

# Gender Representation in Philippine Junior High School English Language Textbooks

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*Abstract – The present study analyzed the linguistic aspects of gender representation in the 23 most recently published Philippine English language textbooks for Junior High School. The linguistic aspect was reflected through semantic features such as generically used nouns and pronouns, and particular vocabulary used to define gender. The investigation of nouns showed that males are associated with certain occupations that can be treated as male-specific while females are presented frequently as teachers. Both genders are seen as intelligent, but more negative traits are associated with males. The analysis of verbs revealed that the most common group of verbs is the material process or process of doing. However, the mental processes are more frequently used with the masculine pronoun. The examination of pronouns showed that he repeatedly appeared in the examples, tasks, or exercises than she. After analyzing the relative frequency of occurrence of titles together with surnames, it was revealed that the titles used together with surnames had the highest number of cases in the textbooks. Also, professions are used to honor both genders. The most common are lawyer and doctor for males while professor for females. In terms of firstness, males usually come first. The same pattern is followed using possessive pronouns. Moreover, the usage of the generic man referring to both genders is still evident.*

**Keywords – English Language Textbooks, Gender Representation, Junior High School**

## INTRODUCTION

Sociolinguistics refers to the study of the relationship between society and language [1]. One of the areas in sociolinguistics is the relationship between gender and language. Charteris-Black and Seal [2] explained the difference between sex and gender, underlining the distinction in terms of socially learned behaviors and expectations related to sex (gender) and biological identity (sex). As described by Holmes [3], gender is socially constructed in an environment which crucially depends on and is shaped by the culture. According to Furze et al. [4], culture pertains to shared practices, ideas, and objects that people make sense of, create to, thrive in, or adapt to their environments. Hence, the construction of gender varies from culture to culture since the comprehension and treatment of gender differ among societies.

Furthermore, Wharton [5] explained that gender could be understood as a system of practices that are interlocked, exist independently of individuals, and far-reaching. In other words, gender is governed by social constraints that people must follow and is embedded in social interaction. Language holds an essential role in our society since it influences to what extent our perception of the world and what we understand natural

sex roles to be [6]. Research shows that what kind of things done by a woman is called feminine, done by a man is named as masculine, and gender-free language is called neuter [7]. These roles of language show that gender can be represented, constructed, and contested through language.

Textbooks play a critical role in the formation of cultural and social values as far as gender relation is concerned [8]. These are supposed to aid the learners' learning and serve a major part of the English language classroom. Thus, it is interesting to examine gender representation in textbooks as they may influence learners' way of thinking about gender [9].

Studies have investigated gender-biased items in textbooks. The significance of textbooks for the analysis of gender representation can be accounted for three reasons. First, textbooks are used for teaching the English language that is meant to be constructed by the speakers who use them. Some of the gender-marked items in the English language are titles, adjectives, morphemes, and generic nouns and pronouns. As a result, language becomes a social agent which affects the views and attitudes of speakers. Second, textbooks provide an opportunity to analyze gender from a cultural perspective. The content and language of the materials

depend on the preference of the authors. Therefore, textbooks do provide not only the patterns of the English language for the representation of gender but also the way diverse societies consider gender. Finally, textbooks contain social features of gender representation. Illustrations or pictures are used to investigate gender dominance, visibility, gender traits, or roles. The content analysis of exercises, examples, or texts can account for further gender treatment in different nations.

Research on gender representation has shown that there is a strong gender bias in textbooks [10, 11, 12, 13]. Bahiya [8] found that females play a supporting role to males and associated with stereotypical gentle roles. However, males are depicted as more active than females. This gender-biased language in textbooks can affect students adversely, and it creates an oppressive world for them because this gender-biased language most often is unjustified and unfair [14]. Gender portrayal in textbooks reflects social values and behavior [15, 16]. Students are influenced and formed by the kind of materials they are given in school. If the textbooks being used in most schools are charged with sexism, the issue of superior men and inferior women will persist. Moreover, gender bias and gender stereotypes in written texts and pictures have deleterious effects for female students, such as feelings of exclusion, alienation, and devaluation [17].

Sovič & Hus [18] performed a gender stereotype visual analysis of three textbooks for young learners in Slovenia. The study showed that all the textbooks showed gender stereotype. There were more male characters presented than females in all the textbooks and males were presented to have more active roles while females were presented quieter, socially approved roles. In 2013, Parham [19] explored gender representation in a collection of books designed to teach English to young children. These books were used in different Iranian language institutes as main course books. The conversations, illustrations, and graphic design of the cover were analyzed for gender bias. Results revealed that there was equal gender visibility in conversations, and there was no significant difference in the representation of gender in the graphic designs of the cover. However, the study also found out that females were under-represented in children's books.

Meanwhile, Hall [20] examined gender representation in two EFL textbooks used in Iranian secondary schools. Systematic quantitative analysis was used to investigate gender visibility in both text and illustrations and female/male-oriented topic presentation in dialogues and reading passages. The findings showed

that there was a degree of imbalance in gender representation in the two textbooks.

In 2010, Bahman and Rahimi [21] investigated all the parts, including the illustrations of the three volumes of English textbooks of Iranian high schools. Findings revealed that sexism is manifested in the different areas of the textbooks. Male-specific terms came first more often than those of females, and there was the supremacy of males over females in the reading passages. Furthermore, there was abundant use of male generics referring to both men and women, and the number of animals related to males was more than that of women.

In the Philippines, there are few studies on gender representation in ESL materials such as Java and Parcon [22], Tarrayo [13], Bautista et al. [23], Mante-Estacio, Dumalay and Rentillo [24], and Tiangson [25]. However, there are limitations in their methodologies, which the present study wishes to address. First, Java and Parcon [22] only examined both sexes' productive, reproductive, and community roles in Grade one textbooks' illustrations. Second, Tarrayo's [13] has limited his findings in the two textbooks used for the preschool level in private schools. Third, Bautista et al. [23] only investigated the reading and language school books of Kinder I to Grade III in a private school. Their analysis focused on the number of illustrations of boys and girls, the number of illustrations of male/female in traditional male/female roles, and the number of chapters in text with subjects that are boys, girls, or both. Fourth, Mante-Estacio, Dumalay, and Rentillo [24] identified the current trends in gender role among Filipino children's storybooks. Lastly, Tiangson [25] only analyzed the images of Filipino women in selected short stories as well as the influence of these images on gender role development.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Most of the previous studies analyzed the language textbooks used in basic education and private schools. Others only focused on the social aspect of gender representation and used short stories and storybooks. Hence, as a contribution to filling these research gaps, the present study investigated the linguistic aspect of gender representation in the course materials, reading passages, conversations, and exercises in the English textbooks. Theoretically speaking, there is no in-depth study that focuses on the said aspect and the parts of the textbook used as the basis of the analysis in the ESL teaching materials. Moreover, the study analyzed the Philippine Junior High School English language

textbooks used not only in private but also in public schools.

## **METHODS**

### **Corpus**

The corpus of this study consisted of the 23 most recently published English language textbooks for Junior High School in the Philippines, both public and private schools from 2014 to 2018. The corpus represents only a portion of language textbooks used at the time of the study, so the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all ESL textbooks. The findings of the study could only be generalized to the textbooks under investigation. However, some of the recommendations and conclusions may benefit schools and educators in other contexts in the Philippines who used the same or similar student textbooks.

### **Frame work of Analysis**

#### *Linguistic Aspect of Gender Representation*

Porecca's [26] framework for gender representation was adopted in the study. The linguistic aspect was reflected through semantic features such as generically used nouns and pronouns, and particular vocabulary used to define gender. Moreover, the analysis of "firstness" was carried out to identify the prominence given to a certain gender by linguistic means. Finally, the analysis of titles was performed to determine the stereotypical attitude towards gender.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The vocabulary used in the textbooks depends on the authors and the way they perceive gender. While developing the English language textbooks, the authors attempt to show the most dominant features of gender representation of a particular society. For the analysis of the vocabulary used to define gender in the Philippine Junior High School English Language Textbooks, the nouns, adjectives, and verbs were investigated concerning the third person singular masculine and feminine pronouns, i.e., she and he.

### **Nouns**

The investigation of nouns used together with the pronouns he and she revealed that males are associated with certain occupations such as politician, jurist, farmer, engineer, fishermen, businessman, statesman, doctor, lawyer, soldier, merchant, programmer, computer virus engineer, office manager, barangay captain, woodcutter, political leader, post office worker, policeman, sailor, painter, camera bug, financier, factory watchman,

peddler of small items, actor, playwright, scientist, anchorman, taxi operator, inventor, architect, chairman, messenger, and pamphleteer. These occupations were frequently attributed to males and can be treated as male-specific.

Also, being a poet is always referred to the masculine pronoun he, which shows that this occupation is associated with males. The analysis further revealed that males are dominant in written texts because they are admired for their bravery and goodness. They are repeatedly described as heroes in different literary texts such as short story, novel, drama, play, etc. Moreover, males are labeled as sportspersons, for they are described as a bowler, boxer, and sports enthusiast.

In contrast, females are described as mother, daughter, and wife. The pivotal role of being a mother, wife, or daughter is still the divine mission assigned to women. Also, they are presented frequently as teachers, which shows that they were more nurturing than men. This makes the teaching a female-dominated profession which the real-world proves it correct since there are so many female teachers all over the world.

### **Adjectives**

The analysis focuses on the third person singular masculine and feminine pronouns usage in collocation with adjectives. In the Philippine Junior High School language textbooks, the pronoun she collocates with the adjectives describing the emotional state, i.e. sad; the adjectives describing appearance, i.e. pale, upset, fat and small but tall, lovely and beautiful; the adjectives describing personality, i.e. honest, patient, courageous, friendly, good-natured and gentle but sarcastic, money-hungry and easy-going; the adjectives describing social and financial status, i.e. poor and dependable; the adjectives describing the level of knowledge, i.e. clever or intelligent.

On the other hand, the analysis of masculine pronoun he used with adjectives reveal that he collocates with the adjectives describing the emotional state, i.e., happy; the adjectives describing appearance, i.e. old-fashioned; the adjectives describing personality, i.e. skillful, adventurous, admirable, brave, noble but reluctant, arrogant, selfish, lazy, inconsiderate, cruel and bad-tempered; the adjectives describing social and financial status, i.e. successful, powerful, famous, educated, well-respected, and rich; the adjectives describing the level of knowledge, i.e. wise.

In comparison to the usage of adjectives with the third person singular masculine and feminine pronouns about emotional state, males are presented as happy

while females are sad. As regards personality, it can be seen that males are presented as being successful, powerful, famous, educated, well-respected, and rich than females who are poor and dependable. The analysis of the adjectives denoting the level of knowledge about pronouns revealed that both genders are seen as intelligent and wise. About the adjectives describing personality, more negative traits are associated with males rather than females. Moreover, the usage of the adjectives in describing appearance delineates that males are old-fashioned, whereas females are pale, upset, fat and small but tall, lovely and beautiful.

### Verbs

Material process is the most common group of verbs. Both genders are involved in studying, traveling, cooking, buying, eating, watching, speaking, finding, asking, answering, explaining, working, going, discovering, coming, writing, reading, running, talking, or working. However, males are associated with crime. They kill, shoot, destroy, damage, murder, and fight, whereas these verbs do not collocate with the third person singular pronoun she.

In contrast, the material verbs such as looking, advising, supervising, doing the laundry, chopping, and listening are only associated with women. It shows that females are more responsible for helping others and performing household chores.

Furthermore, the analysis of verbs denoting a mental process or the process of sensing revealed that both genders think and remember. Thinking and Remembering are equally ascribed to males and females. However, mental processes are more frequently used with a masculine pronoun. For instance, males wonder, believe, remember, dream, and know. It shows that males are more active and involved in more various mental processes than females.

### Pronouns

The analysis revealed that the third person singular masculine pronouns outnumbered the third person singular feminine pronouns. The pronoun he appeared more frequently in the examples, tasks, or exercises. For instance, in Textbooks 7 and 23, the exercises only present the masculine pronoun he. Consider the following examples:

- (1) Can you guess why the big man said nothing to Little Willy?
  - a. He did not like to talk to white men.
  - b. He did not like Little Willy.
  - c. He did not hear Little Willy speak to him. (Textbook 7, Page 41)

- (2) Which does not tell about the man Little Willy saw?
  - a. He has five beautiful Samoyeds.
  - b. He is big.
  - c. He is a merchant trading goods in their town. (Textbook 7, Page 41)
- (3) 1. He observed the \_\_\_\_\_ fly and how they used their wings.
  2. He collected \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. He made \_\_\_\_\_ for himself.
  3. He taught himself \_\_\_\_\_ using his wings.
  4. He made another pair of wings for \_\_\_\_\_ and taught him how to fly, too, using the wings.
  5. He cautioned his son \_\_\_\_\_. (Textbook 7, Page 115)
- (4) Scout A: What did our leader say?  
Scout B: He told us to prepare our bags and get ready for the hike.  
Scout C: He told us \_\_\_\_\_.  
Scout D: He advised us \_\_\_\_\_.  
Scout E: He said \_\_\_\_\_.  
Scout F: He ordered us \_\_\_\_\_.  
Scout G: He asked \_\_\_\_\_. (Textbook 23, Page 285)

Moreover, the analysis disclosed that male or female characters dominance in texts determined the usage of the masculine or feminine personal, possessive, and reflexive pronouns in the coinciding exercises and tasks. For example, if the main character in the selection is a male, then the reading tasks or exercises are presented with the masculine pronouns he and his:

- (5) Does he only think of himself or other people? Why does he think that way?  
Does it serve as an opportunity to prove he can face the challenges?  
What did he learn from the experience?  
Was there a change in his actions, thoughts, feelings, and attitude, or did he remain the same till the end? (Textbook 19, p. 84)
- (6) What did the man do for a living?
  - a. He was a factory watchman.
  - b. He was a peddler of small items.
  - c. He was the owner of a gift shop.Has Gino stopped smoking?
  - a. No, he hasn't.
  - b. No, he does not.
  - c. No, he didn't stop.Has Joshua recorded his song?
  - a. No, he hasn't done it yet.

- b. No, he didn't record his song.  
c. No, he doesn't record it.  
(Textbook 14, p. 100)

- (7) Aside from writing, what other careers or jobs did he have?  
Was he committed to writing poetry? How can you say so?  
How did he feel about poetry?  
What were his themes in his works?  
How popular are his works in the 21st century?  
Support your answer. (Textbook 17, Page 131)

In contrast, after the text about a female character, the exercises presented the feminine pronouns she and her:

- (8) Who is the speaker, and how young is she?  
What organization does she represent?  
What is she fighting for?  
Who are her listeners?  
(Textbook 10, Page 156)
- (9) How did her father cheer her up?  
What did Pollyanna's father ask her to do?  
How did she feel after each task?  
How do you think Pollyanna felt after her father had explained to her the idea behind the game?  
(Textbook 18, Page 113)

### Titles

In the English language, Mrs. refers to a married female, whereas Miss refers to a maiden. Using marital status together with a surname underrates females about males because they are presented and treated in the society according to their marital status. However, the title Mr. does not indicate a male's marital status and is frequently used to address respectfully. After analyzing the relative frequency of occurrence of titles together with surnames, it was revealed that the titles used together with surnames had the highest number of cases in the Philippine Junior High School English Language Textbooks. Consider the following examples in Textbooks 22, 20, and 7.

- (10) Mr. Vargas ran after the cab. He waved his hands, hoping the driver would see him.  
(Textbook 22, Page 50)  
Ms. Mendoza, have you been to London?  
(Textbook 22, Page 72)  
Mr. dan Colombo works with the military service.  
(Textbook 22, Page 96)  
Mr. Morales was absent because his car broke down.  
(Textbook 22, Page 157)

- (11) Mr. Jones treated the animals better than Napoleon.  
(Textbook 20, Page 250)
- (12) Mr. Severino de la Paz does not know the little boy outside the room. (Textbook 7, Page 90)  
Mr. Villamin has an admirable character.  
(Textbook 7, Page 168)  
Mr. Junio spoke too fast.  
(Textbook 7, Page 169)  
Mr. and Mrs. Mendez import baby dresses from Hong Kong. (Textbook 7, Page 188)  
Mrs. De Jesus called for her three children.  
(Textbook 7, Page 189)

Also, professions are used to honor both genders. The most common are lawyer and doctor for males while professor for females.

- (13) Dr. Stockman is going to address the townspeople.  
(Textbook 20, Page 168)
- (14) Dr. Jose Rizal is our national hero. (Textbook 6, Page 70)
- (15) Atty. Hubalde talks to his wife about court experience. (Textbook 21, Page 6)
- (16) Dr. Santos is one of the best surgeons in the land.  
(Textbook 22, Page 63)
- (17) Professor Diaz told her students, "Never take history for granted." (Textbook 5, Page 284)
- (18) Professor Suarez (taught/ has taught) in our school for a decade now. (Textbook 10, Page 186)

### Firstness

Firstness means stating first men before women when both are mentioned together. The tendency to mention males first weakens women and generates the attitude that males are dominant. Moreover, it is not a mistake to mention a female first, but the tendency to place males in front of females is so deeply embedded in the patterns of language usage that saying female first sounds strange and unnatural. The analysis revealed that when male and female names are paired or mentioned together, males usually come first.

- (19) Mario and Elena sold (their, his) lottery ticket to a visitor. (Textbook 1, Page 105)
- (20) Either Mark or Mitch will be part of the soccer team.  
(Textbook 2, Page 322)
- (21) Denis and Denisse confuse their teammates with their names. (Textbook 5, Page 120)

- (22) Romeo and Juliet seem to be young to fall in love this way. (Textbook 15, Page 329)

Likewise, third person singular masculine pronoun always appeared before third person singular feminine pronoun when they were mentioned together. The same pattern was followed using possessive pronouns.

- (23) The speaker in the poem considers his/her friends as his best companions. His/her friends neither leave him/her nor hate him/her. They help him/her solve his/her problems and influence him/her to develop his/her character to be the best. (Textbook 3, Page 232)
- (24) The passive voice is preferably used when the doer of the action is not mentioned for reasons of confidentiality or because he or she is unknown. (Textbook 13, Page 219)
- (25) Either he or she (knows, know) the lyrics of the song. (Textbook 4, Page 18)
- (26) He or she wants the readers to hear the sounds in the environment is described. (Textbook 10, Page 111)
- (27) A good student should not study his/her lessons just because he/she is scheduled to have a quiz or because his/her teacher is giving a grade recitation the next day, or because homework is given. (Textbook 22, Page 6)
- (28) And since the interviewer is the one to do it, he/she should remember some details concerning his/her dealing with an interviewee. He/she should understand that in an interview, human factor and interpersonal relationships are important. (Textbook 22, Page 69)

### Generic Man

The word, "man," has two meanings. It may refer to either a male or female person or an adult male person. Consider the following examples from Textbooks 15 and 18.

- (29) The God of man gave your capabilities. (Textbook 15, Page 22) Speech of a man's self ought to be seldom, and well-chosen. (Textbook 15, Page 80)
- (30) The man handed the doctor his chart. (Textbook 18, Page 74)  
The man was shot by a former barangay tanod. (Textbook 18, Page 74)

The man and his cousins were shot while buying liquor in a store. (Textbook 18, Page 74)

The man's two cousins are now in critical condition. (Textbook 18, Page 334)

In the analysis of the textbooks, using the generic man referring to both male and female is still evident. The frequent occurrence of the word man shows that males are still dominant and prominent in society.

- (31) All men are created equal. (Textbook 10, Page 241)
- (32) All men have a heart which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others. (Textbook 9, Page 179)  
Man is endowed with intelligence, curiosity, and resourcefulness. (Textbook 9, Page 360)
- (33) Early man lived in warm and protective caves. (Textbook 4, Page 210)  
Man started to live on Earth about half a million years ago. (Textbook 4, Page 210)  
Early man's body was covered by a heavy mat of hair. (Textbook 4, Page 210)  
The man longing for a mound of rice is an Asian. (Textbook 4, Page 325)

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the analysis, males are associated with certain occupations that can be treated as male-specific such as politician, jurist, farmer, engineer, fishers, businessman, statesman, doctor, lawyer, soldier, etc. Moreover, males are dominant in written texts and described as sportspersons and heroes, while females are frequently presented as mother, daughter, wife, and teachers.

Males are presented as happy while females are sad; males are presented as being successful, powerful, famous, educated, well-respected, and rich than females who are poor and dependable; both genders are seen intelligent and wise; more negative traits are associated with males rather than females; and males are old-fashioned whereas females are pale, upset, fat and small but tall, lovely and beautiful.

The most common group of verbs collocated with pronouns he and she is the material process or process of doing. Males are associated with a crime, while females are more responsible for helping others and performing household chores. Furthermore, the analysis of verbs denoting a mental process or the process of sensing revealed that both genders think and remember. However, males are more active and involved in more various mental processes than females.

The masculine pronoun he appears more frequently in the examples, tasks, or exercises.

After analyzing the relative frequency of occurrence of titles together with surnames, the titles used together with surnames has the highest number of cases in the Philippine Junior High School English Language Textbooks. Professions are also used to honor both genders. The most common are lawyer and doctor for males while professor for females.

In terms of firstness, the analysis shows that when male and female names are mentioned together, males usually come first. Moreover, the third person singular masculine pronoun always appears before third person singular feminine pronoun when they are mentioned together. The same pattern is followed using possessive pronouns.

In the analysis of the textbooks, using the generic man referring to both male and female is still evident. The frequent occurrence of the word man shows that males are still dominant and prominent in society.

The findings above have implications for future research. First, it must be noted that the corpus selected for the analysis represents only a selection of the 23 student textbooks in use at the time of the study. Future researchers may include all English Language Textbooks currently available in publication and use for Junior High School so that the results could be generalized to all ESL textbooks from the public and private schools offering Grades 7 -10 in the country.

Second, further study is needed to analyze the social aspect of gender representation in textbooks. Such analysis may include gender visibility, gender attributes that are regarded to be features or activities stereotypically ascribed to gender, gender roles and the responsibilities ascribed to genders concerning household duties, and the relationship between gender and occupation.

Third, further study is needed to determine what occurs when learners attempt to use these recommended textbooks. It would be enlightening to investigate how male and female students react to these language textbooks. A qualitative study may be conducted to get students' insights.

Fourth, including the representation of gay, lesbian, or gender queer in the textbooks may also be taken into consideration. An analysis of genders outside the binary and stories which feature gender queer characters may be included.

Lastly, future researchers may conduct more studies on gender representation in other textbooks used

in both private and public universities and colleges in the Philippines.

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