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Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Roles in the SEPH *Oxford* English

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of gender equality awareness, gender stereotypes in textbooks have been widely concerned. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the gender role portrayals in the *Oxford* English published by Shanghai Educational Publishing House. To achieve this objective, a quantitative content analysis and a case study of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) are employed, with two frameworks proposed by Halliday and Kress & Van. The result of this paper suggests that there is an imbalance between male roles and female roles. Theoretically, this paper contributes to enriching the research of gender and textbooks from the perspective of MCDA. Practical implications are to promote the complications of textbooks and thus provide better materials for teachers and students to raise their gender conscious.

Keywords: Gender roles, textbooks, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

For those students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), textbooks play an important role in their study, in which the imbalance of gender roles in EFL textbooks has drawn a worldwide attention. Gender role is a set of expectations about what behaviors are appropriate for people of one gender [1]. That is, males or females are expected to be masculine or feminine. According to Durkin, gender roles can be stereotypical, neutral, or counter-stereotypical to traditional gender roles [2]. The stereotype is a simplified and standardized belief or image held in common by members of a group, which is often unfair or untrue in judgments. From the perspective of gender stereotype's structure, Deaux and Lewis point out that several separate components of gender stereotypes can be identified: traits, role behaviors, occupations, and physical appearance, each of which has a masculine and feminine version [3].

In light of Tom Hutchinson & Eunice Torres, the textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching [4]. In recent years, EFL textbooks published by People's Education Press (PEP) and Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) are investigated. Few studies, however, have focused on English textbooks published by Shanghai Educational Publishing House (SEPH). Therefore, this paper aims to investigate how gender roles are portrayed in the SEPH *Oxford* English for Chinese middle schools from the perspective of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA). This paper analyses the roles' frequency, personalities, behaviors, and the use of language in discourse and illustrations.

To achieve the purpose, both quantitative and qualitative methods are adopted. The quantitative method is used to count the frequency of gender roles. In this part, celebrities introduced in textbooks are taken into consideration. It's also helpful to classify the role behaviors, including occupational choices and domestic obligations. As for the qualitative method, a case study is employed under the perspective of MCDA. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Kress & Van's Visual Grammar (VG) serve as theoretical frameworks. In SFG, language is a meaning system with three metafictions: interpersonal function, ideational function, and textual function, all of which will be discussed from the point of view of grammar, such as subjects, verbs, and sentence patterns. When analyzing illustrations, three meanings of images proposed by Kress & Van are representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning, concerning actions, contacts, social distances, attitudes, placements, and angles of gender roles.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

American researchers Child, Potter, and Levine firstly evaluate primary school textbooks for third graders. They

find that of all the central characters, 73% are male and only 27% are female [5]. From a moral point of view, females are depicted more negatively, while males tend to be creative, aggressive, and ambitious [5]. U'Ren discovers that girls are shown subordinate to their brothers, doing uninteresting things, or receiving no recognition even for accomplishments; adult females are also subordinate to their husbands, acting as a housewife without offering a solution to a family crisis [6]. Another researcher Trecker also states that texts omit many women of importance in the discussion of reform movements, abolition, and labor-areas [7]. Though females are competent and professional in workplaces, compilers seldomly depicted them in textbooks. These studies indicate an imbalance of males and females in their personalities, occupations, and domestic roles, which are some basic themes when investigating gender stereotypes in EFL textbooks.

In China, research on gender roles in textbooks begins a little later, but some results have been achieved. Mingsu, Wang. & Jianmin, Cui. investigate PEP Chinese textbooks and discover that the Chinese tradition of preferring boys over girls remains [8]. Compared with American textbooks, Xiaobin, Zhu. notices the frequency of females in American textbooks is higher than that of Chinese textbooks; and males always own some merits while females tend to show the dark side of humanity [9]. However, at the beginning of the study, the focus is on Chinese textbooks, and the investigation about EFL textbooks is not enough.

Since the 2010s, Chinese scholars have continued to explore whether the problem of gender stereotypes in textbooks has been improved in recent decades. Songlin, Wang., Huiping, Wang., & Kexin, Li. make a comparison of English textbooks published by PEP (1996 Edition) and Shandong Education Press (2005 Edition). Their results suggest the frequency of females in workplaces in the 2005 textbooks has increased [10]. But there are significant differences in the occupation types of men and women: the females are trapped on a very narrow occupational range, and most of them are occupied in assistant and supportive works; males are engaged in a wide range of occupations, most of which are creative and physical with have high social status [10]. Their findings are important because few studies show the changes of gender roles in the textbook at that time.

Most of the previous studies use quantitative research to analyse the frequency of gender without the application of MCDA for qualitative research. Therefore, from the perspective of linguistics, this paper combines quantitative research and qualitative research to analyse the discourse and illustrations.

3. METHOD

In this paper, both quantitative research and qualitative research are adopted. According to White & Marsh, one of the characteristics of quantitative content analysis is frequency, indicating the existence, intensity, and relative importance [11]. This paper counts the frequency of main gender roles in the verbal texts and corresponding illustrations. Then, independent sample t-tests are conducted with IBM SPSS, to testify whether there is a significant difference. In terms of Qualitative research, Systemic Functional Grammar and Visual Grammar are two basic theoretical frameworks.

3.1. Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar is created by Halliday, a British linguist, at the end of the 1950s. In SFG, there are three meta-functions: ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function.

The ideational function is to convey information and to communicate unknown content. One of the most significant analyses of ideational meaning is transitivity. The transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types [12]. It includes participants (people or things involved in the process), process (actions involved in the sentences, or called verbs), and circumstances (who, where, when, how, and why) [12]. The six process types are shown below.

Table 1. Process Types

Process Types	Main Participants
Material Process	Actor & Goal
Mental Process	Senser & Phenomenon
Relational Process	Carrier, Identified & Identifier
Behavioral Process	Behaver/Behavior
Verbal Process	Sayer & Receiver
Existential Process	Existent

The interpersonal function embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations. In speaking or writing, people engage in an exchange where they take on giving roles or demanding roles.

Table 2. Exchanges

Roles	Goods-and-services	Information
Giving	Offer	Statement
Demanding	Command	Question

These exchanges can be achieved by two linguistic systems called Mood and Modality.

Table 3. Mood and Modality

Mood	Examples
Declarative	e.g., I am a student.
Interrogative	e.g., Do you like apples?
Imperative	e.g., Speak loudly, please.
Exclamative	e.g., What a nice day it is!

Modality	Examples
Probability	e.g., The child might be hers.
Usuality	e.g., He often watches TV.
Obligation	e.g., You should sleep now.
Inclination	e.g., I'll help you.

The textual meaning refers to the fact that language can make any stretch of discourse into coherent and unified texts rather than a random list of sentences. It includes thematic structure, information structure, and cohesion. In thematic structure, theme refers to what it is mainly about, and rehem means what is said concerning the theme. Information structure helps covey the given and the new information. Cohesion consists of conjunction, reference, ellipsis, and substitution.

3.2. Visual Grammar

Visual Grammar is put forward by Kress & Van in 1996. In VG, vector, a semiotic mode, is used to represent objects and their relations to other objects and processes. What in the language is realized by words of the category 'action verbs' is visually realized by elements that can be formally defined as vectors [13]. With the help of vectors, three meanings of images—representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning—can be better analysed.

Representational meaning is narrative or conceptual. Where conceptual patterns represent participants in terms of their class, structure, or meaning, in other words, in terms of their generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, narrative patterns serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements [13].

Interactive meaning explains how images interact with viewers. Images involve two kinds of participants, represented participants (the people, the places, and things depicted in images) and interactive participants (the people who communicate with each other through images, the producers, and viewers of images), and three kinds of relations: (1) relations between represented participants; (2) relations between interactive and represented participants; and (3) relations between interactive participants [13].

The third element is the compositional meaning. Three principles of composition are information value, salience, and framing. The placement of elements (such as left and right, top and bottom, and center and margin) shows information values; salience is to attract viewer's attention through the placement of foreground or background, size, color, and sharpness; and the presence or absence of framing devices disconnects or connects elements of the image, signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense [13].

4. RESULTS

The SEPH *Oxford* English is comprised of six volumes from grade seven to grade nine, mainly used in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Shenyang in China. The reading part has one article, and the other parts are exercises, such as filling the blanks, reading exercises, and choice questions. The criteria for data selection are as follows:

In discourse, the main gender roles are selected, which refers to characters who can be identified as males or females based on traditional gender features. If roles cannot be identified as males or females, such a situation will not be counted. Next in important, main gender roles should appear in the discourse consisting of more than one sentence, where the texts contain textual meanings.

As for valid illustrations, only pictures with identifiable gender roles are chosen, excluding animals and objects. These illustrations also should be particularly designed for specific contexts, which means they are helpful to convey information together with discourse rather than only presenting visual effects to feast viewer's eyes.

The gender roles in discourse and illustrations are classified into three categories: only males, only females, and both genders. In the process of selection, each gender role is coded according to this rule: D/I—V1—U1—M1/F1/B1 (D: discourse; I: illustration; V: volume; U: unit; M: male; F: female; B: both gender).

4.1. Gender Roles in Discourse

4.1.1. The Frequency of Males and Females

There are two protagonists throughout the six volumes—Hi and Lo—a boy and a robot respectively. Lo can be seen as a male because the personal pronoun is "he" in discourse. Hi and Lo appear on the first page of each unit to lead in the new topic, from daily topics like making friends and school clubs, to complicated topics like inventions and memory. So, the first point is, in the compilation of the SEPH *Oxford* English series, there is a lack of female protagonists.

As for those main roles in Readings, Table 4 shows that males account for 44.44%, which is the same as both genders, whereas the lowest one can be seen in females.

Table 4. The Frequency of Main Roles in Readings

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	2	3	4	1	3	3	16	44.44%
F	1	1	0	0	1	1	4	11.11%
B	2	3	3	4	4	0	16	44.44%

Through the independent T-test, the results are presented in Table 5: the frequency of males and females is significantly different (P<0.05).

Table 5. The Independent T-test

	Male	Female	t	P
Frequency	2.67±1.03	0.67±0.52	4.243	0.002

Although the percentage of females slightly increases in the Exercises, the percentage of males stably remains.

Table 6. The Frequency of Main Roles in Exercises

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	17	14	20	15	22	12	100	44.84%
F	8	10	10	7	4	2	41	18.39%
B	15	12	8	13	27	7	82	36.77%

And the independent T-test also indicates that there is an important difference in the frequency between male protagonists and female protagonists (P<0.05).

Table 7. The Independent T-test

	Male	Female	t	P
Frequency	16.67±3.77	6.83±3.25	4.833	0.001

With regards to celebrities, female famous people are Jane Goodall, Guifang Feng, Xiujuan Xu, and Marie Curie; two of them are scientists, and the other two are a teacher and an environmentalist. Males, however, shoulder their responsibility in different fields, such as painters, poets, scientists, and writers. Table 8 gives the information that the percentage of male celebrities greatly exceeds that of females, reaching up to 91.11%.

Table 8. The Frequency of Celebrities

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	1	2	11	2	19	6	41	91.11%
F	0	1	0	2	1	0	4	8.89%

The main roles are active in different workplaces. As shown in Table 9, males have much more occupational choices, ranging from teachers to postmen, but female main characters are depicted as only four kinds of workers: teachers, sellers, actors, and reporters. Those dangerous, directive, and supervisory works are for males, such as doctors, astronauts, schoolmasters, and trip leaders.

Table 9. The Occupations of Main Roles

Gender	Occupation	Frequency
M	Teacher	7
	Doctor	4
	Astronaut	2
	Head Teacher	1
	Trip Leader	1
	Engineer	1
	Cleaner	1
	Manager	1
	Salesman	1
	Fisherman	1
	Craftsman	1
	Postman	1
F	Teacher	6
	Seller	1
	Actor	1
	Reporter	1

In the family, mothers undertake more domestic works. Sometimes mothers work outsides or set some rules for the whole family, but in most cases, it is the fathers who are always in charge of this. Fathers are busy working, and they seldom take on the household duties as mothers do. The frequency of fathers is not as high as that of mothers, accounting for 28.57%. Furthermore, fathers

are often the proposers and decision-makers in the family, while mothers are listeners and advisors.

Table 10. The Domestic Duties of Main Roles

Roles	Frequency	%(/Total)
Father	8	28.57%
Grandfather	1	3.57%
Mother	16	57.14%
Grandmother	3	10.71%

In a word, males appear most frequently both in texts and illustrations, followed by both genders, and the lowest one, females. The independent t-tests also confirm that there is a general and significant difference between the male and female groups—an imbalance.

4.1.2. Analysis of Roles through Systemic Functional Grammar

4.1.2.1 Ideational Function

The transitivity system is essential when it comes to ideational function, which is helpful in gender role portrayals.

The following article comes from V2-U1 Reading, *People around us*. The article in this unit is full of sentences belonging to the relational process. For instance, "My grandma was a short woman with grey hair. She was always cheerful. She was a very good cook." These three sentences describe her appearance, personality, and skills. The be-verb, "was", is a symbol of relational process. The material process also works. In this sentence "Grandma took care of my family", the subject "Grandma" is an actor, and "my family" is the goal. It shows that grandma, as a female, is in charge of some domestic works in a family.

In V6-U1 *Wise men in history*, the article tells a story about Archimedes and the golden crown. The first sentence in the second paragraph describes what Archimedes thinks through the verbal process and mental process. "'It's a nice crown, isn't it?' he asked his men" is an interrogative sentence of verbal process, taking the word "say" as a symbol. Besides, it also presents his internal monologue— "Is it made completely of gold?" is a kind of mental process. What he thinks is presented by this sentence for readers.

4.1.2.2 Interpersonal Function

As mentioned above (Table 3), the interpersonal function can be achieved through the system of mood and modality, then whether the gender role is demanding or offering something can be discovered.

Through analysing the dialogues between males and females, it is the males who usually start the conversations.

Figure 1 Daisy and Benny

In this dialogue, the first sentence "How are you feeling, Daisy" is an interrogative sentence to make sure whether Daisy feels well. Then, before Benny goes outside, he asks "May I borrow your bicycle", which is also an interrogative sentence used for demanding a bicycle. Daisy responds, "Yes, you may. Before you go to meet your friends, can you come and see the doctor with me", a declarative sentence to agree with Benny's request and an interrogative sentence to seek help. In this discourse, both Benny and Daisy are offering roles and demanding roles.

Figure 2 Amy and Frank

Females often act as demanding roles to ask for new information or service from males. Here is an obvious example. Amy is a demanding role while Frank is an offering role. She wonders whether computers are cleverer than human, and Frank give his own opinions to explain the reasons through several declarative sentences.

4.1.2.3 Interpersonal Function

In the conversation between Amy and Frank (see Figure 2), Amy demands new information from Frank through several questions. And the answer, the new information, is provided by Frank. From the perspective of thematic structure, the theme of whether computers are smarter than humans is concluded by Frank, while the

rheme is offered by Amy because she asks questions related to the theme and reaches an agreement in the end.

4.2. Gender Roles in Illustrations

4.2.1. The Frequency of Males and Females

The main roles depicted in the illustrations suggest an imbalance between males and females. The proportion of males remains the highest, followed by that of both genders (29.39%) and that of females (12.88%).

Table 11. The Frequency of Main Roles in Illustrations

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	48	53	32	36	64	36	269	57.73%
F	22	12	3	11	8	4	60	12.88%
B	34	22	15	19	37	10	137	29.39%

By doing the independent T-test, the p-value is less than 0.05, which means there is a significant difference between the frequency of males and females in illustrations.

Table 12. The Independent T-test

	Male	Female	t	P
Frequency	44.83±12.37	10.00±6.90	6.025	0.000

4.2.2. Analysis of Roles through Visual Grammar

To deeply analyze the relationships or comparisons between male roles and female roles, the illustrations with both genders are selected. As mentioned in Table 11, there are 137 illustrations with both genders. Differently, the analysis of celebrity's portraits should use illustrations with one gender.

4.2.2.1 Representational Meaning

This paper only discusses the action process and reactional process of narrative representation because both are closely related to gender role portrayals. In action process, actor and goal are important. Through evaluation, the results indicate there is no obvious difference in the amounts of male actors and female actors.

Table 13. Actors

|	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	17	5	2	5	6	2	37	51.39%
F	13	3	3	5	8	3	35	48.61%

In illustrations including both male and female actors, they usually do similar things that fit the theme of units. For instance, in the following image, the girls on the right are controlling machines, and a boy in the middle is introducing their hand-made rockets (machines and rockets are goals). What they do fits the theme of the article called *The Clubs Fair*.

Figure 3 The Clubs Fair

Compared with male actors, female actors tend to be supporting roles. Taking a short comic strip as an example, the girl Carol is advising to the boy, Henry. In these pictures, Carol is instructing Henry to do something like truing wheels and wearing coats. Her arms and fingers form vectors. Besides, Henry also can be an actor, and what he takes on his hands can be goals, such as the soil and the plane. The difference between them is that Carol acts as an assistant role, while Henry is dealing with different things in person.
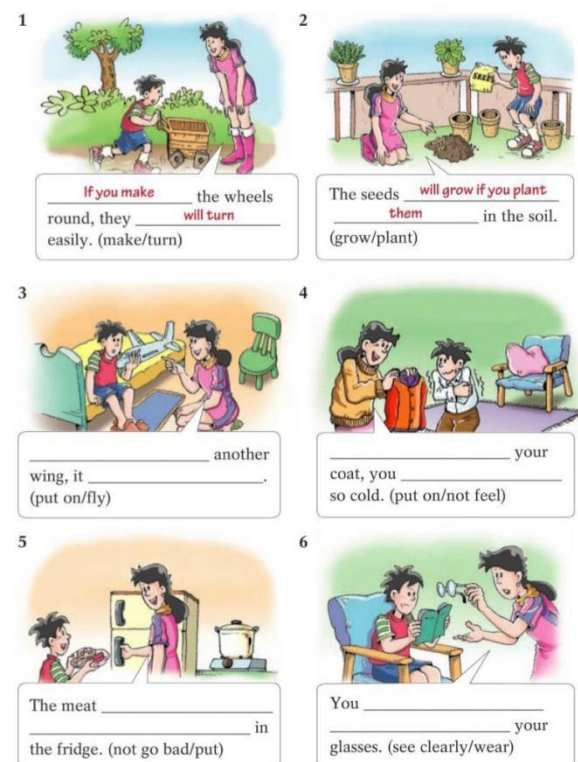
Figure 4 Carol and Henry

In the reactional process, when the vector is formed by an eyeline, by the direction of the glance of one or more of the represented participants, the process is reactional, and we will speak not of Actors, but of Reactors, and not of Goals, but of Phenomena [13]. The roles who act as phenomena is counted in this paper. As the data shown below, there are more male roles as phenomena than females. That is, males tend to be a visual focus in illustrations.

Table 14. Phenomena

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	14	10	4	5	10	2	45	60.81%
F	8	7	2	6	5	1	29	39.19%

4.2.2.2 Interactive Meaning

The interactive meaning consists of contact, social distance, and attitude. When represented participants look at integrative participants (viewers), vectors, formed by participants' eyelines, connect the participants with the viewer, and contact is established, even if it is only on an imaginary level [13]. The images can be demanding or offering.

Relations between represented participants are shown in Table 15. It means that females are usually demanding roles, which is the same as the results in the interpersonal function of SFG.

Table 15. Demand

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	2	0	1	1	0	0	4	30.77%
F	0	2	1	2	3	1	9	69.23%

The choice of distance reflects different relations between represented participants and viewers. Table 16 presents the results of characters' social distances in 137 illustrations with both genders. The very close shot and the very long shot are not included because they seldom appear. Their social distance varies slightly, though males in the medium long shot outnumber females.

Table 16. Distance

		Close	Medium Close	Medium	Medium Long	Long
V1	M	3	9	9	9	5
	F	2	9	7	5	2
V2	M	1	10	1	6	4
	F	0	9	1	4	4
V3	M	6	2	1	5	1
	F	4	3	2	2	1
V4	M	1	6	4	4	1
	F	4	10	2	7	1
V5	M	2	2	1	8	0
	F	0	2	5	5	2
V6	M	0	2	1	4	0
	F	4	2	2	2	0
Total	M	13	31	17	36	11
	F	14	35	19	25	10

Then is the attitude, or also called perspective. It is the selection of an angle, a 'point of view', implying the possibility of expressing subjective attitudes towards represented participants, human or otherwise [13].

In Figure 5, Marie Curie is slightly looking forward, so she is seen from an oblique angle and a high angle. The distance between viewers and she becomes far, and here is a sense of detachment. A high angle also makes her seemingly small and insignificant under the perspective of powerful viewers. Nevertheless, male celebrities are often depicted with a frontal angle and a low angle. Low angles generally give an impression of superiority, exaltation, and triumph [13]. In the V6-U2 *Great Minds*, several famous people, such as Charlie Chaplin, Albert Einstein, and William Shakespeare, are portrayed. The lower angle makes them look powerful and confident.

Figure 5 Marie Curie and Charlie Chaplin

4.2.2.3 Compositional Meaning

In this paper, one element of compositional meaning—information values—is the main concern. The elements placed on the right are something which is not yet known, or perhaps not yet agreed upon by the viewer, hence as something to which the viewer must pay special attention [13]. Besides, if a visual composition makes significant use of the Center, placing one element in the middle and the other elements around it, we will refer to the central element as Center and to the elements around it as Margins [13]. Table 17 shows the right position of gender. Male characters tend to be placed on the right in illustrations.

Table 17. Right Position

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	12	7	3	2	8	1	33	58.93%
F	7	6	1	3	4	2	23	41.07%

From data, though male characters tend to be placed on the right position and center position in illustrations, the difference between males and females is not so significant (P>0.05).

Table 18. The Independent T-test

	Male	Female	t	P
Frequency	5.50±4.23	3.83±2.32	0.846	0.417

Table 19 indicates that males are put in the center position more frequently than females.

Table 19. Center Position

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Total	%(/Total)
M	3	3	5	4	5	3	23	58.97%
F	4	1	3	4	4	0	16	41.03%

However, the independent T-test testifies that there is also not an obvious difference (P>0.05). That is, when it comes to the position of characters in the SEPH *Oxford* English, the imbalance is not obvious between males and females. Both can be those who attract more attention from viewers in illustrations with more than one person.

Table 20. The Independent T-test

	Male	Female	t	P
Frequency	3.83±0.99	2.67±1.75	1.423	0.185

5. DISCUSSION

Drawing on Halliday and Kress & Van framework, this paper is the result of an investigation into gender role portrayals in the SEPH *Oxford* English for Chinese middle schools, offering evidence that the gender roles are unbalanced in different aspects.

There are more male main characters than female ones. Compared with the discoveries of Songlin, Wang., Huiping, Wang., & Kexin, Li., this paper finds the gender ratio of the SEPH *Oxford* English is more unbalanced. Among these main characters, the protagonists in this series of textbooks are two males, Hi and Lo. A female protagonist is needed.

Female celebrities are also neglected. Only four female celebrities are introduced, whereas 41 famous men are depicted from such a lower angle that makes them more powerful and successful in a higher social status. The underlying negative influence may be that girls unconsciously perceive it as harder for women to succeed even if they are as good as men when growing up, and girls may be timid, self-abused, and less innovative. These results confirm the findings of Trecker, who claims the importance of women is omitted [7]. This is not in line with the reality, since nowadays women are active in career and academic fields and promote social development.

In comparison to Songlin, Wang., Huiping, Wang., & Kexin Li.'s conclusion that occupations for women are often restricted to assistant and supportive jobs [10], females in the SEPH *Oxford* English can do some professional jobs like teachers. Yet, they still have a narrower range of occupation choices, only including teachers, sellers, actors, and reporters. The dangerous, directive, and supervisory jobs are for males. Meanwhile, females take more responsibility in the family, and one possible reason is the Chinese traditional opinion of breadwinning men and homemaking women. It is similar to the tradition of preferring boys over girls, as Mingsu, Wang., & Jianmin, Cui. proposed [8].

Females are subordinate to males in most cases. As data shows, females usually act as demanding roles when males offer new information and services, and males often starts the conversations. In illustrations, males tend to be the visual focus. These findings are in agreement with U'ren's finding which suggests females are subordinate to males to some extent [6]. However, surprisingly, the

results infer there is not an obvious difference when it comes to the actors and positions of gender roles, which explains both males and females have the chance to be central roles and draw viewers' attention. It is somewhat unexpected and an improvement for textbook complications.

Textbook complications should keep pace with the times. Except for the considerations of reading materials and language points, gender-conscious also should be included to increase the frequency of females, for example, especially famous women, and emphasize the important role of fathers and grandfathers in the domestic field. As Tianshan, Zeng. [14] points out, family values have changed with the development of society and more women receive higher education. The change of gender stereotypes should start from the reform of textbook complications. Further, as a crucial part of school education, teachers who use the textbooks need to insist on life-long learning, receive the latest opinions, and help students to enhance the ability of independent and critical thinking not only in knowledge development but also in gender cognition.

6. CONCLUSION

Previous work has suggested that negative effects of gender stereotypes exist in the complication of textbooks. Yet, there is currently a scarcity of empirical studies that have examined Chinese EFL textbooks, especially the gender roles portrayals and stereotypes in SEPH *Oxford* English. This paper has contributed to this gap by providing an empirical analysis and critical evaluation based on Halliday and Kress & Van's framework. For the question of how the gender roles are portrayed in verbal texts and illustrations of the Oxford English textbooks, this paper indicates an imbalance between males and females both in discourse and illustrations.

This paper provides insight into both theoretical and managerial implications. Nevertheless, as is true with any study, the findings of this paper should be viewed with caution due to the following limitations. As for the selection of textbooks, only SEPH *Oxford* English for middle schools is selected because of time limitations, so the sample size is not large enough. And it has examined only the main gender roles in discourse and illustrations that help to reinforce relevant texts. Furthermore, the first-hand data are collected through manual work and then be coded in consecutive numbers. Minor errors and omissions in this process may result in inaccurate data, such as identifiable or double counting roles.

Therefore, as the promotion of the field concerning language and gender in textbooks, more samples are needed to test, and some accurate and efficient methods for this kind of research should be applied to make more sound judgments about gender roles in the EFL textbooks.

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