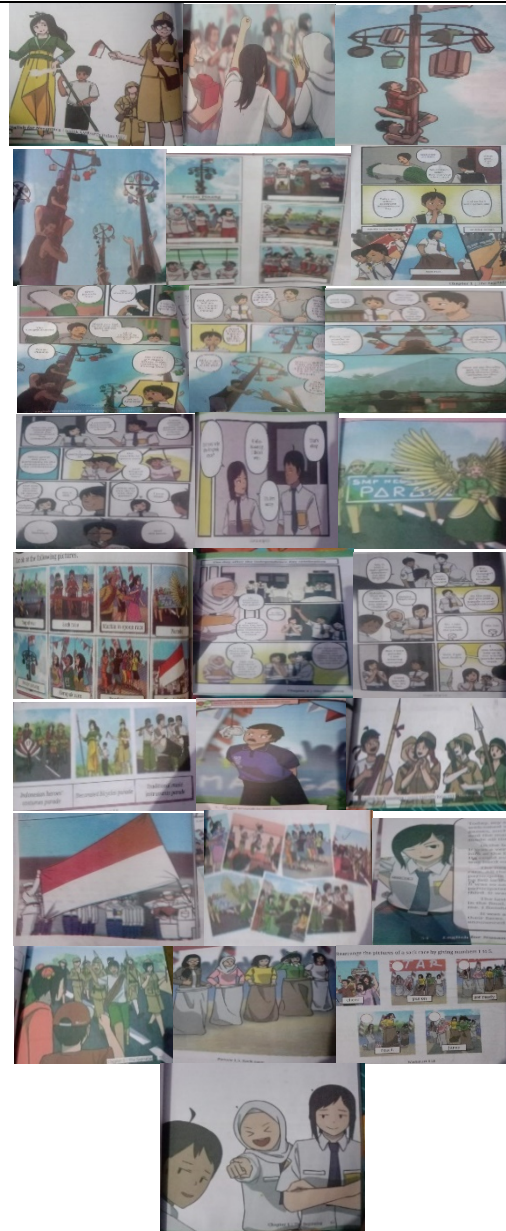
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data regarding Gender Representation in English Textbooks is provided in Tables 1-3, whereas data on language functions is provided in Table 4.

Table1. Female or Male Pictorial or Illustration

Chapter and page	Pictures	Female	Male
Chapter 0, pages: xxii, xxiii, xxiv, 1		9	9

Chapter 1,
Pages: 18, 19, 22, 23,
24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 34,
35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41,
48, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57,
58, 61, 65.



125

140

Chapter 2, pages: 67,
70, 71, 72, 83, 85, 88,
98, 125, and 126.



25

14



Total	296	299
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Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of female and male illustrations in the book, totaling 296 females and 299 males, which demonstrates a nearly balanced representation.

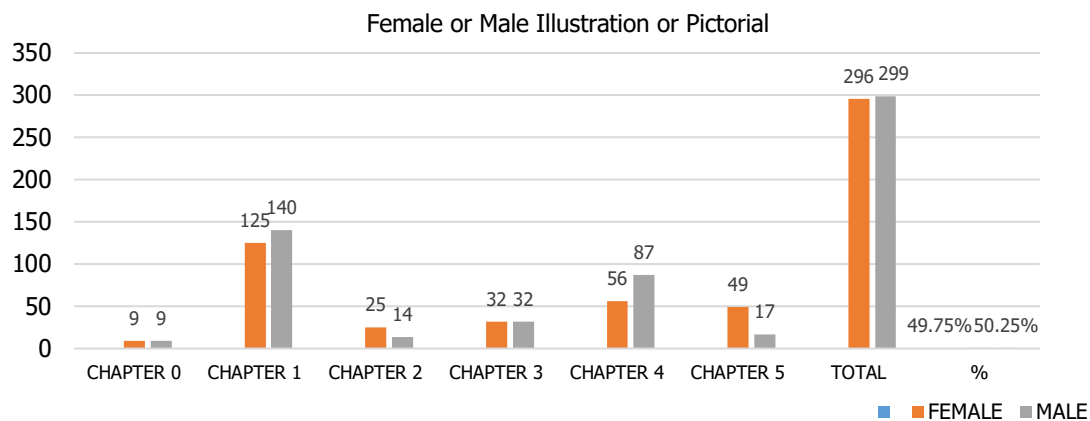


Figure 1. The distribution of female and male illustrations in the book

Table 2. Female or Male Activities

No	Female	No	Male
1	Teaching	1	Reading
2	Reading	2	Playing football
3	Putting on make-up	3	Cleaning up the environment
4	Combing hair	4	Tug of war race
5	Cleaning up the environment	5	Panjat pinang race
6	Watering the flowers	6	Wash the car
7	Playing a musical instrument	7	Playing a musical instrument
8	Study	8	Study
9	Tendem race	9	Rescue the people
10	Swim	10	Farming
		11	Caught fish
		12	Swim
Total	10		12

The data provided, summarized in Table 3 below, relate to additional representation distribution data, in addition to the data supplied in Tables 1 and 2 in the previous section. The distribution of gender representation across these six aspects is used to determine the predominant type of gender representation used by the authors in the English textbook "English for Nusantara" for Grade 8 Junior High School.

Table 3. Male and Female Representation Data

No	Gender representation	Frequency	
		Male	Female
1	Female or male pictorial or illustration	299	296
2	Female or male characters	11	6
3	Female or male mention	396	297
4	Female or male role models	2	1
5	Female or male activities	12	10
Total		720	610
Percentage		54,13%	45,87%

Moreover, the data on language function types and gender representation are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Language Functions used in Gender Representation

Utterances data	Gender Representation	Language Function Type
"She had to keep her six eggs warm until they hatch."	Female	Referential
"Mother Duck tried to calm him down."	Female	Referential
"They are so beautiful."	Female	Referential
"They put on make-up."	Female	Referential
"You are not yellow but gray and brave."	Male	Referential
"He worked hard."	Male	Referential
"Buto Ijo was a strong and mystical giant."	Male	Referential
"Firefighters and soldiers worked together to rescue the people."	Male	Referential
"It motivates me to work hard."	Male	Referential
"He promised to train hard."	Male	Referential
"The Ugly Duckling was sad."	Male	Emotive
"The Ugly Duckling felt heartbroken."	Male	Emotive
"Mother Duck became worried about the Ugly Duckling."	Female	Emotive
"Mumtaz felt angry at Radit, but she did not know what to do."	Female	Emotive
"The Ugly Duckling walked with his head down in shame. He was sad."	Male	Emotive
"The elephant was upset and felt heartbroken."	Male	Emotive
"He was surprised."	Male	Emotive
"She was nervous."	Female	Emotive
"The Ugly Duckling was proud of himself."	Male	Emotive
"I am so happy!"	Male	Emotive
"She was disappointed when she lost the game."	Female	Emotive
"Yes, Ma'am, but it was sad."	Male	Emotive
"I feel sorry for the ugly Duckling."	Female	Emotive
"He was surprised."	Male	Emotive
"I was just so happy, and I was very proud of myself."	Male	Emotive
"Please, Mr. Tiger, do not eat up these poor animals."	Male	Conative
"Mind your own business!"	Male	Conative
"Let's put our trash in the trash can first."	Male	Conative
"Let's get back to our class."	Female	Conative
"We should reduce the use of plastic from now on."	Male	Conative
"Hey, check this post out."	Female	Conative
"Yeah, we just have to find what we like."	Male	Conative
"Go play outside with your friends!"	Female	Conative
"Let's get back to our class."	Female	Conative
"Let's welcome Peter to the band."	Male	Conative
Let's practice together to become a better team."	Male	Conative
"Assalamualaikum."	Male	Phatic
"Hi, everyone, how was the game?"	Female	Phatic
"Hi, readers."	Female	Phatic
"Hi, Monita. What are you doing?"	Male	Phatic
"Hi, Pipit"	Male	Phatic
"Hi, Galang."	Female	Phatic
"Thank you for reminding me, Galang."	Female	Phatic

"You are very welcome, Pipit."	Male	Phatic
"Hey, guys. Check this post out!"	Female	Phatic
"By the way, thanks, Galang."	Female	Phatic
"Hello, friends."	Female	Phatic
"Hi there! I am from Bina Karya."	Female	Phatic
"Hi, Monita. What is going on?"	Male	Phatic
"Oh, Hi, Galang. Hi, Andre. I am well, thanks."	Female	Phatic
"Hey girls"	Female	Phatic
"Thanks, Galang."	Female	Phatic
"I am sorry for underestimating you, Mirza."	Female	Phatic
"Timun' means cucumber, and 'Mas' means gold."	Female	Metalingual
"He was called a great midfielder because he passed the ball accurately."	Male	Metalingual
-	-	Poetic function

A crucial element of communicative competence is utilizing language for diverse purposes. Functions encompass requesting information, providing explanations, and making requests (Koopmans, 2022). This concept enables students to learn and relate suitably to the interlocutor's thought. Moreover, it enables students to organize their thoughts in diverse ways, acquire essential patterns for expressing their ideas, identify the linguistic requirements of specific roles and related concepts, and improve their use of complex sentence structures. Language fundamentally embodies the communicative strategy aimed at developing communication skills. Therefore, the linguistic lexicon employed in how language works must take into consideration those for language skills. Thus, it is crucial to comprehend the utilization of both official and informal language by English-speaking speakers (Hopkinson, 2021; Kiklewicz, 2023). The term's linguistic functions have been defined in several ways. Jakobson (1960), as cited by Anggraini et al. (2025), argues that language functions represent the roles language fulfills in communication, with each function aligning with a fundamental component of the communicative process: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic. Alhadi et al. (2023) and Hussain et al. (2021) affirmed that language functions as the means of engaging in communicative roles during oral, interactive, or discursive exchanges. This idea holds that language's functions are social activities that individuals aim to achieve through linguistic expression. Advocates of language functions may have articulated the phrase in many ways. Every definition, however, posits an active concept that renders language functional and meaningful.

Moreover, Jakobson (1960) affirmed that each type of language function plays an essential role in analyzing text content (Anggraini et al., 2025; Sokolova & Feshchenko, 2021), including 1) referential Function, which is a function to convey information, and this is done through different forms of speech, such as declarative or interrogative statements. The referential function focuses on the context of communication and aims to convey information. In gender representation, this function is essential for analyzing how gender roles are described in narratives or texts; 2) Emotive function, which focuses on the addresser, aims to directly express the speaker's attitude toward what he/she is speaking about. It is addressed to the addressee, who is the person speaking. Emotive function states the speaker, affects bodily comportment, and implements cognition. The expressive/Emotive function emphasizes the speaker's expression of attitudes or emotions. In gender analysis, this function can be examined through how emotions and traits are attributed to different genders; 3) Conative function or interpretive function is an orientation toward the addressee. This function influences behavior; in other words, through it, the speaker is trying to get the receiver to do something related to the speaker's utterances. In terms of gender representation, this is evident in commands, directives, or motivational phrases directed at specific genders; 4) Phatic function, which functions as the opening channel, checking whether it is working or not, and as the representation of social relationships. In gender analysis, this function can reveal who is more likely to initiate, sustain, or terminate conversations; 5) Metalingual Function, which aims to refer to the nature of the interaction and focus on the code, clarify it, or renegotiate it. The metalinguistics function focuses on clarifying the language code itself. In gender representation, this function is relevant when gender related terms are defined or explained; and 6) Poetic Function, which aims at highlighting textual features in which the particular form chosen is the essence of the message. The poetic function highlights the structural or stylistic components of the intended meaning. Symbols, signs, analogies, or aesthetic sentences can be employed to analyze this function in terms of how gender is represented. Jakobson's language functions provide an outline for examining the representation of gender in interaction. The functions of language, which incorporate referential speech and poetic articulation, demonstrate how it both reinforces and challenges conversational gender roles. A comprehensive analysis can expose biases and encourage more equal representation of men and women. The phatic function is the most relevant in the context of an English textbook among the six language functions defined by Jakobson (1960). The English textbook must be used to analyze how gender is represented through textual description and narrative, as it defines and conveys factual

information about cultural practices and gender positions.

The power of language to reflect, reinforce, or question gender stereotypes and preconceptions can clarify the connection between language use and gender. Language and gender are reciprocally linked, as prior studies have shown. For example, [Lee et al. \(2024\)](#) found that gender is manifested in language and that language influences gender. Similarly, [Tripp & Munson \(2022\)](#) and [Tyarakanita et al. \(2021\)](#) found that language illustrates gender disparities in the use of linguistic functions by men and women. These findings confirm that men typically employ referential functions (communicating knowledge) and directive functions (issuing commands), reflecting preconceptions of them as reasonable and assertive leaders. On the other hand, women are more inclined to utilize emotive functions (articulating feelings) and phatic functions (fostering relationships), which align with their responsibilities as supporters and nurturers. These disparities are not inherent but instead socially produced and established from an early age.

Previous studies also affirmed that language not only reflects gender but also serves as an instrument to challenge gender stereotypes. For example, [Selvi and Kocaman \(2021\)](#) and [Thulasivanthana \(2025\)](#) found that language not only reflects gender but also promotes stereotypes through lexical choices and textual representations. This finding aligns with the facts regarding the use of the pronoun "he" in the textbook of this study. Employing pronouns, such as "he" in English, for universal or particular roles frequently positions males as the default reference. Textbooks often portray men as leaders or active participants, while relegating women to supporting roles. This depiction is also apparent in media, as men employ imperative functions to demonstrate dominance, but women utilize emotive functions that indicate subservience. Implementing inclusive language, including neutral pronouns and impartial terminology, might mitigate preconceptions in communication.

Furthermore, alterations in communication dynamics, exemplified by women assuming directorial roles in public discourse and men conveying empathy through emotional expression, illustrate the potential to reconfigure gender norms. Illustrating women in scientific positions and men in caring responsibilities in textbooks is essential for deconstructing gender stereotypes. Language also reflects power dynamics between genders, as affirmed by [Kutuk et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Selleck \(2023\)](#). This finding asserts its relevance to the utilization of language functions in societies that continue to uphold patriarchal practices. In patriarchal societies, men frequently dominate discussions by forcing themes, interjecting, or employing more forceful assertions, whereas women typically convey support and are frequently relegated to subordinate roles.

In the classroom, instructors use textbooks as their primary teaching materials. Students and educators, including in EFL contexts, often use textbooks as references during the learning process. This idea aligns with [Li \(2022\)](#) and [Vitta \(2021\)](#), who emphasize that a textbook is a holistic set of language-teaching materials, which may include a textbook or a complete educational kit with various parts. Besides that, a textbook is a compilation of language instruction materials intended to improve students' understanding and facilitate the attainment of their educational goals ([Amiri & Rezyani, 2021](#); [Garth, 2022](#)). Textbooks are among the many frequently employed aids for the course of learning. It has become one of the most accessible sources of knowledge and is used to help students understand the material clearly and concisely. According to [Suzuki et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Yunus et al. \(2024\)](#), Language courses employ textbooks in a variety of contexts. This concept posits that textbooks are the primary driver of classroom materials, which teachers and students routinely use and follow as their primary source for language learning.

In the educational process, there are numerous types of textbooks, and it is essential to understand their classifications before reviewing or buying them. Core series textbooks often begin at intermediate or advanced levels and may occasionally include a literacy component. Nevertheless, many series often emphasize the cultivation of listening and speaking skills while focusing on life skills. Furthermore, numerous series offer diverse features, including audiovisual resources, instructional materials, online support, and evaluation options ([Garth, 2022](#); [Selvi & Kocaman, 2021](#)). Most core curricula aim to align with standardized assessments and educational standards. Secondly, integrated skills texts offer independent practice in all four language skills, rather than as components of a multi-level core series. Thirdly, a grammar book serves as a foundational grammar series, providing instruction and practice for learners and a reference text for educators and students, although either group rarely uses it. Fourthly, skill-specific texts concentrate on a distinct skill, such as listening, reading, speaking, vocabulary, or pronunciation, and are generally incorporated into a curriculum series. Fifthly, literacy has been tailored for individuals with minimal formal education, is frequently prepared in accordance with specific curriculum standards, and is used in scholarly research. Sixth, content-based books address professional challenges in political science, civic engagement, job issues, and readiness for the educational process. Lastly, a picture dictionary for beginners and an English-only dictionary of varying levels of complexity may be useful in and out of the classroom. These meet learners' distinct requirements with single-language, dual-language, and multilingual choices.

All forms of education, including language instruction, depend on textbooks. Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture affirms that textbooks are indispensable for enhancing the quality of education. Students are provided with a substantial reservoir of linguistic knowledge, a critical element of the instructional resources instructors use. Furthermore, there are numerous functions of textbooks ([Alrishan, 2022](#); [Yunus et al., 2024](#)),

such as textbooks serves as a resource for presenting oral and written materials utilized by educators and learners to convey and comprehend content efficiently; provides a basis for learner practice and communication interaction, fostering active participation in the educational process; as reference resource for students on critical elements such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, rendering them indispensable instruments for autonomous study; as a resource for modeling and concepts for classroom language exercises, facilitating the creation of interactive and dynamic learning settings; serve as a syllabus when they embody predetermined learning objectives, directing the instructional trajectory; provides a resource for autonomous learning or self-directed study, advantageous for pupils desiring independent education; and Textbooks functions as an aid for novice educators, aiding in the development of their confidence through the provision of organized content and pedagogical concepts. (Alrishan, 2022; Altamimi & Alshehri, 2023).

The word 'gender' often comes up in daily life. The inaccurate confusion of sex and gender may arise from gender identity, even though these concepts are already separate ideas. Gender refers to the distinctions in societal roles, actions, and responsibilities that exist between males and females (Awal, 2024; Empalmado et al., 2024). In a sociological perspective, gender is defined as socially produced differences between men and women. Cultural views gender divides society into men and women. Gendered traits, preferences, competencies, responsibilities, and obligations vary across communities. Gender refers to the familial, social, and cultural roles of men and women. It is about how society defines femininity and masculinity. The socially built requirements, actions, and attitudes associated with being male or female diverge from our biologically determined sex (Dalle et al., 2023; Ghajarieh et al., 2023). Gender refers to the socially constructed differences between men and women, shaped by the societal context that influences human existence. It is profoundly dependent on social roles and conventions. Moreover, gender encompasses the societal expectations, regulations, and norms associated with femininity and masculinity. This aligns with Goodarzi et al. (2025) and Hameed & Jabeen (2021), who asserted that gender inequalities exist across many cultures, locations, and groups.

Textbooks encompass cultural and social components, including those related to gender. The discourse on gender inherently encompasses the concepts of masculinity and femininity, as well as the roles of men and women. Many assert that men have a more prominent role than women (Rasti, 2025; Suchana, 2025). Gender roles delineate the duties assigned to men and women based on their gender. For example, men may be perceived as agricultural laborers owing to their physical prowess, whereas women may be regarded as culinary experts. To investigate the depiction of gender roles in textbooks, it is crucial to analyze specific elements identified by Longson (2024), namely, pictorial representations or illustrations of females or males. Determining the gender depicted in images or illustrations in textbooks is not always straightforward. This can be accomplished by analyzing the characteristics in the photographs. Attributes such as haircuts and clothing, which are frequently stereotyped according to cultural context, may help identify gender. For example, conventional male hairstyles typically include beards, mustaches, and extremely short hair, whereas female hairstyles often feature braids, plaits, or hair embellishments such as ribbons or bows. Moreover, regarding attire, men commonly wear pants, but women are generally portrayed in skirts or dresses.

Furthermore, female and male characters in Textbooks Often portray individuals in gender-specific professions. These roles are identified in book texts, illustrations, and exercises (Goodarzi et al., 2025; Rasti, 2025). Examples of male and female occupations include teacher, student, police officer, actor, actress, singer, writer, and others. Mention gender. Textual genders include proper nouns, pronouns, common nouns, and titles. Proper nouns are names (Mary, Bayu), and possessive adjectives are pronouns. Common nouns include father, mother, husband, wife, son, and daughter. The textbook's language functions described reinforce conventional gender roles, presenting men as energetic, powerful, and authoritative. At the same time, women are represented as emotional, nurturing, and socially engaged. Repeated illustrations in instructional materials may influence students' ideas of gender roles and societal expectations. The results align with those of Suchana (2025) and Thulasivanthana (2025), who employed critical discourse analysis to investigate gender representation in English textbooks.

The results of this study offer a new perspective: the variety of gender-based language functions in English textbooks for junior high school students in Indonesia can serve as a space for pedagogical reflection for all stakeholders. This differs from the results of previous studies (Amalia et al., 2024; Ekasiwi & Ena, 2022; Fauziyah et al., 2025; Korochkina & Kovalenko, 2022), which focused on calculating the roles and frequencies of appearance of male and female characters across various exercises in textbooks. The similarity between the results of this study and those of four previous studies lies in the concept and role of gender in textbooks. What distinguishes this study's insights from those of earlier studies? This study examines how various language functions are used in relation to the characters and genders highlighted in the exercise variety. Adapting Roman Jakobson's theory of language functions and strengthening it with Systemic Functional Linguistics from a gender-based perspective, this study reveals language as a bridge for negotiating power relations and gender stereotypes in English language learning discourse. This alternative offering enriches the study of applied linguistics in education by providing a deeper understanding of how the language in subject textbooks not only develops linguistic competence but also shapes students' social awareness and gender identity.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the male gender is more prevalent (54.13%) than the female gender (45.87%) in the English textbook. This result is based on criteria measuring gender representation, pictorial illustrations, characters, gender mentions, role models, activities, and patterns of referencing females and males. Furthermore, phatic language functions represent the highest level of female gender, followed by other functions. Moreover, understanding six language functions and how they are used to express gender in English textbooks is essential. Language functions significantly influence gender representation, promoting conventional notions of male and female roles. The main linguistic functions employed by authors in the English textbook and other works serve as the fundamental basis for the composition of the text. This study proposes numerous recommendations to enhance gender representation and the utilization of language functions in English textbooks. The recommendations are directed towards textbook authors and publishers. The publishers should consider revising the content to provide a more balanced portrayal of male and female roles. Authors must ensure a balanced representation of women and men in graphical illustrations, activities, public figures, characters portrayed, and names, while challenging gender stereotypes. They should also employ gender-neutral language when appropriate to foster inclusivity. Moreover, English teachers should promote critical discourse around gender representation in textbooks to heighten students' awareness of potential biases. Encourage equitable involvement in classroom activities, regardless of gender, to foster a balanced educational atmosphere. Moreover, this study examines language functions and various aspects and gender representations. The analysis shows how language negotiates power relations and gender stereotypes in English instruction, using Roman Jakobson's theory of language functions and Systemic Functional Linguistics. The findings contribute to applied linguistics in education by providing evidence that an English textbooks elevate linguistic competence, social awareness, and gender identity.

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