

Gender Representation in a Hong Kong Primary English Textbook Series: The Relationship between Language Planning and Social Policy

Abstract

Language-in-education planning, in the form of materials planning, has an important role to play in achieving a society's social goals. Gender stereotyping has been found in previous language textbook studies. Although gender bias has declined, some recent studies suggest that it still exists. This study analysed the content and language of a recently published Hong Kong English language textbook series for grade one students to explore its gender representation. The results of the study showed that males and females were almost equally represented and were portrayed in a similar range of activities. Females were also more visible in both illustrations and texts. The phenomena of females being underrepresented and male dominance occurred in the previous textbook studies did not exist in the textbook series examined, though males were still mentioned first when two nouns were paired for sex. One implication that can be drawn from the results is that gender stereotyping or how gender is represented in textbooks should be an important factor to be considered when school teachers select textbooks for their students, and this aspect should be highly emphasised in the Government's policy manual for selection of textbooks for use in schools, given the fact that textbooks may have strong influence on children's development of values and attitudes.

Key words: gender stereotyping; Hong Kong; primary schools; English language; textbooks; language planning and policy

Introduction

Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) have identified materials policy, that is the selection of the materials to be used in language teaching, including textbooks, as being closely related to curriculum policy, within the framework of language-in-education policies. However, materials policy can also be understood as closely connected to wider educational and social contexts. Language education is not only about developing linguistic and literacy capabilities but also a way of socialising students into societal norms. When a society engages with discrimination on the basis of gender, the materials being used in education have a role in implementing relevant policies. Language learning texts can therefore be seen as being a part of the implementation process of reform in gender discrimination and it is in the classroom that language planning and broader social planning come into contact for the first time for students. In this way, language-in-education policies have a role in the ways in which other social objectives are included in education. It is therefore important to understand how

language-learning materials relate to and contribute to broader societal objects.

Gender equality is a relatively recent policy concern in Hong Kong. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), a statutory body in Hong Kong, was set up in 1996. One of its responsibilities is to implement the Sex Discrimination Ordinance to promote “equality” and “equal opportunities for all” (Equal Opportunities Commission, n.d.). Even though there is the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, people in Hong Kong still have a strong perception of a difference in gender stereotypes. According to a survey conducted by Equal Opportunities Commission, people perceive the eight personality traits (willing to take risks, having leadership abilities, possessing strong personality, defending own beliefs, independent, willing to improve, aggressive, and assertive) as the male stereotypes. For females, the respondents consider “fond of children, shy, sensitive to the needs of others, gentle, compassionate, affectionate, sympathetic, and understanding” as their stereotypical personality traits (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997, p. 13). This indicates that the Sex Discrimination Ordinance has not achieved all of its objectives in that it has not influenced Hong Kong people’s perceptions of gender differences. This means that there is a need for a better understanding of gender equality to be developed through education.

Law and Chan (2004) believe that people’s internalized stereotypical differences are formed by different socialization agents (e.g. schools) and processes. In schooling, textbooks can be one of the major sources that influence people’s values and attitudes. The Curriculum Development Council (2004) considers that students can develop positive values and attitudes with the use of quality textbooks. Their attitudes learnt from growing in a culture will then be “reinforced and/or transformed with what is conveyed in textbooks” (Luk, 2004, p. 3). Cincotta (1978) suggests that sex-role stereotypes, as a kind of perception, are formed in the pupils’ mind mainly through textbooks. Scott (1980) also believes that books may have considerable impact on children’s attitudes, values, and behaviour as they spend a great deal of time on reading at schools. Evans and Davies (2000), in investigating the portrayal of masculinity and femininity among male characters in the first, third and fifth grade reading textbooks, found that males were portrayed as significantly more aggressive, argumentative and competitive than females, while significantly less likely to be described as affectionate, emotionally expressive, passive or tender. However, in another study in which a set of picture books listed in *The Horn Book* for the years 1967, 1977 and 1987 were analysed, Peterson and Lach (1990) found that the prevalence of gender stereotypes has decreased somewhat. Girls are as likely to have adventures as they are shown in a domestic setting, and boys and girls are equally likely to be the main character in both socially-oriented and family stories. Nonetheless, Peterson and Lach (1990) also point out that this major shift in the trends is not statistically significant. Gooden and Gooden (2001), in their examination of eighty-three

Notable Books for Children from the period 1995-1999, suggest that while gender equity has greatly improved with an increase of females represented as the main character, gender stereotypes are still prevalent.

The purpose of this paper is to examine a textbook series used in teaching English in Hong Kong to examine the extent to which these textbooks are consistent with the promotion of equality and equal opportunities. Though teachers are advised to use a wide range of teaching resources to broaden students' learning experiences (Curriculum Development Council, 2004), textbooks are still the major teaching materials in most primary and secondary English classrooms in Hong Kong. Therefore, the present study was conducted to analyse gender stereotyping and gendered discourses in a Hong Kong primary English textbook series. An English textbook, but not a textbook for other subjects, was chosen because of the important role and high status of English in Hong Kong and it is one of the core and major subjects in Hong Kong schools, with pupils have at least one English lesson (of about 35 minutes) every day. While gender representation in the local secondary English textbooks has already been investigated by Lee and Collins (2008), Hong Kong primary English textbooks still have not been studied. The present study involved a descriptive content and linguistic analysis of a Hong Kong Primary One (i.e. grade one) English language textbook series. Primary One textbooks were chosen for analysis because Primary One is the first year of primary schooling and the pupils' values and attitudes may be easily influenced at this stage.

Data and Methods

The textbooks analysed

The chosen series of textbooks included *New Magic 1A* and *New Magic 1B*, which were authored by JoAnn Dionne and published by Oxford University Press (China) Ltd. in 2008 “to support schools in following the 2004 English Language Curriculum Guide for Primary 1-6” (Oxford University Press, 2008), and was selected from the *List of Recommended Primary School Textbooks in English Subject: English Language* published by the Education Bureau (2009a). According to the Education Bureau (2007), all the textbooks listed in this Recommendation List have been examined by the appropriate Reviewing Panels of the Bureau's Textbook Committee and are recommended for use in schools. They have been considered as “acceptable in terms of coverage, content, sequence, exercises, language, illustration and format”. That is, they have been the focus of materials planning in the Hong Kong education system, however, the fit between these textbooks and broader social agendas was not a part of the recommendation. Within the list, although there is another series of textbooks called Primary Longman Elect which was published in 2009 and is the most

currently published one, this series was not selected for analysis because *New Magic* is more commonly used in Hong Kong primary schools. The whole series of *New Magic* textbooks for Primary One students (including *New Magic 1A* and *New Magic 1B*) was analysed as it is used in the two terms, autumn and winter, of Primary One. Excluding the content page and the blank pages in the Main Task at the end, there are 62 pages in both the two books. The 'Picture dictionary', 'Self-assessment', 'Suggested reading list', and 'More words to use' (in *New Magic 1B* only) sections were excluded because of their limited content and only non-human characters can be found. The remaining parts for analysis include all the different units, 'The alphabet' (in *New Magic 1A* only), 'Classroom English', and the 'Main task' sections, and all the written texts and illustrations were analysed.

Data analysis

To answer the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the selected textbooks. The coding categories to be used for data analysis are as follows:

Male and female characters in illustrations: A tally was made of the number of male and female characters in each of the illustrations. The sex of some illustrated characters could not be identified easily. In these cases, the researcher determined the sex based on the names given.

Male and female mentions: These included both male and female names and male and female references represented with personal pronouns, e.g. *he*, *she*, etc. The male and female mentions found in every instance of the texts were counted.

Male and female domestic and occupational roles: Domestic (e.g. father, mother, brother, sister, etc.) and occupation roles (e.g. student, teacher, model) were noted and listed together with the gender of the associated character.

Male and female activities: The activities at school (e.g. drawing, reading) and other activities (e.g. skipping, driving) were noted and listed together with the gender of the associated character.

Male and female descriptions: All nouns and adjectives used with male and female characters were noted and listed with the gender of the associated character.

Order of mention of males and females: The order of mention of males and females within a single phrase (e.g. *He/She* vs. *She/He*) were tallied.

Utterances initiated by male and female speakers: The number of times male and female speakers initiated speech in mixed-sex dialogues was counted. Like Poulou (1997), the term ‘utterances’ which refers to a turn of speech, preceded and followed by other utterances, defined by Gupta and Lee (1989) was adopted.

Functions of the mixed-sex dialogues: Based on the context and the theme of the units, the functions of the mixed-sex dialogues initiated by the male and female speakers were identified.

In order to ensure accurate analysis of the data, the whole textbook series was analysed thoroughly by the researcher twice. Discrepancies of the findings obtained from the two analyses were resolved by reviewing the items again.

Results

The results of the present study were presented in this section and then discussed in the following section.

Male and female characters in illustrations and texts

In the Primary One English textbook series analysed, it could be found that male and female characters were represented almost equally often in illustrations. The total number of occurrences of males and females in the illustrations in the whole series was 176 and 179 respectively (see Table 1). The ratio of males to females in illustrations was 1:1.017.

Table 1: The number and frequency of male/female characters represented in illustrations

	Male characters	Female characters
New Magic 1A	116 (50.2%)	115 (49.8%)
New Magic 1B	60 (48.4%)	64 (51.6%)

Apart from counting the number of males and females represented in the illustrations, the total number of mentions in the texts was also counted. The number of male and female mentions can be identified with the total number of male and female nouns and possessive nouns (e.g. *father, mother, Holly's*), names (e.g. *Harry, Holly*), surnames with titles (e.g. *Miss Tickle*), and pronouns, including subject pronouns (*He, She*), object pronouns (*him, her*) and possessive pronouns (*his, her*). Adding all the mentions of males and females in *New Magic 1A* and *New Magic 1B*, the total number was 202 and 224 respectively (see Table 2). The ratio of males to females in the two books is 1:1.109. However, while there were slightly more male mentions in *New Magic 1A*, *New Magic 1B* had considerably more female than male

mentions.

Table 2: The number and frequency of male/female mentions represented in texts

	Male mentions	Female mentions
New Magic 1A	101 (50.5%)	99 (49.5%)
New Magic 1B	101 (44.7%)	125 (55.3%)

Domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters

The roles of male and female characters portrayed in the illustrations and texts of the textbook series examined are similar. In the domestic roles, people were family members of either sex. Males were usually fathers whereas mothers were the major domestic role for females. Other portrayed domestic roles for males included brother and grandfather, and females were portrayed as sister, grandmother, or daughter.

Other than the domestic roles, male and female characters were portrayed as students in many occurrences (71 and 58 times respectively). They were also represented as models in five and three instances respectively. In other words, in the occupational role, most mentions were students. This relates to the audience for the textbooks, who are mainly primary school students. For teachers, only female teachers could be found. Table 3 shows all the domestic and occupational roles portrayed in the textbook series analysed.

Table 3: Domestic and occupational roles of male and female characters

Domestic & Occupational roles	Males (Number of occurrences)	Domestic & Occupational roles	Females (Number of occurrences)
Father	16	Mother	13
Brother	7	Sister	7
Grandfather	1	Grandmother	4
		Daughter	1
Model	5	Model	3
Student	71	Student	58
		Teacher	24
		Reporter (school magazine)	1

Range of activities of male and female characters

The male and female characters in the textbook series examined were portrayed in a similar range of activities (both indoor and outdoor), though females engaged in a slightly greater

variety of activities (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Range of activities performed by male and female characters

Activities	Males (Number of occurrences)	Activities	Females (Number of occurrences)
Activities at school			
Drawing	3	Drawing	1
Cleaning blackboard	1	Giving instructions (e.g. <i>Close the door</i>)	7
Opening windows	1	Giving orders (e.g. <i>Keep quiet</i>)	6
Throwing rubbish	1	Reading	2
Fighting	1	Turning off lights	1
Reading	1	Talking to a student	1
		Tidying books	1
		Teaching	1
Other activities			
Swimming	2	Swimming	1
Skipping	2	Skipping	1
Making food	3	Shopping	1
Counting	1	Having a barbecue	1
Singing	1	Driving	2
Eating	1	Dancing	2
Playing ball	1	Making food	2
		Playing ball	1
		Singing	5

Lexical and physical representations of male and female characters

In the Primary One textbook series examined, male and female characters were usually portrayed with stereotyped images. In terms of appearance and clothing, males usually have short hair and wear shirts/T-shirts and trousers, while many female characters wear dresses and have long hair. For the size of body, a girl is described as “short and thin” whereas a boy is “tall and fat”, as portrayed in *New Magic 1B*.

Frequency of male/female firstness within single phrases

Lee and Collins (2008) discovered a strong tendency for men to be mentioned first in single

phrases in Hong Kong English textbooks, given that two nouns are paired for sex. This phenomenon can also be found in many instances of the textbook series examined in this study. In the whole series of textbooks, there are 37 instances of male firstness but only 3 instances of female firstness (see Table 5 for details). The ratio of female to male firstness is 1:12.3. While only a few examples of female firstness (e.g. *Witchy and Didi*) can be found, males tend to be mentioned first when two nouns are paired for sex. These examples of male firstness occur in nouns (e.g. *Harry and Holly*), possessive nouns (e.g. *Harry and Holly's first day at school*, *Harry and Holly's birthday*, etc.), subject and object pronouns (e.g. *He is* or *She is*, *him/her*, etc.), and short phrases or sentences (e.g. *Birthday boy(s) and/or girl(s)*, *'He' for a boy and 'She' for a girl*, etc.). Hartman and Judd (1978, p. 390) believe that this ordering of placing the male first “reinforces the second-place status of women” and suggest mixing the order.

Table 5: Number and frequency of instances of male/female firstness within single phrases

	Male firstness	Female firstness
New Magic 1A	27 (96.4%)	1 (3.6%)
New Magic 1B	10 (83.3%)	2 (16.7%)

Number of the utterances and functions of the single-sex/mixed-sex dialogues initiated by male and female characters

The total number of utterances initiated by male and female speakers was counted to determine their speaking opportunities, with an assumption that the more chances to speak, the more visible the character is. As mentioned earlier, Gupta and Lee's (1989) definition of a unit of an utterance was adopted when counting the number of utterances. To simplify the counting, those utterances uttered by more than one person at the same time were excluded from analysis. The utterances were also not considered if their speakers were unknown or not clearly shown. The speaker of an utterance was determined by the direction the speech bubble was pointed to, and the structure of direct speech (e.g. *'It is a lion! Help!'* says the man.). There are only 41 utterances initiated by male speakers, while the total number of utterances initiated by female speakers is 68 (see Table 6 for the number and frequency of utterances initiated by male and female speakers in the textbook series). The ratio of the utterances initiated by the male and female speakers is 1:1.66. This means the female characters are more visible and audible than the male characters in this textbook series.

Table 6: The number of male/female utterances

Male utterances	Female utterances
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New Magic 1A	30 (39%)	47 (61%)
New Magic 1B	11 (34.4%)	21 (65.6%)

The utterances initiated by the male and female speakers were then qualitatively analysed in two situations, either in single-sex dialogues, or in mixed-sex dialogues to identify their discourse functions.

In the whole textbook series examined, not only were there more female utterances, but also more turns involving female speakers (16 turns), compared with the turns with male speakers (8 turns) in the single-sex dialogues, as can be seen in Table 7. However, in the mixed-sex dialogues, the number of turns initiated by males and females is similar, with 7 turns initiated by males and 8 turns initiated by female characters (see Table 8 for details).

Table 7: Number of turns in single-sex dialogues

	Male-only dialogues	Female-only dialogues
New Magic 1A	6	12
New Magic 1B	2	4

Table 8: Number of turns initiated by males or females in mixed-sex dialogues

	No. of turns initiated by males	No. of turns initiated by females
New Magic 1A	5	7
New Magic 1B	2	1

Males and females were also represented in a similar way, without any bias towards either sex in terms of their status. This aspect can be discovered from the functions of the utterances initiated by either male or female speakers in single-sex and mixed-sex dialogues (see Table 9 and Table 10).

Table 9: Functions of the turns initiated by male or female speakers in the single-sex dialogues

Functions of the turns	No. of instances among male speakers	No. of instances among female speakers
Asking for information & giving information	3	3
Requesting & reacting to the request	1	--
Questioning & answering	--	2
Greeting & reacting to the	--	1

greeting		
Asking for permission & accepting	--	2

Table 10: Functions of the utterances initiated by males or females in the mixed-sex dialogues

Functions of the utterances	No. of utterances initiated by males	No. of utterances initiated by females
Asking for information	4	4
Requesting	--	2
Expressing gratitude	--	2
Greeting	1	--
Asking for permission	2	--

In the textbook series examined, asking for information is the most common function in both the single-sex and mixed-sex dialogues. In the single-sex dialogues, a male speaker asks for information and another male speaker gives information, or vice versa between two female speakers. For example, “*Hello! I am Harry. What is your name?*” “*My name is Tim.*”, “*Is it a drawing board?*” “*Yes, it is.*”, etc. The function of asking for permission, followed by agreeing (e.g. “*May I go to the toilet, please?*” “*Yes, sure.*”) can be found in two instances of the single-sex dialogues between two female speakers. Here, the two speakers are of different status, with one as a teacher and another a student. Other functions of the turns initiated by the male/female speakers in the single-sex dialogues are summarized in Table 9.

In the mixed-sex dialogues, there is the same number of male and female utterances that function as asking for information (4 utterances). When the male speaker asks for information (e.g. “*What colour is his cap?*”, “*How many apples are there?*”, etc.), the female speaker responds by giving information (e.g. “*It is green.*”, “*There are seventeen apples.*”). The female characters’ asking for information (e.g. “*What is your name?*”, “*What is it?*”) is also followed by males’ giving information (e.g. “*My name is Joe.*”, “*It is a toy plane.*”).

Apart from the asking for and giving information function, in the mixed-sex dialogues, a male speaker’s greeting is followed by a female’s reaction to his greeting, as can be seen in the example in *New Magic 1A* “*Hello, Emma. How are you?*” “*I am fine, thank you.*” (Dionne, 2008, p. 12). The male speaker’s asking for permission can also be found and is followed by the female’s agreeing, as in the dialogues “*Excuse me. Can I borrow your book, please?*” “*Here you are.*” in *New Magic 1B* (Dionne, 2008, p. 58). Then, in the female-initiated mixed-sex dialogues, two utterances function as requesting, followed by the male speakers’

reactions to the requests. One example of this type of dialogue in *New Magic 1A* is “*Can you spell your name, please?*” “*J-o-e.*” (Dionne, 2008, p. 5). And, two examples of female-initiated dialogues that express gratitude can be found and are followed by the male speakers’ reply to the thanks (e.g. “*Thank you very much.*” “*You are welcome.*”) (Dionne, 2008, p. 58).

Discussion

To investigate gender representation in the currently published textbooks in Hong Kong, a primary English language textbook series was examined in this study.

First of all, it was found that male and female characters were almost equally represented in the texts. Female characters were also represented slightly more than male characters in the illustrations. This aspect differs from Huang’s (2009) study in which there was gender imbalance in the junior high school English textbooks in Taiwan in favour of males. The slightly higher ratio of occurrences of female to male characters in the illustrations may probably be explained by the fact that female teacher characters appeared in many different units of *New Magic 1A* because the contexts were usually at schools or classrooms. Similar to the results of Lee and Collins’s (2008) study which analysed Hong Kong secondary English textbooks, this study shows that the phenomena of female invisibility and male dominance occurred in the earlier textbooks published from the 70’s to the early 21st century do not exist in the textbook series examined.

One interesting phenomenon that could be found in this textbook series is that while female teachers appeared for twenty-four times in both illustrations and texts, no male teachers could be found. Bağlı and Esen (2003, cited in Esen, 2007) believe that it will serve as a factor that reinforces sexism. Whilst teaching is still portrayed as a female-identified occupation, as in Gupta and Lee’s (1989) study, this phenomenon partly reflects the reality in Hong Kong. In 2008/2009 school year, there were 46,385 female teachers and 22,551 male teachers. In primary schools, the ratio of female to male teachers was even greater. According to the figures from the Census and Statistics Department (2009), 77.8% (i.e. 17,509) of the primary school teachers in Hong Kong were female while only 22.2% of them (i.e. 4,982) were male. The phenomenon of only females being portrayed as teachers highlights Kimmel and Messner’s (1995) claim that males are underrepresented at the lower levels of education, since the gender ratio of primary school teachers in Hong Kong is reported as 3.5 females to 1 male. To a certain extent, the textbook series under review in this study reflects this underrepresentation.

Regarding the range of activities of male and female characters, the male and female

characters were portrayed in a similar range of activities. Interestingly, males were portrayed as making food, which was traditionally considered as a stereotyped female domestic activity, in two illustrations. This finding is similar to Esen's (2007) study in which there is an illustration where the mother is cleaning the windows, while the father is ironing in Turkish Life Studies textbook. These cases suggest that the textbook writer has tried to portray the males and females similarly to avoid gender bias that occurred in earlier textbooks. As for the undesirable behaviour such as fighting with others (one instance) and throwing rubbish on the ground (one instance), these activities were performed only by male characters. Nevertheless, with only one instance of each, it is best not to draw any conclusions.

In lexical and physical representations, the male and female characters in the textbooks examined were portrayed with stereotyped images. This finding is in line with Esen's (2007) study in which the female figures were portrayed in skirts and dresses while the number of female figures wearing trousers was very small. On the other hand, most of the male figures were portrayed in suits. However, textbook publishers need to consider their readership, which includes teachers and even parents who may be highly critical of their students and children being exposed to non-conventional images. In this sense, authors, illustrators and publishers may simply be aligning images to public expectations with ultimate concerns being for the bottom line.

Finally, in the investigation of the number of the utterances and functions of the single-sex/mixed-sex dialogues initiated by male and female characters, contrary to Jones et al.'s (1997) study, the quantitative analysis of the utterances of this study shows that there were more utterances initiated by female characters than males. The functions of the utterances initiated by either male or female speakers in single-sex and mixed-sex dialogues were also similar. For example, the number of the utterances whose function was asking for information initiated by males and females was the same. This implies that there was no bias towards either sex.

The results of this study show that these Primary One textbooks do not demonstrate extensive gender bias. Female invisibility, which was a phenomenon of the textbooks published in the early 1970s, did not exist in the textbook series examined here. Females were more visible, with more female characters appearing in illustrations and more utterances spoken by females. In terms of the discourse functions of the utterances, whilst male speakers' asking for information was followed by female speakers' giving information in mixed-sex dialogues, the opposite also occurred at a roughly equal rate. However, in many instances, males were still mentioned first, followed by female mention, within a single phrase when two nouns were paired for sex. This maybe because of traditional forms of expression which often put the

male form before the female one. In other words, the issue is not necessarily gender bias.

Conclusion

The important findings of this study are that males and females were almost equally represented in the textbooks examined. Also, the male and female characters were portrayed in a similar range of activities, though isolated instances of undesirable behaviour were still performed by males. Female invisibility, which was a phenomenon of the textbooks published in the early 1970s, did not exist in this textbook series. Females were even more visible, with more female characters appearing in illustrations and more utterances spoken by females. In terms of the discourse functions of the utterances, whilst male speakers' asking for information was followed by female speakers' giving information in mixed-sex dialogues, the opposite also occurred at a roughly equal rate. An implication that can be drawn from the results is that language textbooks seem to support wider social policy in Hong Kong to promote "equality" and "equal opportunities for all" (Equal Opportunities Commission, n.d.) to avoid either sex being discriminated or treated unfairly.

Also, gender stereotyping or how gender is represented in the textbooks should be an important issue to be considered as part of materials planning both at the system level when the Education Bureau authorises textbooks for use in Hong Kong schools, and at the local school level when teachers and schools select textbooks for their students, given the central roles of textbooks in many primary schools in Hong Kong (Chien & Young, 2007) and the great impact textbooks may have on children's development of values and attitudes. This is especially important for English language textbooks because of the high status of English as a core subject and teaching medium in many Hong Kong schools. Impartiality is suggested as one of the principles in the *Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks* prepared by Education Bureau (2009b). In the guideline, it is stated that "There is not any bias in content, such as over-generalisation and stereotyping" and "The content and illustrations do not carry any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender ..., nor do they suggest exclusion". This important guideline should be highlighted and reiterated in the Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools which is circulated and read by all school teachers in Hong Kong, though "meeting the educational needs and abilities of the students" are equally important (Education Bureau, 2010). The other related issue for the Government or the Education Bureau is that, as a language planning consideration, attention should be given not only to language and curriculum issues, but also to other social objectives such as promoting gender equality. This can be achieved by ensuring the language-learning materials are free of gender bias.

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