

## Heteronormativity and Gender Inequality in Three ESP Textbooks in Thailand: Multimodal Discourse Analysis

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Article information	
<b>Abstract</b>	Educational issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community in Thailand include discrimination, bullying, and many restrictions resulting from heteronormativity, leading to gender inequality, gender stereotypes, and the dominance of heterosexuals. Therefore, this study investigated how heteronormativity and gender representations are constructed as common knowledge in English for specific purposes (ESP) textbooks used in Thailand. It used multimodal discourse analysis to examine the representation of heteronormativity and gender in ESP textbooks. The data were gathered from three Thai authors' ESP textbooks. Accordingly, the discursive and pictorial content of the textbooks was implicitly loaded with the authors' ideologies and worldviews. Multimodal discourse analysis was used to analyze the images from all three textbooks. The portrayal of gender and the construction of heterosexuality as the norm were analyzed. The analysis revealed reinforcement of gender stereotypes, as women were associated mainly with nurturing matters, and men were leaders. Furthermore, the images of male and female couples upheld heteronormativity, defined as the assumption that heterosexuality is the natural and default norm, by normalizing them as typical couples. On the basis of these findings, gender equality should be promoted, and content which may perpetuate negative, discriminatory, or prejudiced stereotypes or views on gender should be removed.
<b>Keywords</b>	ESP textbook, heteronormativity, gender inequality, multimodal discourse analysis, stereotypes
<b>APA citation:</b>	Kathapant, A. & Vathanalaoha, K. (2026). Heteronormativity and gender inequality in three ESP textbooks in Thailand: Multimodal discourse analysis. <i>PASAA</i> , 74, 1–23.

### 1. Introduction

Thailand's gender equality has improved, but issues remain. Wongsantativanich (2018) found that two English language teaching (ELT) textbooks in Thailand reflected a male-dominated perspective. All the textbooks portrayed men as family leaders, while women were nurturers. Similarly, a study by Cho and Yoo-Kyoung (2020) explored the manifestation of gender in the illustrations in Thai high school textbooks. Findings suggested the presence of

gender biases reinforcing stereotyped roles. The findings also pointed to the dominance of heteronormativity.

Thailand is a country that supports heteronormativity, which is the acceptance of heterosexuality as the norm (Tang et al, 2020). In turn, this norm gives preference to heterosexual individuals, creating stereotypical roles for females and males in society; and marginalizing LGBTQ individuals, especially in education. Accordingly, heteronormative images are omnipresent in textbooks, resulting in the underrepresentation of LGBTQ images (Suebkinnon & Sukying, 2021). Heteronormativity may often be perpetuated through pedagogical discourse (Mattheis et al., 2022). Worthen (2016) argued that heteronormativity privileges heterosexuals and creates negative stigmatization, prejudices, and homophobia toward non-heterosexuality.

While male and female representation in textbooks has been widely researched, research on heteronormativity in Thai ELT textbooks remains limited. It is necessary to understand that heterosexuality tends to be presented as normal, which leads to its generalization and normalization. When people perceive heterosexuality as the norm, they may come to view only heterosexual relationships to be natural and normal. Children may learn societal gender expectations from school textbooks. Kobia (2009) stated that textbooks are a powerful tool for influencing learners' perceptions of gender roles in society. Hence, the development of learners' beliefs and values regarding gender are of great importance in determining the role of textbooks. Castro and Sujak (2014) found that heteronormativity in course materials and instructional strategies could affect students' views, attitudes, and concepts.

This research aimed to reveal how heteronormativity and gender representations are reproduced and normalized into conventional knowledge through English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks in Thailand. It examined heteronormativity and gender representations in three ESP textbooks using multimodal discourse analysis (MDA). MDA focuses on the construal of meaning through modes other than language. Fairclough (2001) stated that textbooks construct subjectivities, and that producers' ideologies and worldviews could constrain the selection and organization of content through their linguistic descriptions and semiotic illustrations. Therefore, three in-house textbooks were selected because Thai professors produced them, and the textbooks were likely to contain indications of the professors' worldviews or ideologies regarding sexuality. In line with the objectives, the two research questions below were the focus of this study.

1. How is heteronormativity represented in three Thai ESP textbooks?
2. To what extent is gender inequality depicted in three Thai ESP textbooks?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 ESP Textbooks**

Textbooks are pedagogical materials that serve as sources of academic knowledge. There are various types of ELT textbooks. Nevertheless, English teaching in Thailand is categorized as English as a foreign language (EFL), which can be divided into general English and English for specific purposes (ESP).

In addition to serving pedagogical purposes, Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger (2015) argued that language textbooks are not ideologically neutral; ideology is embedded within the text and the images. Moore (2020) explained that the alignment of textbooks with the dominant

ideology results from the mass production of textbooks and the intention to create profit. Additionally, Kaur (2018) claimed that textbooks are one of the fundamental sources that perpetuate gender stereotypes and prejudices. Castro and Sujak (2014) suggested that, while students learn from textbooks, they simultaneously deepen their understanding of the world, which constrains their options and perspectives. It could be concluded that course material and instructional strategies might influence students' views, attitudes, and concepts regarding behavioral expectations. Moreover, they could implicitly promote gender inequality and heteronormativity.

## **2.2 Heteronormativity**

Heteronormativity in society results from historical socio-political attitudes against homosexuality, positioning LGBTQ individuals as deviants or delinquents. Heteronormativity refers to social norms that advantage heterosexuals and assume that the "default" sexual orientation is straight. It implies that "normal" relationships exist only between men and women, leading people to unconsciously categorize others' genders based on these norms (Davies & Neustifter, 2023). There are several causes and effects of heteronormativity. Mattheis et al. (2022) noted that heteronormativity is created and sustained through social and educational discourses. They also found that teachers were often constrained in their teaching and classroom activities due to the prevalence of heteronormative content. Therefore, this research investigates heteronormativity and gender inequality in ESP textbooks.

### **2.2.1 Heteronormativity in Textbooks in Thailand**

Recent studies have exposed an imbalance between the number of males and females in Thai education textbooks, and have shown how textbooks perpetuate gender stereotypes. One of the first studies on this topic in Thailand was conducted by Na Pattalung (2008), who examined ESL textbooks by Thai authors and found that they promoted gender stereotypes, including portrayals of male characters as physically strong and successful. Similarly, Bhattarachaiyakorn and Boonthong (2017) found gender bias and a lack of equal representation in an ELT textbook. Their findings focused on the possible effects of these portrayals on students' attitudes toward the opposite sex. Khanunthong's (2021) study of four high school textbooks in Thailand found that males were associated with more positive social positions, activities, and characteristics than females. Additionally, Bhattarachaiyakorn and Pimprajit (2023) found that textbooks published by the Thai Ministry of Education portrayed aggression and competitiveness as male characteristics, which are often associated with difficult occupations, whereas females were portrayed as nurturing, primarily as mothers. Altogether, these studies highlight the widely accepted and significant differences in how males and females are depicted in these learning materials, and hence the urgent need for more balanced representations.

The effects of heteronormativity are widespread and affect a significant portion of the Thai educational system. For instance, Souto-Manning and Lanza (2019) suggested that the Thai school curriculum promoted heterosexual ideas, leading to the marginalization of individuals who do not conform to traditional gender and sexuality norms. Lin et al. (2020) characterized the education context in Thailand as an unavoidably heteronormative sphere. The current study examines the ideologies, beliefs, and values regarding heteronormativity and unequal gender representations in textbooks authored by Thai professors. The analysis

examines images; thus, multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) was employed to investigate how heteronormativity was portrayed in textbooks and to analyze the depiction of male and female images in terms of power relations.

### **2.3 Multimodal Discourse Analysis**

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is an approach to discourse that focuses on the construal of meanings through different modes other than language (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). MDA examines images in three different functions: representational, interactive, and compositional.

#### **2.3.1 Three Functions in Multimodal Discourse Analysis**

Representational function refers to representing the world through humans' experiences. It can be divided into narrative and conceptual processes. The narrative processes refer to participants (actors) and actions (vectors), while the conceptual processes refer to images in which no action is performed (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001).

Analysis of the interactive function examines viewers' perceptions of images. Interpersonal relations are codified through several choices: gaze, social distance, and camera angle (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The gaze refers to an actor's gaze, either directed at the viewer (demanding) or indirect (offering). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) argue that an indirect gaze in images results in passive information absorption because actors do not make eye contact and do not require interaction. This indirect gaze invites viewers to perceive the actors as objects of contemplation or symbols of idealism. Frame size and social distance are closely related. Social distance, on the other hand, is the interpersonal meaning established through visual framing and the levels of intimacy or detachment between the viewer and the represented participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Social distance is primarily realized through changes in frame size. Frame size refers to the degree of visual framing applied to actors (e.g., close-up, medium shot, long shot). Furthermore, Camera height can convey power: high shots make a subject appear small, whereas low shots make it appear imposing and powerful. The eye-level angle indicates an equal relationship.

The compositional function is concerned with how different parts make up the whole of the meaning of a composition. It includes information value, salience, and scene frame. Information value refers to the position of elements in the scene, salience refers to the importance of elements, and scene frame refers to the connections among elements (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

Prejudice and unequal status resulting from gender stereotypes have led to gender representation issues worldwide, particularly in developing countries in Asia (Andini et al., 2023). Andini et al. (2023) examined an Indonesian EFL textbook from 2017 and found that there were gender imbalances, with males being more dominant in roles and depictions, including in professional or leadership roles, while females were underrepresented or limited to traditional roles. Such depictions perpetuate stereotypes and could contribute to further inequality. These results show the importance of addressing gender bias in educational materials. In the same vein, Yang and Yan (2020) analyzed primary school English textbooks in Hong Kong and found gender bias in 126 professional and 81 non-professional occupational images. Males were depicted as having agentic qualities in such roles as architects and doctors, while females were portrayed as having communal qualities in professions such as nurses and

teachers. Non-professional males, such as farmers and firefighters, were also portrayed in assertive roles, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes.

From the literature review, ELT textbooks are influenced by heteronormativity. Therefore, this research aims to analyze ESP textbooks, a subcategory of ELT textbooks, to explore how heteronormativity and gender are represented within.

### 3. Methodology

The current study employed a qualitative approach, aiming to investigate and raise awareness of heteronormativity in Thai ESP textbooks by using MDA to explore elements in three textbooks.

#### 3.1 Data

This research selected three ESP textbooks compiled by professors from one university in Northern Thailand. Thai professors wrote textbooks to address resource shortages in these faculties and to meet the requirements for academic promotion. These ESP textbooks were purposively selected as samples: ENGL 222 (English for Fine Arts), written in 2015 with 215 pages; ENGL 223 (English for Humanities and Mass Communication), written in 2015 with 65 pages; and ENGL 292 (English for Hotel Business), written in 2023 with 235 pages. They were chosen because their contents are related to the study of society and the relationships among people within society. These textbooks were designed to improve students' language proficiency in English for future occupations appropriate to their faculties. Therefore, these textbooks are meant to help students learn and apply English in their future careers.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

Two research questions were addressed using MDA. The analysis focused on representational, interactive, and compositional functions. The first research question (RQ [1]) was answered by analyzing images of couples, and the second research question (RQ [2]) was answered by comparing images of males and females. The images in three textbooks were categorized into three MDA functions.

The representational function was analyzed to better understand how the images conveyed specific aspects of sexuality in the real world. The processes involved were narrative and conceptual. For the representational function, the occupations portrayed in each image and the situations of the characters were analyzed to examine gender inequality.

Furthermore, the interactive function was analyzed in terms of gaze, frame size, and vertical camera angle to determine the relationship between the images and the viewers.

Lastly, the compositional function was examined for salience, information value, and scene frame to show how the images were presented and how these compositional choices may shape viewers' perceptions. As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) explained, the way images are presented can influence how people interpret them.

### 4. Results

Textbook 222 (English for Fine Arts) contains 230 illustrations, of which 69 depicted human forms. The images were separated into 54 narrative processes and 15 conceptual processes. There were 22 direct-gaze and 47 indirect-gaze images. In terms of social distance, there were eight close shots, 39 medium shots, and 22 long shots. There were three low-angle

shots, 62 eye-level shots, and four high-angle shots. There were 27 images in the informational value condition and 34 in the salience and scene frame conditions. These results are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1***Textbook 222: English for Fine Arts*

Representational		Interactive		Compositional	
Images	Actors		Images	Images	Actors
Narrative Processes: 54	M: 21	Gaze	Direct: 22	Informational Value	M: 8
	F: 24		Indirect: 47		F: 18
	Both: 9				Both: 1
Conceptual Processes: 15	M: 5	Social Distance	Close-up: 8	Salience & Scene Frame	M: 15
	F: 9		Medium: 39		F: 17
	Both: 1		Long: 22		Both: 2
		Camera Angle	Low: 3 Eye-level: 62 High: 4		

There are 75 images and two videos embedded in Textbook 223 (English for Mass Communication and Humanities), which were classified into 23 narrative processes and two conceptual processes. Of the images, eight depicted direct gaze and 17 depicted indirect gaze. There were 17 medium shots, four long shots, and four close-ups. Camera angles included three low-angle shots, 20 eye-level shots, and two high-angle shots. With respect to the subject, there were 18 images and 17 images for information value and scene framing, respectively. These results are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2***Textbook 223: English for Mass Communication and Humanities*

Representational		Interactive		Compositional	
Images	Actors		Images	Images	Actors
Narrative Processes: 23	M: 4	Gaze	Direct: 8	Informational Value	M: 4
	F: 7		Indirect: 17		F: 7
	Both: 12				Both: 7
Conceptual Processes: 2	M: 1	Social Distance	Close-up: 4	Salience & Scene Frame	M: 3
	F: 1		Medium: 17		F: 7
	Both: 0		Long: 4		Both: 7
		Camera Angle	Low: 3 Eye-level: 20 High: 2		

Textbook 292 (English for Hotel Business) contains 174 images, with 50 featuring people. These images were categorized into 34 narrative processes and 16 conceptual processes. Gaze types included 21 with a direct gaze and 29 with an indirect gaze. In terms of shot types, there were four close-ups, 31 medium shots, and 15 long shots. Camera angles

included two low, 43 eye-level, and five high. For compositional function, there were 29 images with informational values. The salience and scene frame included 27 images. These results are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Textbook 292: English for Hotel Business*

Representational		Interactive		Compositional	
Images	Actors	Images		Images	Actors
Narrative Processes: 34	M: 8	Gaze	Direct: 21	Informational Value	M: 15
	F: 8		Indirect: 29		F: 9
	Both: 18				Both: 5
Conceptual Processes: 16	M: 8	Social	Close-up: 4	Salience & Scene Frame	M: 12
	F: 5	Distance	Medium: 31		F: 10
	Both: 3		Long: 15		Both: 5
		Camera	Low: 2		
		Angle	Eye-level: 43		
			High: 5		

## 5. Discussion

The discussion has three parts: representational, interpersonal, and compositional analysis. Gender inequality and heteronormativity are examined in each part.

### 5.1 Representational Function Analysis

#### 5.1.1 Narrative Processes Analysis

#### Figure 1

*The Narrative Process of Heteronormativity in Textbook 222*



Note: From Pongpom, J. (2015). *ENGL 001222 English for fine arts* (p. 28). Union Offset Printing House.

In Textbook 222, an image represents heteronormativity. Figure 1 shows a male and a female actor, emphasizing a heterosexual couple. The image depicts a man and a woman standing above the city. The couple is seen standing over the city, and the couple are bigger than the city itself, making clear that this traditional couple is a prominent representation of society. The image supports the concept that relationships are between men and women. Moreover, heteronormativity is apparent when only one couple is represented, and they are a man and a woman. Such images suggest that a normal relationship is only between males and females.

The concept of heteronormativity describes the social mechanisms that perpetuate heterosexual norms and marginalize LGBTQ people (Kuhar, 2016). It reveals the ways that the social structures and cultural entail have bolstered heterosexual privilege and have consequently restrained the experiences and the freedoms of others who do not conform to these norms.

## Figure 2

### *The Narrative Process of Male and Female Images in Textbook 222*






Note: From Pongpom, J. (2015). *ENGL 001222 English for fine arts* (pp. 69, 94, 116, 130, and 167). Union Offset Printing House

There are 20 female characters in Textbook 222; 10 were workers, but only two are artists, and the rest were office workers. In contrast, most male actors (six of eight) are portrayed as artists. Accordingly, artists are associated with descriptors such as: creative, hardworking, resourceful, conscientious, etc. (Liu, 2008). Meanwhile, office workers are associated with descriptors such as: hardworking, reliable, motivated, able to work in a team, and as good communicators (Kim et al., 2011). While both sets of attributes are positively valued, they are not equally distributed across occupational roles. Artistic occupations are more often associated with creativity and higher-order thinking, while office work is linked to coordination and support functions. Since these characteristics are socially associated with varying degrees of cognitive and symbolic value, this tendency can create a hierarchy in which some roles are discursively positioned as more prestigious than others. Despite the higher number of female characters in Textbook 222, the number of women in creative professional positions was limited (see Figure 2). This pattern might indicate a gendered distribution of symbolic authority, in which male characters were more often associated with intellectual or creative distinction. In contrast, female characters were more often placed in structured organizational roles. The difference does not imply that office work inherently lacks creativity, but the textbook semiotically orders professional identities, potentially privileging some forms of intellectual visibility over others.

Similar results were also found in the analysis of Textbook 223. Heteronormativity is illustrated in the advertisement video in Textbook 223. The video, which lasts 1 minute and 13 seconds, effectively conveys the traditional social expectation that a boy has to become a man. It reinforces the idea that acceptable relationships are only between men and women. The accompanying lyrics further reinforce this message and contributed to heteronormativity, as highlighted in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Old Spice's Lyrics and Images*

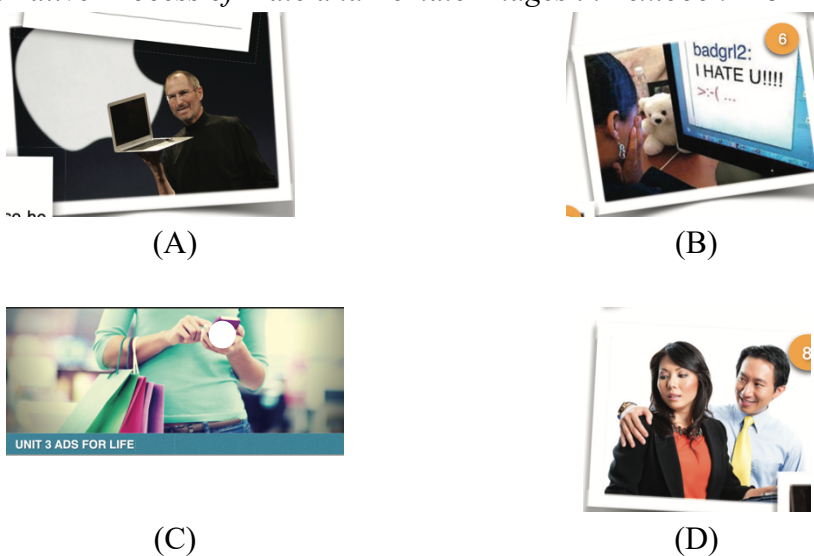
Clauses	Images	Lyrics	Interpretation
1		"Now, my sweet son's sprayed into a man."	A boy uses this body spray to become a man.
2		"When our sons have fun with women and misbehave."	A boy will become a man when he starts dating a woman.
3		"Now he's kissing all the women ..." "Now he's touching, kissing, feeling all the women."	This emphasizes that a boy needs to socialize with women to become a man.

Note: From Old Spice. (2014) *Smellcome to manhood commercial* [video]. in Sangangamsakun, T., & Wichaidij, S. (2015). *ENGL 001223 English for Humanities and Mass Communication*. Print Express Thai by Lannamedia.

The first clause expresses the expectation that a boy would grow into manhood. The second and third describe acts that demonstrate how a boy can become a man. Moreover, the lyrics also indicate that a boy needs to kiss, touch, and be intimate with women in order to be seen as a man. The third clause upholds heteronormativity by showing a male and a female together. Lester (2014) stated that gender and sexuality in the media are usually centered on heteronormativity, with codes of fixed binaries and the erasure of queer experiences. Accordingly, such representations are part of a cultural narrative that ignores the complex multiplicity of human experience, and limit societal understanding and acceptance of queer people's lived experiences.

**Figure 3**

*The Narrative Process of Male and Female Images in Textbook 223*

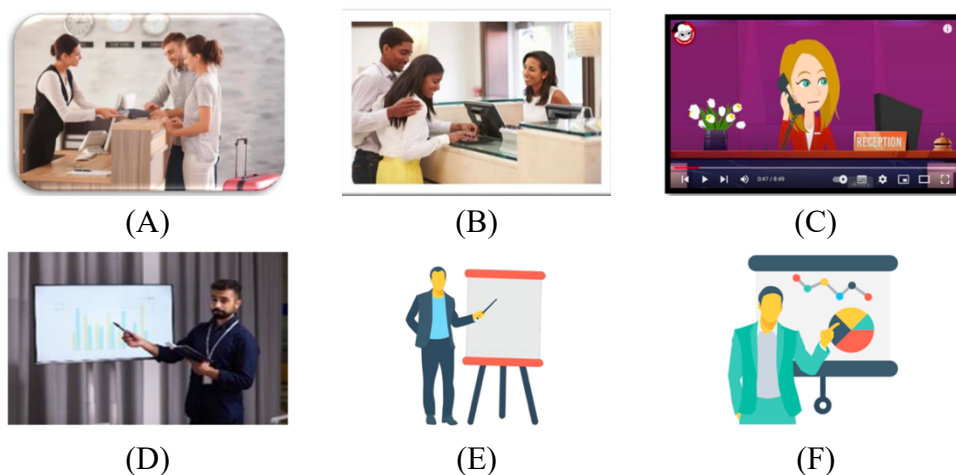


Note: From Sangangamsakun, T., & Wichaidij, S. (2015). *ENGL 001223 English for humanities and mass communication* (pp. 6, 11, 20, 22, & 57). Print Express Thai by Lannamedia.

In Textbook 223, there are four male actors and seven female actors. Gender inequality is evident in the textbook's portrayal of one female actor as a victim of online bullying (Figure 3 [B]) and another as a shopper (Figure 3 [C]). Furthermore, Figure 3 (D) depicts sexual harassment, portraying a woman as a victim. The disparate depictions of gender in the images may distort viewers' perceptions of how men and women are represented across occupational roles. Makarova et al. (2019) noted that when women encountered biased imagery repeatedly, it appeared to significantly discourage them from pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as leadership roles and other fields traditionally occupied by males. Moreover, continuous exposure to visual content that undermines the suitability of gender-based violence might promote a process of desensitization that ultimately contributes to the institutionalization of such behaviors in society. Images depicting gender inequality may influence public perceptions and occupational stereotypes, which may in turn perpetuate a biased understanding of career roles (Kay et al., 2015). This, in turn, highlights the need for a critical examination of media representations and their potential ramifications for gender equity in professional spheres.

#### Figure 4

*The Narrative Process of Male and Female Images in Textbook 292*



Note: From Tadwong, D. (2023). *ENGL 001292 English for hotel business* (pp. 65, 78, 89, 168, 208, & 215). Union Offset Printing House.

In Textbook 292, Figures 4 (A) and (B) effectively reinforce heteronormativity by depicting men and women as couples. Hogan (2024) stated that couples can be recognized by nonverbal signals including proximity, holding hands, and affectionate gestures, all of which are frequently the domain of romantic relationships. These signals play a significant role in conveying emotions and deepening connections between couples. The way these couples openly travel, check in, and lodge together implies their marriage or in-relationship status. Therefore, these images establish that a man and a woman are in a normal relationship. However, many non-heterosexual individuals and couples often feel compelled to conceal these aspects of their identities to avoid judgment, adversely impacting their relationships and self-expression. Especially in public, they might find that their identities are not fully accepted.

Gender-based divisions of occupational types may also demonstrate gender inequality. The female actors in Figures 4 (A), (B), and (C) are receptionists. The role of receptionist is

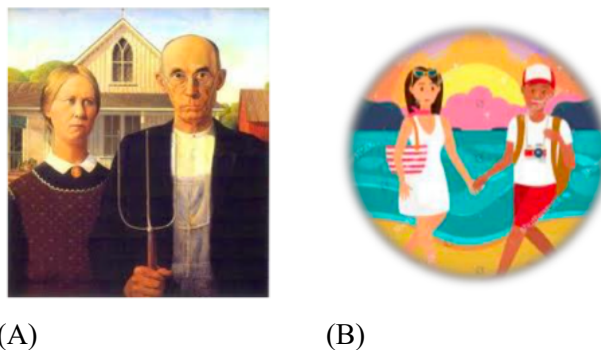
related to nurturing. As Neuwelt et al. (2016) stated, receptionists represent caregivers as they must fulfill customers' requests and make them feel relaxed. Meanwhile, Figures 4 (D), (E), and (F) show working male actors gesturing toward boards and graphs. Vogel and Viale (2018) explained that working experience, knowledge, and proficiency are required to deliver a presentation. Hence, the working male actors in Figure 4 are portrayed as performing occupations that require such skills. The representations of gender roles in various occupations might contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, as women are frequently depicted in nurturing roles. Simultaneously, men are often seen as having more complicated and challenging work. This dichotomy perpetuates traditional stereotypes and contributes to gender-based perceptions of the value of certain professional roles.

### 5.1.2 Conceptual Processes Analysis

The conceptual processes analysis comprised two images: one from Textbook 222 and one from Textbook 292. Textbook 223 contains no image that portrays both a male and a female actor together.

#### Figure 5

*Images of the Conceptual Processes in Textbooks 222 and 292*



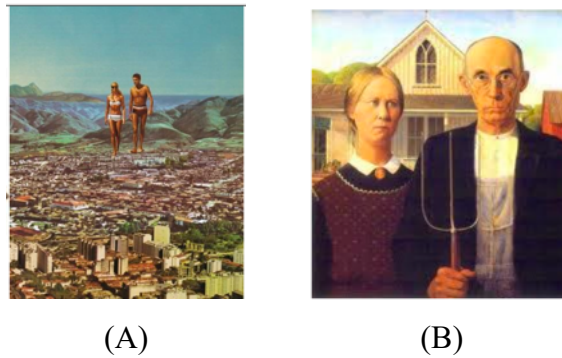
Note: From Pongpom, J. (2015). *ENGL 001222 English for fine arts* (p. 13). Union Offset Printing House.  
From Tadwong, D. (2023). *ENGL 001292 English for hotel business* (p. 45). Union Offset Printing House.

Figure 5 (A) was taken from Textbook 222, while Figure 5 (B) was taken from Textbook 292. Both figures center a couple in the visual frame, thus reinforcing their centrality. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argued that the rigid portrayal of an actor in a fixed position, without explicit action, could preclude the nuanced expression of meanings or social positions. Consequently, this theoretical framework suggests that these images function as representations of normative ideals in romantic partnerships. The actors, a male and a female, conform to heteronormative standards, shaping the audience's perception and reinforcing dominant societal values pertaining to romantic relationships. The consequences of such visual representations extend beyond aesthetic appreciation; they also profoundly shape cultural narratives about intimacy and partnership in society.

### 5.2 Interactive Function Analysis

Interactive function analysis concerns the relationships between the image, the creator, and the viewer. In other words, it examines how viewers perceive images. There are several choices that can codify interpersonal relations, namely: gaze, frame size, and vertical camera angle.

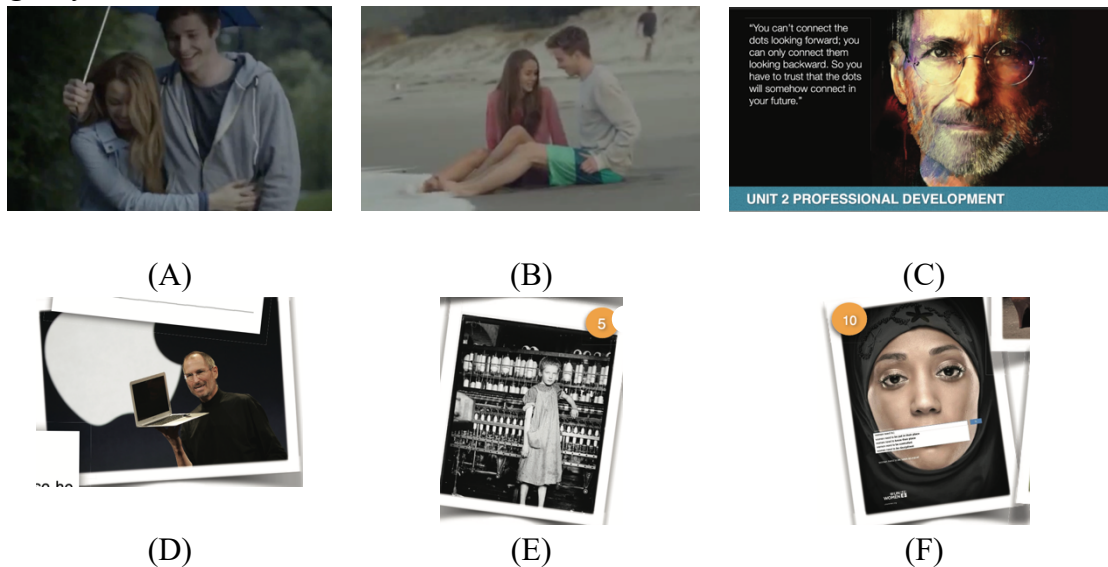
**Figure 6**  
*Images of the Interactive Function in Textbook 222*



Note: From Pongpom. J. (2015). *ENGL 001222 English for fine arts* (pp. 28, 53, & 103). Union Offset Printing House.

A couple with an indirect gaze is presented in Figure 6 (A). This indirect gaze offers information to viewers without making any demands of them (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Thus, it creates a disconnect between the subjects depicted and the audience, leading the audience to perceive the relationship as idealized. In contrast, in Figure 6 (B), a man shows a direct gaze, while the female shows an indirect gaze. This contrast suggests that the man has more potential to attract viewers and engage them. Eye level in both figures fosters a sense of personal affiliation and identification with the subjects. This suggests that the relationship depicted is considered typical. Such representation of heterosexuals may serve to marginalize non-heterosexual identities, leading to a feeling of invisibility or othering. Such images of heteronormativity can lead to an internalization of biases, especially among LGBTQ individuals who may feel the need to abide by heteronormative norms.

**Figure 7**  
*Images of the Interactive Function in Textbook 223*



Note: From Sangangamsakun, T., & Wichaidij, S. (2015). *ENGL 001223 English for humanities and mass communication* (pp. 6 & 57). Print Express Thai by Lannamedia.

From Old Spice. (2014) *Smellcome to manhood commercial* [video]. in Sangangamsakun, T., & Wichaidij, S. (2015). *ENGL 001223 English for humanities and mass communication*. Print Express Thai by Lannamedia.

Figures 7 (A) and (B) depict images representing heteronormativity in a medium shot and a long shot respectively. The video originates from Western society, and as Kimport (2012) explained, Western societies emphasize couple-oriented norms, reflecting symbolic heteronormativity that promotes romantic pairings between men and women. Therefore, the contents of these images were interpreted as couples. The medium and long shots portray their gestures of fondness and tenderness. These images were also categorized as indirect gaze. According to Hu and Luo (2016), the indirect gaze represents idealism by drawing a boundary between idealism and realism. The idealism suggested in the images implies that the only normal and proper relationship is between a man and a woman. As the indirect gaze disconnects viewers from the human subjects depicted, viewers may perceive their relationship as idealistic.

The male actors in the two images are Steve Jobs (Figures 7 [C] and [D]), while the female actors in Figures 7 (E) and (F) are portrayed as victims of various crimes. These female actors stare straight at the camera (direct gaze), begging for help from the viewer to escape from their situations: child labor and systemic oppression. Clay-Warner and Edgemon (2020) reported that women’s victimization rates consistently and significantly exceeded those of men. In contrast, the image of Steve Jobs (Figure 7 [C]) aligns with the theme of “professional development,” suggesting that he symbolizes success and career development. The image reinforces this idea by using an eye-level perspective to capture his self-assured facial expression. The medium shot in Figure 7 (D) portrays Steve Jobs with his product, a MacBook, and the Apple logo he created. The medium shot is specifically employed to associate him with his business. This may highlight his accomplishments and portray him as a successful businessman. As he is male, this may also reflect societal gender stereotypes.

## Figure 8

*Images of the Interactive Function in Textbook 292*



Note: From Tadwong, D. (2023). *ENGL 001292 English for hotel business* (pp. 7, 9, 65, 78, & 89). Union Offset Printing House.

Within Textbook 292, 12 male images and four female images were found. The greater number of male images suggests that men are more potent, prompting viewers to engage as they look directly at them, and requiring attention or a response (Figure 8 [A]). Seven female actors and three male actors are portrayed with an indirect gaze, while one male with a direct

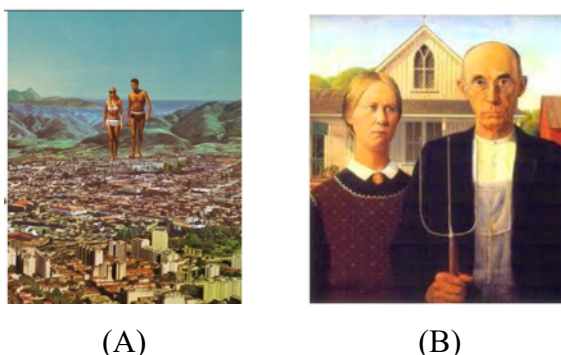
gaze. This gaze invites viewers to explore the images, which may present females as objects for viewers to contemplate, as shown in Figures 8 (B) and (C).

The indirect gaze analysis in Textbook 292 also implies heteronormativity, as the depicted heterosexual couples similarly exhibit an indirect gaze (see Figures 8 [D], [E], and [F]). Furthermore, the medium shots portray indirect gazes, inviting viewers to observe their facial expressions as well as the happiness and enjoyment in their gestures. These heteronormative images suggest that this kind of relationship is typical and joyful. According to Hu and Luo's statement (2016), heterosexual couples are portrayed as being in idealistic relationships, which is supported by the images' strong suggestion of an intangible yet undeniable link between happiness and relationships. It conveys a sense of fulfillment that people might experience after forming a relationship, implying that a man and a woman together represent a typical, happy, and pleasant relationship. Heteronormative imagery, as it is perpetuated through media and cultural representations, reinforces societal norms, which in turn shape individuals' actions and collective attitudes toward them (Rossi, 2011). These norms often create standards of acceptability, which might marginalize non-heterosexual identities.

### 5.3 Compositional Function Analysis

#### Figure 9

*Compositional Function of Heteronormativity in Textbook 222*



Note: From Pongpom. J. (2015). *ENGL 001222 English for fine arts* (pp. 28, 53, & 103). Union Offset Printing House.

In Figures 9 (A) and (B), the heterosexual couples are aligned in the middle of the pictures. Positioning of a heterosexual couple at the center of an image indicates the prioritization of heteronormative relationships (Lovelock, 2018). This practice reflects society's larger patterns of marginalizing and silencing homosexuality and could also contribute to the erasure of a wide range of sexual and gender identities in visual media.

Moreover, the unusual size of the couple (Figure 9 [A]) and the foregrounding of the couple in front of the house in Figure 9 (B) makes these couples salient in the images. Images that privilege heteronormativity decisively enforce the view that heterosexual relations and binary gender roles are normative. This could contribute to the normalization of exclusionary views toward non-heteronormative identities.

**Figure 10***Images of the Compositional Function in Textbook 222*

Note: From Pongpom, J. (2015). *ENGL 001222 English for fine arts*. (pp. 13, 43, 69, 82, 83, & 171). Union Offset Printing House

In Textbook 222, the analysis of functions of composition in the images revealed underlying gender disparities despite a greater numerical representation of females. As shown in Figures 10 (A), (B), and (C), male actors are visually prioritized in attention through contrasting colors, foreground placement, and salience within the frame. These compositional choices make them remarkably more visible and represent importance, authority, or centrality. In contrast, the female actors are usually visually marginalized. For example, in Figure 10 (D), a female subject was situated standing behind Post-it notes, literally pushing her into the background and diminishing her importance. Similarly, Figures 10 (E) and 10 (F) place female actors along the edges of the images, reducing their salience. However, the portrayals of female actors contrast with the paintings in both images. They are more visually prominent due to their vivid colors and the central placements, making them more salient. This composition could imply that, although there are more women (in Table 2), their importance is reduced in terms of the visual representation. Such arrangement and priority imply that, despite women being present in larger numbers (as shown in Table 2), their significance is minimized. Such portrayals are consistent with patterns observed in studies of visual media, which frequently feature women who lack agency and, as such, reinforce traditional gender norms and perpetuate implicit biases regarding gender roles (Mills & Mustapha, 2015). This form of visual framing normalizes male authority and female marginality while impacting viewers' perceptions of gendered social value and visibility.

**Figure 11***Compositional Function of Heteronormativity in Textbook 223*

Note: From Old Spice. (2014) *Smellcome to manhood commercial* [video]. in Sangangamsakun, T., & Wichaidij, S. (2015). *ENGL 001223 English for humanities and mass communication*. Print Express Thai by Lannamedia.

Analysis of Textbook 223 produced a similar finding as the instances of female imagery outnumbered those of male imagery. The video advertisement for Old Spice reaffirms heterosexuality as the norm. By repeatedly placing heterosexual couples in the center of every scene, the advertisement creates a feeling that these relationships are not only typical, but also epidemically common (Figures 11 [A], [B], [C]). These heteronormative ideals may cause psychological pressure for individuals who do not conform to societal expectations, especially in their quest for identity. Boyer and Lorenz (2020) highlighted the possible mental health consequences of these sorts of pressures, including anxiety and depression. As a result, members of the LGBTQ community may feel ashamed, inadequate, or confused about their own individual identities.

Figures 11 (D), (E), and (F) present women as mothers exhibiting nurturing behaviors. The video uses unusual placements to grab viewers' attention. Gestalt theory holds that unusual representations are more likely to draw viewers' attention (Chuang et al., 2023). Figure 11 (D) places the mother between the heterosexual couple and the center of the frame. Figure 11 (E) places the mother who has unusually fallen from the sky and is lying on the grass behind the couple, and Figure 11 (F) places the mother on a beach in the water while wearing her ordinary clothes. Besides the placements, the textbook uses color to emphasize the presence of these mothers. The mother in Figure 11 (E) wears a bright-colored outfit, contrasting with the green background. In Figure 11 (F), the mother wears a red shirt, which draws viewers' attention more quickly (Anderson & Maier, 2019). Through color and positioning, these mothers capture viewers' attention and emphasize their role in nurturing and motherhood. This maternal role is depicted explicitly in the video, in which the mothers care for their children. Wherever their children go, these mothers are always by their side.

Furthermore, the mother's facial expression in Figure 11 (D) indicates unhappiness. Bershtling and Strier (2022) stated that the relationship between mothers and sons is characterized by profound emotional interconnectedness and by the influence of societal narratives regarding masculinity. These elements may influence how mothers perceive and

respond to their sons' emotional expressions in relation to socially constructed expectations of masculinity, which may help explain the mother's expression observed in Figure 11 (D).

### Figure 12

*Images of the Compositional Function in Textbook 223*

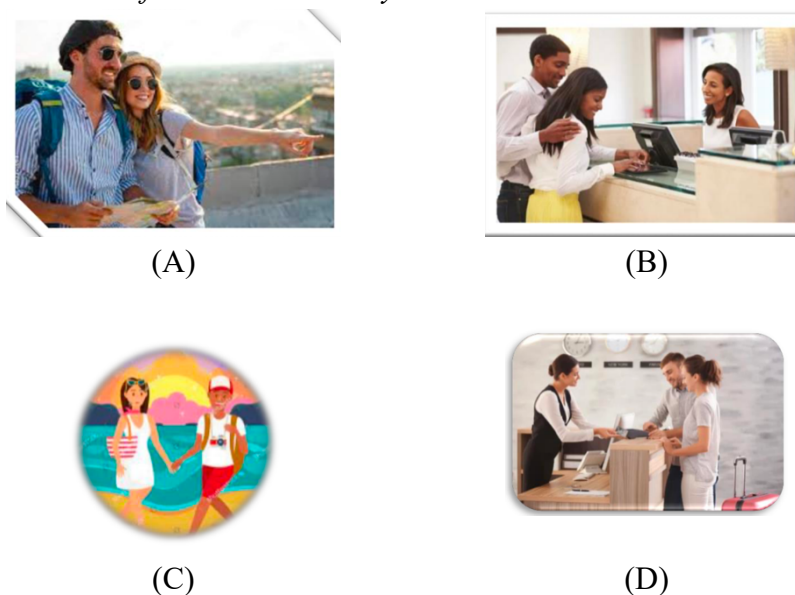


Note: From Sangangamsakun, T., & Wichaidij, S. (2015). *ENGL 001223 English for humanities and mass communication* (p. 57). Print Express Thai by Lannamedia.

The textbook also uses colors to draw viewers' attention. Figures 12 (A) and (B) portray a child wearing red high-heeled shoes and a woman in an orange shirt respectively. Anderson and Maier (2019) stated that red is the fastest color to be recognized. While the victim is a woman, anyone can experience sexual harassment. However, Yasmin (2021) stated that the news of female victims was found to be more sensationalized than that of males. Accordingly, people tend to feel more empathetic towards women. These depictions of women imply that women cannot help themselves, thereby encouraging viewers to address unjust situations even though the rate of female victims is more visible than that of males in the media. However, Burgess-Proctor (2015) argued that societal norms discourage men from seeking help, resulting in fewer reports of male victims. These trends reinforce the stereotype that women are vulnerable, weak, and need protection.

### Figure 13

*Compositional Function of Heteronormativity in Textbook 292*

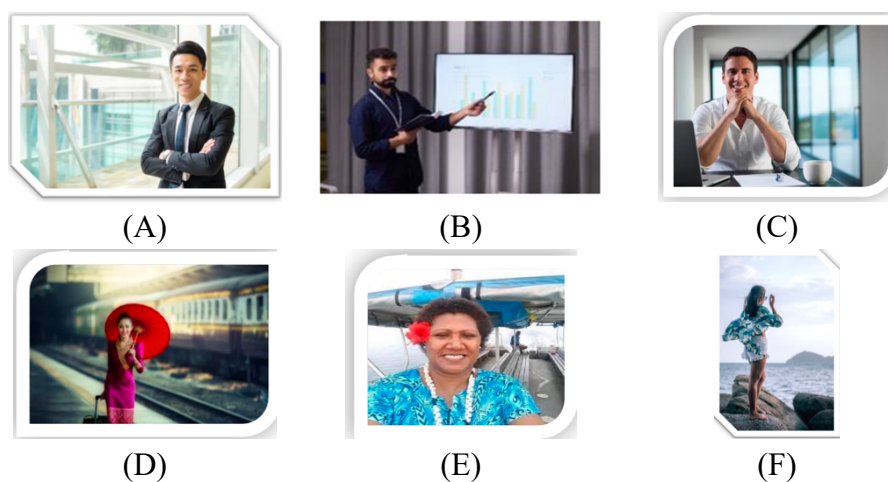


Note: From Tadwong, D. (2023). *ENGL 001292 English for hotel business*. (pp. 8, 78, 81, & 91.) Union Offset Printing House.

Heterosexual couples portrayed in Textbook 292 always wear bright colors (Figure 13). Elliot's (2015) study found that bright colors may be metaphorically linked to positive traits like goodness, morality, and purity. Hence, when people see images of heterosexual couples wearing these colors, such as red, yellow, white, and blue, they tend to ascribe positive traits to them, reinforcing the idea that such relationships are normal, sound, and pure. Additionally, images of heterosexual couples were usually strongly framed and positioned at the center of the image, as depicted in Figure 13 (C). Heteronormative frameworks reinforce rigid gender roles and behaviors, which as Schilt and Westbrook (2009) asserted, may contribute to the ongoing discrimination faced by transgender and nonbinary individuals. Such discrimination might create limitations for LGBTQ and nonbinary individuals and exclude them from society.

### Figure 14

*Images of the Compositional Function in Textbook 292*

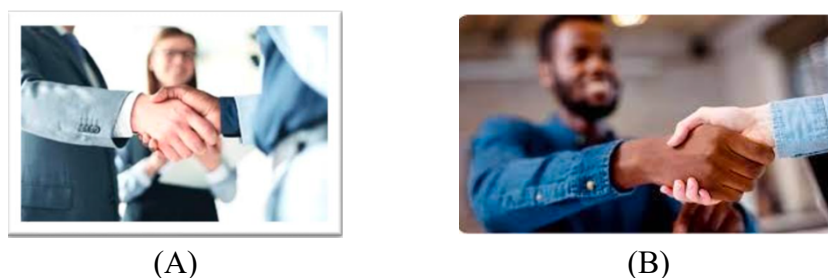


Note: From Tadwong, D. (2023). *ENGL 001292 English for hotel business* (pp. 7, 8, & 168). Union Offset Printing House.

Textbook 292 uses color to differentiate male and female actors. Figures 14 (A), (B), and (C) show male actors in plain colors like black and white shirts, while Figures 14 (D), (E), and (F) depict female actors in bright, colorful outfits such as pink and blue. Tavaragi and Sushma (2016) highlighted that color serves as a nonverbal communicator and a psychological tool, with dark colors symbolizing authority and strength, while bright colors represent happiness and warmth. Thus, the colors worn by male actors suggest leadership and authority, whereas those of female actors imply innocence and caregiving attributes.

### Figure 15

*Salience in Textbook 292*



Note: From Tadwong, D. (2023). *ENGL 001292 English for hotel business* (pp. 78 & 82). Union Offset Printing House.

The compositional analysis of the salience features in Textbook 292 revealed significant gender inequality. Figure 15 makes the handshakes salient as they are the main focus of the images. The shaking of hands indicates the success of a business agreement. Figure 15 (A) emphasizes the hands by blurring the woman in the background, portraying her as not participating in the business. Figure 15 (B) also emphasizes the hands; however, the image shows that the hands belong to a man, indicating that he completed the agreement.

While these images depict positive situations, such gendered representations within the workplace could have negative implications, since they create a microculture in which women might feel excluded or unwelcome (Bilodeau et al., 2020). This perception could lead students who use these textbooks to subscribe to a narrow understanding of gender roles, which could affect their choice of career and perpetuate traditional stereotypes. As images might influence students' perceptions and experiences, these issues underscore the need for more balanced and equitable visual representation.

## 6. Limitations and Recommendations

This study had two main limitations. First, three in-house textbooks written by Thai academics, each for a single course at a university, are less likely to represent the breadth of evidence within ESP materials and their prevalence of usage at the national or international level. Second, the MDA analysis did not further investigate modality analysis as part of this interactive function. Therefore, this limited the extent to which the research analysis could address both research questions.

The study has implications for textbook authors, illustrators, and publishers, who might create more gender-equitable representations and actively avoid stereotyped or biased ones. They may also raise awareness about the ideologies associated with textbook images. Future research and studies should examine textbooks in different disciplines, as well as contexts specific to their deliberately multimodal nature. Future studies should also consider using corpus linguistics as a systematic methodology to identify gendered language patterns that may otherwise be obscured by visually driven or qualitative discourse analysis, as both are subjective.

## 7. Conclusion

The result of this research revealed that the three texts justify and construct unequal gender roles as well as heteronormative ideologies. Textbook 222 normalizes heterosexual relationships by showing pictures of male-female relationships. One video from Textbook 223 focuses on the development of male adolescents through their relationships with females and the expectations placed on them by their mothers. Textbook 292 utilizes indirect gazes and gestures of affection to normalize heterosexual preference. Together, the representations reaffirm binary gender norms and heterosexual dominance. Overall, there is evidence of gender inequity in all three texts, where men are always portrayed as intelligent, authoritative, and successful; in contrast, women are represented as passive and submissive. Such representations reinforce the gender hierarchy and erase both gender diversity and non-heterosexual identity in education.

## 8. About the Authors

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## 9. Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my Ph.D. advisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Kriangkrai Vathanalaoha, who guided me throughout my research. I also appreciate the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University, for analyzing its in-house textbooks. Lastly, my appreciation goes to my previous illness. In 2021, I was diagnosed with brain cancer. Even though I am completely cured, the damage resulted in the destruction of the posterior pituitary gland, leading to lifelong diabetes insipidus, as well as diffuse brain atrophy associated with progressive cognitive and motor impairments. Yet, through these struggles, I have learned resilience and found strength in perseverance.

## 10. Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that AI tools, namely Grammarly and Mendeley, were used in the preparation of the manuscript solely for spelling and grammar correction and citation formatting.

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