Sự thể hiện giới tính trong giáo trình Solutions Elementary ấn bản 2 và 3

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TÓM TẮT

Bài viết nhằm tìm hiểu về sự thể hiện giới tính trong sách Solutions Elementary (ấn bản thứ 2 và thứ 3) bằng cách phân tích hệ thống chuyển đổi của Ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống của Halliday & Matthiessen.[1] Dữ liệu được thu thập từ các bài tập đọc hiểu, hội thoại, bài tập ngữ pháp và từ vựng và được phân tích ở cấp độ mệnh đề và nhóm từ. Kết quả cho thấy nam giới được ưu ái hơn nữ giới về tần số xuất hiện của họ trong các vai trò tham gia. Trong cả hai phiên bản, nam giới xuất hiện nhiều hơn nữ giới trong các vai trò quan trọng bao gồm Hành thể, Đương thể / Bị đồng nhất thể, Cảm thể, Phát ngôn thể và Ứng thể. Tuy nhiên, một vài thay đổi trong cách thể hiện nữ giới ở các chủ đề thể thao và công việc nhà được phát hiện trong ấn bản thứ 3. Điều này có thể cho thấy sự công nhận ngày càng tăng của các tác giả sách giáo khoa đối với vấn đề định kiến giới. Những kết quả này cho thấy sự cần thiết của người dạy và người học phải quan tâm hơn đến định kiến giới được truyền tải trong sách giáo khoa ESL.

Từ khóa: *Thể hiện giới tính, sách giáo khoa, hệ thống chuyển tác, ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống.*

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Representation of gender in Solutions Elementary textbooks 2nd and 3rd editions

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate how males and females are represented in the Solutions Elementary students' books (2nd and 3rd editions) by analyzing the transitivity system, which is a component in the ideational meaning of systemic functional grammar by Halliday & Matthiessen.[1] The data were collected from the reading texts, dialogues, grammar examples and exercises and were analyzed at the levels of clause and word group. The findings reveal that males are favored over females in terms of their visibility in participant roles. In both editions, males are more visible than females in the important roles of Actor, Carrier/Identified, Senser, Sayer and Behaver. However, a few changes in the female representation within the themes of sports and housework are spotted in the 3rd edition, which might indicate the textbook authors' growing recognition of the gender stereotyping issue. These results highlight a need for teachers and learners to pay more attention to gender stereotyping conveyed in the ESL textbooks.

Keywords: *gender representation, ESL/EFL textbooks, transitivity, Systemic Functional Grammar.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the global spread of English as an international language, English is the most taught second or foreign language in schools, language centers, universities and other educational institutions.[2] The growing popularity of English teaching has been paralleled by the constant investigation of gender representation in ESL/EFL textbooks, which has been counting nearly four decades of research and resulting in a significant body of knowledge.

The literature is abounding studies relying on content analysis, such as Ansary and Babaii,[3] Barton and Sakwa,[4] Lee and Collins,[5] Musty,[6] to name but a few. However, recent years has seen a rise in new methods to study language gender bias, one of which is the adoption of Halliday's systemic-functional linguistic theory. Driven by the same direction, the researchers aim to contribute to the application of this framework to studies on gender representation in ESL/EFL textbooks by analyzing the data at the levels clause and word groups through the transitivity system. The study is also attempted as a contribution to the literature on language and gender, 'which has been moving from seeing language as reflection of gender towards language as construction of gender.'[7]

The research is conducted to answer two questions: (1) How are females and males represented in terms of participant roles? and (2) Is there any significant difference in gender represention between the 2nd and 3rd editions?

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The textbooks under investigation are Solutions Elementary Student's Book (2nd and 3rd editions). These books are part of the Solutions series, which are published by Oxford University Press, one of the world's largest publishing companies.[8]

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar describes and explains the organization of 'meaning-making resources'[1] used to communicate meanings and perform multiple functions in various contexts of our everyday lives. This framework divides the functions of language into three types: *the ideational meta-function* - language used to construe our experience of the outer world and our inner world; *the interpersonal meta-function* – language used to enact our personal and social relationships, and lastly *the textual meta-function* – language employed to organize discourse and create continuity and flow.

The ideational meta-function encompasses logical function (language used to describe logical relationship between two or more meaningful units) and experiential function (language use to express our experiences with external and internal worlds). The experiential function is chiefly construed by a configuration of a process, participants involved and any attendant circumstances.

2.2. Transitivity

'The transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of PROCESS TYPES.'[1] Transitivity includes six kinds of processes: (a) Material process, (b) Mental process, (c) Relational process, (d) Behavioral process, (e) Verbal process and (f) Existential process.

• *Material* processes construe the 'doing' and 'happening', 'a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy'[1]. Prototypically, these relate to perceivable, concrete changes in the material world. They also cover abstract processes. The main participants in the material process are Actor and Goal: The Actor is 'the one that does the deed'[1] — that is, the one that brings about the change. and the Goal is the one 'to which the process is extended.'[1]

• *Mental processes* construe participants entangled in conscious processing, including processes of perception, cognition and affection. The main participants in this process are Senser and Phenomenon. Senser must be endowed with consciousness because it is 'the one that 'senses' — feels, thinks, wants or perceives'.[1] On the other hand, what 'is felt, thought, wanted, or perceived' is named Phenomenon.[1]

• *Relational* processes are processes of being, becoming, in which a participant is characterized, identified or circumstantially situated. The English system operates with three main types of relation – *intensive, possessive* and *circumstantial*, and each of these comes in two distinct modes of being – *attributive and identifying*. The items and participants involved are variously termed Carrier, Attribute, Identifier, Identified, Possessor, Possessed, Token, or Value.

• *Behavioral* processes are processes of 'physiological and psychological behavior', like breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming and staring. The only participant in this process is Behaver, a prototypically conscious being.

• *Verbal* processes are processes of saying, such as telling, stating, informing, asking, querying, demanding, offering, threatening, suggesting, and so on. The major participants are Sayer and Target.

• *Existential* processes function to introduce an existence into the text, as a first step in talking about it. The existence may relate to an entity or an event, which is simply labelled Existent.

2.3. Previous studies on gender representation in ESL/EFL textbooks

Much research of gender representation in

language textbooks has taken the form of content analysis. One of the trailblazers in this field is Porreca,[9] who suggested exploring gender representation on six categories: gender visibility in texts and illustrations, gender firstness, occupational role, masculine generic constructions, gender neutral nouns and gender specific nouns, and adjectives. This framework has been widely adopted, such as in Barton and Sakwa,[4] Lee and Collins,[5] Musty.[6] Some significant findings have been widely echoed: Males are overrepresented and tend to occupy more powerful and a greater range of occupational roles than women; both males and females perform gender stereotypical activities; and the description of females often employs negative adjectives.

Some recent studies used Transitivity system of the systemic functional grammar to explore the construction of gender in English learning materials. For example, Damayanti[10] investigated job-related reading texts in two ELT textbooks published in Great Britain and Malaysia in 1970s to explore how females and males were portrayed in the early era of language awareness. She found that males were more visible than females in major participant roles. Besides, texts within Western culture represent females in a better light than those within Eastern culture in terms of visibility and variety of job. Similarly, Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh[11] analyzed 41 reading passages in the Interchange Third Edition series. They concluded that women are depicted as actors of material processes and the sensers of mental processes more frequently than men. Besides, both were equally activated in relation to verbal process, and women were more frequently assigners of positive attributes in comparison to men. More recently, Emilia et al.[12] investigated 22 reading passages in two English textbooks for Junior High School students in Indonesia and noticed a quantitative domination of male characters in most participant roles, especially in material processes. These studies, however, restricted the data source to the reading texts or only texts related to specific topics, and the language of these texts was analyzed at the clause level and from the perspective of the critical discourse analysis.

3. DATA AND METHODS

3.1. Data

The textbooks under investigation are Solutions Elementary Student's Book (2nd and 3rd editions). These books are part of the Solutions series, which are published by Oxford University Press, one of the world's largest publishing companies.[8] Data for this study are the written texts extracted from the reading comprehension exercises, dialogues, grammar and vocabulary exercises.

3.2. Data analysis

The unit of analysis is clause, and only linguistically gendered clauses - those that feature only one gender- were selected (e.g. '*My sister is singing in the shower*.'). Participants that involve both genders (e.g. '*In some ways, Kate and William are a normal couple*.'; '*A few moments later, their parents returned home.*') were therefore excluded. Regarding the identification of gender identity, some phrases intrinsically refer to either males (e.g. '*my uncle*', '*my dad*', '*his grandfather*') or females (e.g. '*my mum*', '*my sister*', '*her aunt*'). However, in many cases, the surrounding linguistic, visual and sometimes auditory clues were crucial for the assignment of gender. For example, in '*Millie often meets her friends in town after school*', Millie is identified as female based on the possessive adjective.

In cases where no linguistic, visual or auditory clues were given, the participant gender was identified with the help of 'Baby Name Guesser' (https://www.gpeters.com/names/baby-names.php), a program that uses Google's database to analyze common patterns involving first names. The program determines whether a name is used more commonly for a male or a female based on its popular usage on the Internet and provides the ratio that the given name is

used for a specific gender. For example, '*Ethan*' is 68.333 times more common among males than females. In this study, a specific name was arbitrarily determined to be that of a male or a female if the program provided a ratio of more than 3 to 1 (3.0). In case the ratio was less than 3.0, that participant was not included in the analysis. This method was previously used in Russel et al.[13]

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The frequency of process types

Table 1 presents the distribution of the six process types. All six process types are found,

except for the existential process in the 3rd edition. Both editions follow a practically similar distributional pattern of process types: The most used is material process, followed by relational, mental, verbal, behavioural processes. Existential process comes last with only one instance found in the 2nd edition ('*There was a man in the garden with a torch*.'). All types of processes witness a decrease in occurrences from the 2nd edition to the 3rd edition, except for mental processes, which increase by 42.2%. Meanwhile, the number of instances of verbal processes declines by 18.7%, relational processes 24.5% and behavioral processes 56.4%.

Table 1. Distribution of process types

	Material process	Relational process	Mental process	Verbal process	Behavioral process	Existential process	Total (clause)
2nd ed.	515	261	102	75	55	1	1009
3rd ed.	496	197	145	61	24	0	923

4.2. Gender representation in transitivity processes

Through the data analysis, the frequencies of

each participants role in the six process types are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of types of processes

	2nd edition		3rd edition	
	M	F	M	F
EXISTENTIAL				
Existent	1	0	0	0
BEHAVIOURAL				
Behaver	33	22	16	8
VERBAL				
Sayer	46	28	30	29
Receiver	10	8	8	3
MENTAL				
Senser	57	42	78	63
Phenomenon	7	4	8	1
RELATIONAL				
Carrier/ identified	163	98	111	86
MATERI				
Actor	287	219	299	188
Goal	9	8	11	10
Recipient	1	1	1	1
Beneficiary	0	1	3	1

Regarding behavioural and verbal processes, in the 2nd edition, females are heavily outnumbered by males in both Behaver (33 versus 16 instances) and Sayer (46 versus 28 instances). The outnumbering of male Behavers persists in the 3rd edition, which sees, however, a roughly equal engagement of males and females as Sayer (30 versus 29 instances). As for the Receiver role in verbal process, there is no significant difference between the number of males and females in the 2nd edition, yet males are shown to passively engage in verbal processes three times as much as females in the 3rd edition.

As for mental processes, males appear more frequently than females in the role of Senser, with an unchanged margin of 15 instances in both books. Males are also more conspicuous than females in the Phenomenon role, though the frequency of occurrence is relatively low (under 10). Turning to relational processes, male Carriers/Identified are found over one-and-a-half times more frequently than females in the 2nd edition (163 versus 98 instances). In the 3rd edition, males also surpass their female equivalents, yet less dramatically (111 versus 86 instances). As regards the Actor role, in the 2nd edition, males outnumber females by 287 to 219 instances; the 3rd edition even displays a larger difference in frequency counts between males and females (299 versus 188 instances).

Overall, males surpass females in all the major participant roles, including Actor, Carrier/Identified, Senser, Sayer and Behaver. The frequent representation of males as Actor may convey the idea that males are active, strong and competent. This idea, or to be more precise, ideology, has been deeply entrenched in some communities and cultures (Gordon, 1997, as cited in Gharbavi).[14] The preponderance of males as Senser and Sayer was an unanticipated result. Females are often stereotyped as emotional, sensitive and more likely to act as a verbalizer than males. However, this deviation from traditional stereotypes may imply that males are more frequently treated by the textbook writers

as the dominant sex, whose thoughts, feelings and spoken words are worth mentioning.[10]

Now, let's look more closely at this representation of gender in each process type and its instances.

4.2.1. Behavioral and verbal processes

It is shown from the analysis that both males and females are constructed with the same pool of behavioral verbs (*watch*, *sing*, *dance*, *sleep*, *die*, and *listen to music*) in the 2nd edition, while the 3rd edition shows only one overlap between the two genders (*watch*); only males *listen to music, watch, die, rest, dance* and *sit,* while *sing* and *wake up* are used for females only.

The process '*watch*' is used the most with roughly the same frequency in males and females. However, only males are portrayed as watching sports-related content (e.g. '*In the evening, he sometimes watches sports on TV*.' (2nd), '*The boy wants to watch the football match*.'(3rd).

Besides, in the textbooks, the process verb '*die*' is predominantly used for historically famous people whose death seems worth mentioning in the text. A total of 10 instances are found in both editions, yet only one instance has a female Behaver (e.g. '*Marilyn Monroe died in 1983*.', while the others are male Behavers as in '*Beethoven died in Austria.*'; '*Isaac Newton died in October 1727, at the age of 84.*'; '*He only sold one painting before he died*.').

Regarding the Sayer role, in the 2nd edition, some process verbs are exclusively used for males, including *call*, *whisper*, *offer* and *describe*, while *spell*, *lie* and *continue* are used for females only. In the 3rd edition, verbs like *describe* and *spell* are used for males only, whereas only females *call*, *shout*, *blame* and *explain*. The intriguing point here is that females are consistently not constructed with the verb *describe*, while males are recorded in six instances, most of which are in the 3rd edition and related to travelling/adventure (e.g. '*Asher described the crossing in his book 'Impossible*

Journey - Two against the Sahara.'; '*In the 19th century, the famous British journalist and explorer <u>Henry Stanley</u> described the same animal.*'; '*Years later, <u>he</u> described his journey in a book.*')

4.2.2. Mental process

The instances of mental processes can be broken down into four subtypes: perceptive, cognitive, desirative and emotive. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of the subtypes of mental clauses. Two patterns stand out in the table: The perceptive and emotive do not show any significant difference between males and females, while males consistently have more instances than females in desirative and cognitive groups.

Table 3. Distribution of subtypes of mental processes

	2nd		3rd	
	male	female	male	female
Perceptive	8	5	10	10
Cognitive	6	8	27	17
Desirative	21	10	26	16
Emotive	22	19	15	20

Notably, many stereotypical, oversimplified ideas about genders are found in the emotive group in both textbooks. Males are represented to like video games ('*<u>Marcus</u> likes video games*'; '*<u>He</u> loves video games*'), sports games ('*<u>He</u> likes sports games*'; '*[..]but <u>I</u> prefer sports games*'), football ('*<u>William</u> loves football*'; '*<u>Jason</u> loves football.*'), extreme sports ('*That was scary too, but <u>I</u> enjoyed* [abseiling down a cliff].'), exploration ('*<u>He</u> wanted a new challenge and loved the idea of exploration.*') and '*hate shopping*'. The representation of females is also replete with stereotypes (e.g. '*<u>Tilly</u> doesn't like sport*'; '*<u>I</u> like shopping too.*'; '*Victoria is called posh because <u>she</u> loves posh, expensive clothes.*'). Nevertheless, some gender stereotypes are challenged, though at a lower frequency ('*<u>She</u> likes hip hop and rap.*'; '*<u>My mum</u> hates cooking.*'; '*<u>She</u> loved volleyball and basketball.*'; '*<u>He</u> doesn't enjoy competition*').

4.2.3. Relational process

The instances of relational processes can be divided into three subtypes: possessive, circumstantial and intensive. Table 4 shows the distribution of the subtypes of relational clauses. Possessive and intensive groups have broadly similar patterns of distribution: In the 2nd edition, the figures for males are approximately two times higher than females; the 3rd edition sees a considerable decline in the figures of males, while those for females remain stable.

Table 4 . Distribution of subtypes of relational processes

	2nd		3rd	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Possessive	40	17	23	16
Circumstantial	26	34	22	20
Intensive	97	47	66	50

Some differences between male and female representation are spotted. First, female carriers are presented in a wider range of contexts in both books. In the 2nd edition, only two instances of males are found ('*They were in their dad's car.*'; '*Aron realised that he was in trouble*'), while females are presented in varied circumstances, ranging from *in the park, on the bus, at hospital, at doctor's* to *at work, at the cinema, at a party, with her parents*. The circumstantial attributes of males in the 3rd edition are more varied than those in the 2nd edition, though female carriers are still located in a wider range of contexts. Intriguingly, some contexts are exclusively for females, including work, entertainment (party, pop concert, cafe) and shopping (clothes' shop, supermarket).

As for the intensive instances in the 2nd edition, all male carriers are described in a positive light, with sport skills (e.g. '*He's good at tennis.*'; '*He's a good ice skater.*'; '*I'm good at sumo wrestling.*'; '*He was an experienced climber.*') and desirable traits (e.g. '*He's very intelligent.*'; '*Jim carrey is funny.*'; '*During his lifetime, he became very famous and rich.*'). Meanwhile, females are given a mixed and infrequent depiction ('*But the woman seemed nice.*'; '*Angelina Jolie is beautiful.*'; '*She is a terrible cook.*'). However, a more balanced portrayal of males and females is established in the 3rd edition, where females are represented as '*friendly*', '*never late for school*', '*a very independent girl*', '*a very sporty child*', and negative depictions of males are also found (e.g. '*I'm useless with technology.*'; '*I'm keen on surfing too, but i'm not very good at it.*'; '*He isn't good at football.*'). Another observation is that social roles played by males are consistently more varied than females in both books. In the 2nd edition, males are represented to perform 10 different social roles (*lawyer, ski instructor, painter, astronomer, actor, the future king of the United Kingdom, a member of the British royal family, doctor, vet, US president*), while females play only one ('*She's now the Duchess of Cambridge and part of the royal family*'). The 3rd edition sees, however, profound changes on females' part: Females adopt seven social roles, compared to 12 roles played by males.

4.2.4. Material process

In the 2nd edition, 78 different verbs are employed by male actors, favorably compared to 55 verbs by females; interestingly, this pattern is perpetuated in the 3rd edition, though both genders employ a wider range of verbs in this book (99 and 70 verbs respectively). Despite this quantitative difference, both males and females are constructed in actions similar by nature, ranging from physically demanding (e.g. *build, climb, cycle, kayak, cross, run, swim, tidy, walk, explore, ride, clean*) to mentally involving activities (e.g. *study, work, write, learn, find, read*).

In terms of roles played, males and females show a relatively equal participation in the Goal position; however, it is intriguing that most of the Actors in these instances are male. Moreover, there is an interesting finding regarding gender's interests represented in some instances about different daily themes. Let's take housework and sports as examples.

Overall, the representation of males and females on the matter of housework seems relatively balanced in two editions. While females are represented to assume their traditional roles of cooking (e.g. '*My mum usually cooks dinner.*'; '*Rosie is cooking dinner for us tonight.*'; '*Mum is in the kitchen. She is cooking dinner.*') or washing-up ('*My mum washed my clothes last night.*'), males are represented to frequently perform household chores; in fact, male actors slightly outnumber females (13 versus 9 instances) in this sphere (e.g. '*He has to tidy his room before breakfast.*'; '*I have ironed the shirts.*'; '*My dad often does the washing up.*'; '*My brother made dinner last night.*';

As for the category of sports, the results suggest that although both genders are

represented as engaging in many kinds of sports, male actors have much higher frequencies of occurrence. In the 2nd edition, 18 instances under this category are found for males, one-and-a-half times more than females (11 instances). Males are found to take part in a diverse range of sports, from running, swimming, skating, golf to volleyball, basketball, tennis (e.g. '*He has to get up at 6am and go for a run.*'; '*He plays tennis very well.*'; '*I play basketball at school.*'; Like males, females engage in a variety of sports types, including football, running, tennis, volleyball, karate, cycling, surfing, ice skating, dancing (e.g. '*I always do karate on Saturday morning.*'; '*I tried surfing yesterday.*'

5. CONCLUSION

The study is an effort to contribute to the research on language and gender in the sphere of textbooks. Using the systemic functional grammar as the major framework, we investigated how males and females are represented in two ESL textbooks – Solutions Elementary students' book, 2nd and 3rd editions.

The results show that in both editions, males surpass females in all the major participant roles, including Actor, Carrier/Identified, Senser, Sayer and Behaver. This unbalanced treatment may perpetuate the ideology of males as active, strong and competent, and support the position of males as the dominant sex, whose thoughts, feelings and spoken words are worth mentioning.

Regarding gender representation in specific themes, traditional stereotypes about females' interest in shopping/appearance is perpetuated throughout the two books. Besides, both editions generally present males as more interested and active in sports than females. However, there is a significant increase in female interest and engagement in sports activities as well as professional sports in the 3rd edition. Moreover, both books display a balanced representation of the two genders in the domain of housework. These could be taken as a progressive step towards equal gender representation.

These results highlight a need for teachers and learners to pay more attention to gender stereotyping conveyed in ESL textbooks. It is possible that these stereotypes could be reinforced by the teachers through the dissemination and use of the materials. Teachers should therefore take a pre-emptive, critical approach to the gender-stereotyped contents hidden in teaching materials, and help learners recognize these subliminal messages themselves.

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