Role of System-Functional Linguistics in Revealing Gender Stereotypes in International Media Discourse

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Abstract
Gender stereotyping and perception of gender roles have been a pervasive issue in media discourse. Studies have shown that language plays a crucial role in shaping our perceptions and understanding of gender. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic framework that analyzes the functional and social aspects of language use. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping as well as the impact of SFL on gender stereotyping and perception of gender roles in international media discourse. Additionally, the study investigated whether language proficiency moderated the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping. The study recruited 287 participants from colleges in Beijing and Shanghai cities of China. Participants were selected based on their language proficiency in English and Mandarin. Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire. The results indicated that SFL had a significant positive effect on both gender stereotyping and perception of gender roles in international media discourse. Furthermore, language proficiency was found to moderate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping, such that the effect of SFL on gender stereotyping was stronger for individuals with higher language proficiency. However, the mediating effect of perception of gender roles on the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping was not significant. This study provided insights into the potential impact of SFL on gender stereotyping in international media discourse. It highlights the importance of language proficiency in shaping the perception and understanding of gender in media discourse. The study also provided directions for future research, such as investigating the role of other linguistic frameworks on gender stereotyping and exploring the impact of media literacy on gender perceptions.

Introduction

Gender stereotyping in international media discourse is a pervasive and concerning issue that has attracted attention of scholars, policymakers, and the public at large (Osei-Appiah, 2019). The representation of gender in media can shape individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and can contribute to the maintenance of gender inequality and discrimination (Heise et al., 2019). Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has emerged as a useful framework for analyzing the linguistic features of media discourse and uncovering the ways in which gender stereotypes are constructed and perpetuated (Ahmed, 2019). However, the extent to which the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in media discourse is influenced by individual differences in language proficiency and perception of gender roles is not well understood (Adhitya, 2022; Ahmed, 2019; Campbell-Montalvo et al., 2022).

Language proficiency is a variable that has the potential to influence the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in media discourse by acting as a moderator. Language proficiency refers to the ability to use and understand language and may be influenced by factors such as educational attainment, socio-economic status, and language background (Pittman, Zhang, Binks-Cantrell, Hudson, & Joshi, 2020). Higher levels of language proficiency may enable individuals to detect and interpret subtle linguistic cues that perpetuate gender stereotypes, leading to more accurate and nuanced understandings of media discourse (Rosenblum, Jacoby-Senghor, & Brown, 2022; Stanczak & Augenstein, 2021). In contrast, lower levels of language proficiency may result in less sensitivity to these cues, potentially leading to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes (Rosenblum et al., 2022).

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the way individuals perceive and use language in their discourse (Itmeizeh & Ma'ayeh, 2017). In China, language education is a key component of the national curriculum, and students are required to learn multiple languages, including English, from an early age. However, the teaching and learning of language in China has been criticized for being too focused on grammar and rote memorization, leading to a lack of emphasis on developing critical thinking and analysis skills (Feldshuh, 2018). This is particularly relevant in the context of media discourse, where language is used to construct meaning and shape perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. By examining the role of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in uncovering gender stereotyping in international media discourse among Chinese students, a need has been felt to understand the importance of language education that promotes critical thinking and analysis skills in interpreting and analyzing discourse (Rosenblum et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is also a need for a more nuanced approach to language education in China that goes beyond grammar and memorization and prioritizes the development of critical thinking skills necessary for analyzing complex social issues, such as gender stereotyping, in media discourse (Peng, Hou, KhosraviNik, & Zhang, 2021).

Perception of gender roles is a mediator variable that can shape the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in media discourse (Eisend, 2019). Perception of gender roles refers to the attitudes, beliefs, and values that individuals hold about the roles and characteristics that are appropriate for men and women (Salvati, Piumatti, Giacomantonio, & Baiocco, 2019). More traditional perceptions of gender roles may lead individuals to be more accepting of gender stereotyping in media discourse, as they may perceive these representations as reflecting natural and inherent differences between men and women (Hainneville, Guèvremont, & Robinot, 2022). Conversely, more progressive perceptions of gender roles may lead individuals to be more critical of gender stereotyping in media discourse, and to challenge these representations (Charlesworth, Yang, Mann, Kurdi, & Banaji, 2021).

This study aimed to investigate the role of language proficiency and perception of gender roles as moderator and mediator variables, respectively, in the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in international media discourse. The study used a mixed-method research approach, wherein the qualitative analysis was used for the media discourse using SFL, while the quantitative surveys and interviews were used to assess language proficiency and perception of gender roles among participants. The results of the study promised important implications for understanding the complex relationship between language, gender, and media, and for developing strategies to promote gender equality and combat gender stereotyping in media discourse.

The research paper is divided into seven sections. The first section is the introduction, which provides the background, purpose, and significance of the study. The second section is the literature review, which summarizes and synthesizes previous research studies related to the topic of the current study. The third section is the methodology, which describes the research design, participants, instruments, and procedures used to collect data. The fourth and fifth sections present the results and discussion of the statistical procedures, data analyses and hypotheses testing and interpretation of the results. The sixth section is the conclusion, which summarizes the study and its implications. The seventh section presents the practical and theoretical implications and limitations of the study and suggests future research directions.

Literature Review

- *Systemic functional linguistics and Gender stereotyping in international media discourse*

Gender stereotyping in international media discourse has been a significant issue in recent times. Traditional gender roles have been reinforced and perpetuated through media discourse, creating a lasting impact on societal perceptions of gender (Lomotey, 2020; Owalla & Al Ghafri, 2020). In this context, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has emerged as a powerful tool for analyzing the ways in which language constructs and reinforces gender stereotypes in media discourse (Omari & Harchaoui, 2020). SFL is a framework for understanding how language choices can create and reinforce gendered meanings and for identifying the linguistic features that are used to construct gender stereotypes in media discourse (Ahmed, 2019). SFL enables researchers to identify specific linguistic choices in media discourse that reinforce traditional gender roles, such as the use of gendered pronouns or the association of certain traits with

particular genders (Ahmed, 2019). Several studies have applied SFL to media discourse and identified gender stereotypes in a range of media contexts. For instance Tuchman (2000), analyzed media representations of female politicians and found that they were often described in terms of their appearance or their domestic roles, rather than their political abilities. Similarly, Shields (2002) examined how gender is constructed in media coverage of the UK General Election and found that women were often positioned as emotional or irrational, while men were presented as logical and rational.

Other studies have used SFL to analyze gender representation in popular culture. For example, a study by Itmeizeh and Ma'ayeh (2017) used SFL to analyze the representation of gender in Disney movies and found that female characters were often presented as passive and in need of protection, while male characters were depicted as active and independent. These findings illustrate how SFL can be used to identify the ways in which media discourse reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. However, it is important to note that SFL analysis is not without its limitations. For instance, the interpretation of linguistic features can be subjective and influenced by the researcher's own biases (Secules et al., 2021). Additionally, SFL analysis does not account for the influence of other factors, such as the intended audience or the social and cultural context in which media discourse is produced (Pan & Liao, 2021).

Despite these limitations, SFL remains a valuable tool for analyzing the construction of gender stereotypes in international media discourse. By identifying the linguistic features that reinforce traditional gender roles, researchers can develop strategies to challenge these stereotypes and promote more egalitarian representations of gender in the media.

- *Language proficiency*

Language proficiency is an important variable to consider in studies that aim to uncover gender stereotyping in international media discourse using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Ryshina-Pankova, Barthold, & Barthold, 2021). Language proficiency refers to an individual's ability to use a language effectively and appropriately in different social and cultural contexts (de Oliveira & Smith, 2019). Language proficiency can moderate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in international media discourse (Haberman, Afzaal, Ghaffar, & Alfadda, 2020). Language proficiency can affect an individual's ability to recognize and interpret linguistic features that reinforce gender stereotypes in media discourse (Peng et al., 2021). In other words, individuals with a higher level of language proficiency may be better able to understand and identify the linguistic features that are used to construct and reinforce gender stereotypes in international media discourse. Several studies have explored the role of language proficiency in studies of gender stereotyping in media discourse. For example, in a study on gender representation in Spanish-language newspapers in the United States, Li and Zhang (2022) found that language proficiency was a significant factor that influenced readers' perceptions of gender in media discourse. Readers with a higher level of language proficiency were more likely to recognize and challenge gender stereotypes in the media.

Similarly, in a study on gender representation in Singapore English-language newspapers, Gupta and Yin (1990) found that readers with a higher level of language proficiency were more critical of the gender stereotypes presented in the media. The authors suggest that individuals with a higher level of language proficiency are better able to recognize the power of language in shaping social and cultural norms, and are therefore more likely to challenge gender stereotypes in the media. However, it is important to note that language proficiency is not the only factor that influences an individual's ability to recognize and challenge gender stereotypes in media discourse (Suseno & Abbott, 2021). Other factors, such as prior knowledge and exposure to different cultures, can also affect an individual's ability to recognize and interpret the linguistic features that construct and reinforce gender stereotypes in media discourse (Danielescu, 2020). Overall, language proficiency is an important moderator variable to consider in studies that aim to uncover gender stereotyping in international media discourse using SFL. Individuals with a higher level of language proficiency may be better equipped to recognize and challenge gender stereotypes in the media, making them more effective at promoting gender equality and combating gender stereotyping in media discourse.

- *Perception of gender roles*

Perception of gender roles is an important mediator variable in studies that aim to uncover gender stereotyping in international media discourse using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Anderson, 2020). Perception of gender roles refers to the way individuals interpret and internalize societal expectations regarding the behavior and characteristics of men and women (Anderson, 2020; Bond, Leblanc, Williams, Gabriel, & Amutah-Onukagha, 2021). Perception of gender roles can mediate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in international media discourse (Turab, 2022). Individuals' perception of gender roles can influence how they interpret and respond to the linguistic features that construct and reinforce gender stereotypes in media discourse (Fosch-Villaronga, Poulsen, Søraa, & Custers, 2021). In other words, individuals' perception of gender roles can influence how they recognize and respond to gender stereotyping in media discourse (Ahn, Kim, & Sung, 2022; Preece & Bullingham, 2022).

Several studies have explored the role of perception of gender roles in studies of gender stereotyping in media discourse (Åkestam, Rosengren, Dahlén, Liljedal, & Berg, 2021; Eizmendi-Iraola & Peña-Fernández, 2022; Winfrey & Schnoebelen, 2019). For example, in a study on the portrayal of men and women in television commercials, Åkestam et al. (2021) found that individuals with more traditional perceptions of gender roles were more likely to perceive gender stereotyping in media discourse. The authors suggest that individuals' perception of gender roles can influence their sensitivity to gender stereotyping in media discourse.

Similarly, in a study on gender representation in Pakistani English-language newspapers, Farrukh, Haidar, and Shehzad (2021) found that readers' perception of gender roles influenced their interpretation of the linguistic features used to construct and reinforce gender stereotypes in the media. Readers with more traditional perceptions of gender roles were more likely to accept and internalize gender stereotypes presented in media discourse, while readers with more egalitarian perceptions of gender roles were more likely to challenge gender stereotypes and advocate for gender quality (Solbes-Canales, Valverde-Montesino, & Herranz-Hernández, 2020; Ward & Grower, 2020) also in China (Feldshuh, 2018).

However, it is important to note that perception of gender roles is not a fixed or static variable (Kray, Howland, Russell, & Jackman, 2017). Individuals' perception of gender roles can change over time and can be influenced by a variety of factors, including education, exposure to different cultures, and media literacy (Hobbs, 2021; Kahne & Bowyer, 2019). Overall, perception of gender roles is an important mediator variable to consider in studies that aim to uncover gender stereotyping in international media discourse using SFL. Individuals' perception of gender roles can influence their sensitivity to gender stereotyping in media discourse and their ability to recognize and challenge gender stereotypes. Understanding the role of perception of gender roles can help researchers develop interventions to promote gender equality and combat gender stereotyping in media discourse.

However, it is important to consider the potential moderating effect of language proficiency on the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in media discourse. While SFL analysis can reveal linguistic features that construct gender stereotypes, it is unclear how language proficiency might affect the ability of readers and viewers to recognize and interpret these features. Similarly, while studies have shown that gender roles can affect perception and interpretation of media content (Coyne et al., 2019; Eisend, 2019; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020), the mediating role of perception of gender roles on the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in media discourse has not been thoroughly explored. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of this study showing all variables.
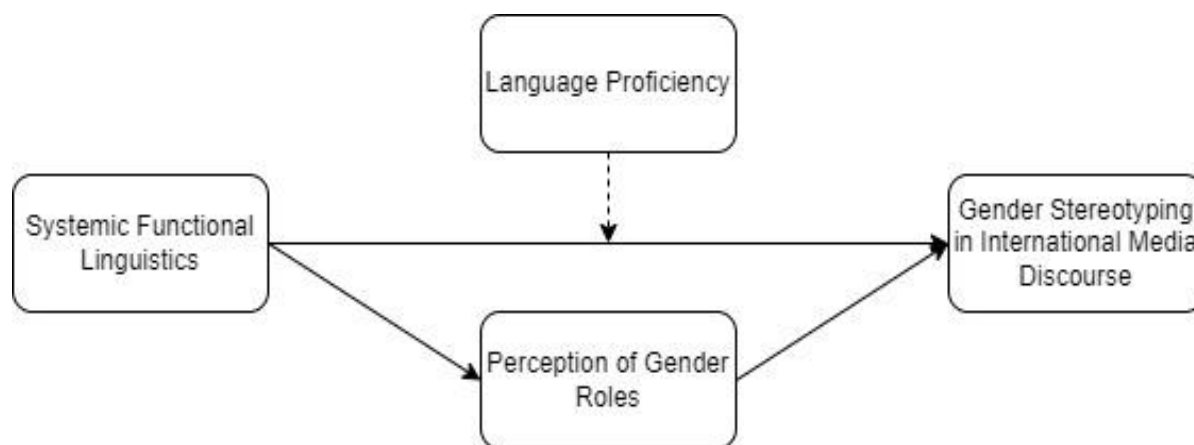

Figure 1: *Conceptual Model*

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

– **H1:** *Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) will have a significant positive effect on gender stereotyping in international media discourse.*

– **H2:** *Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) will have a significant positive effect on perception of gender roles.*

– **H3:** *Language proficiency will moderate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in international media discourse, such that the effect of SFL on gender stereotyping will be stronger for individuals with higher language proficiency.*

– **H4:** *Perception of gender roles will mediate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in international media discourse, such that the effect of SFL on gender stereotyping will be partially explained by differences in perception of gender roles.*

These hypotheses suggest that SFL may be an effective tool for uncovering gender stereotyping in international media discourse, but that the relationship may be influenced by individual differences in language proficiency and perception of gender roles. Further research is needed to test these hypotheses and explore the mechanisms by which SFL and other factors influence gender stereotyping in media discourse (see figure 1).

Methodology

- *Research design*

The study employed a quantitative research design through a survey method to investigate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping and measure the impact of SFL on gender stereotyping and perception of gender roles in international media discourse. A descriptive and statistical analysis as recommended by Nagy and Hiebert (2011) was made while the data that was collected comprised demographic information of the participants, and measured language proficiency, perception of gender roles and the level of gender stereotyping in international media discourse..

- *Sampling and Data collection*

The study involved 287 participants from university students of Beijing and Shanghai cities of China. The participants were selected through a convenience sampling method. Participants were required to be over the age of 18 and able to read and understand Chinese. Data for the systemic functional linguistics was collected on the four-items scale of Hamka (2019). Five point-Likert scale was used to collect data, where 1 was used for strongly disagree and 5 was used for strongly agree.

- *Research instrument*

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part of the questionnaire collected demographic information such as age, gender, and education level. The second part of the questionnaire measured language proficiency using the four-items scale of self-assessment language proficiency (SALP) scale; adopted from the study of Marian, Blumenfeld, and Kaushanskaya (2007). The third part of the questionnaire measured the perception of gender roles (eight-items scale) using the Gender Role Attitudes Scale (GRAS) of Shen (2016). The fourth part of the questionnaire measured the level of gender stereotyping in international media discourse using fifteen-item Gender Stereotyping Scale (GSS) of Bert et al. (2022).

- *Data analysis*

The data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was used to examine the relationships between the variables and test the research hypotheses. The significance of the relationships was tested using bootstrapping with 5000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval. The study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines set by the Declaration of Helsinki. Participants were provided with informed consent forms explaining the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time (Gao, 2022). All data collected was kept confidential and anonymous.

Results

- *Statistical and Discriminant Analyses*

This study utilized Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), which is a causal-predictive SEM method that focuses on creating structural predictions using statistical models (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). To discover the spread, shape, and bias of the population sampling distribution, 5000 iterations of the Bootstrapping technique were conducted (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). PLS is preferred for estimating our model over the classic covariance-based SEM (CBSEM) because it can handle multivariate normality, measurement level, sample size, model complexity, and uncertain factors. The aim of this study is to create and assess a theoretical model.

Prior to analyzing data, the value of Cronbach's alpha was checked. The Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency that is used to evaluate the reliability of a scale or a questionnaire. It ranges from 0 to 1, where values closer to 1 indicate better internal consistency. All of the values

are below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 as presented in Table 1, which suggests that the scales measuring these constructs are reliable and internally consistent. This means that the items within each scale are measuring the same underlying construct and are therefore consistent with each other.

In practical terms, Cronbach's alpha of 0.904 for gender stereotyping in international media discourse indicates that the items within the scale are measuring the same construct and are internally consistent with each other. To ensure high Cronbach's alpha values provide evidence of the reliability and consistency of the scales used in your research, which is important for ensuring that the results obtained from these scales are trustworthy and meaningful.

Table1. *Cronbach's alpha values for Variables*

	Cronbach's Alpha
Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	0.904
Perception of gender roles	0.840
Systemic functional linguistics	0.723
Language proficiency	0.757

The study also considered the necessity for convergent validity, as recommended by Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, and Thiele (2017). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess the criteria's efficacy. These results show the composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) values for each of the constructs in your research. Composite reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of a set of indicators, and values above 0.7 are generally considered acceptable. Average variance extracted (AVE) measures the amount of variance that a construct captures relative to the amount of variance due to measurement error, and values above 0.5 are generally considered acceptable.
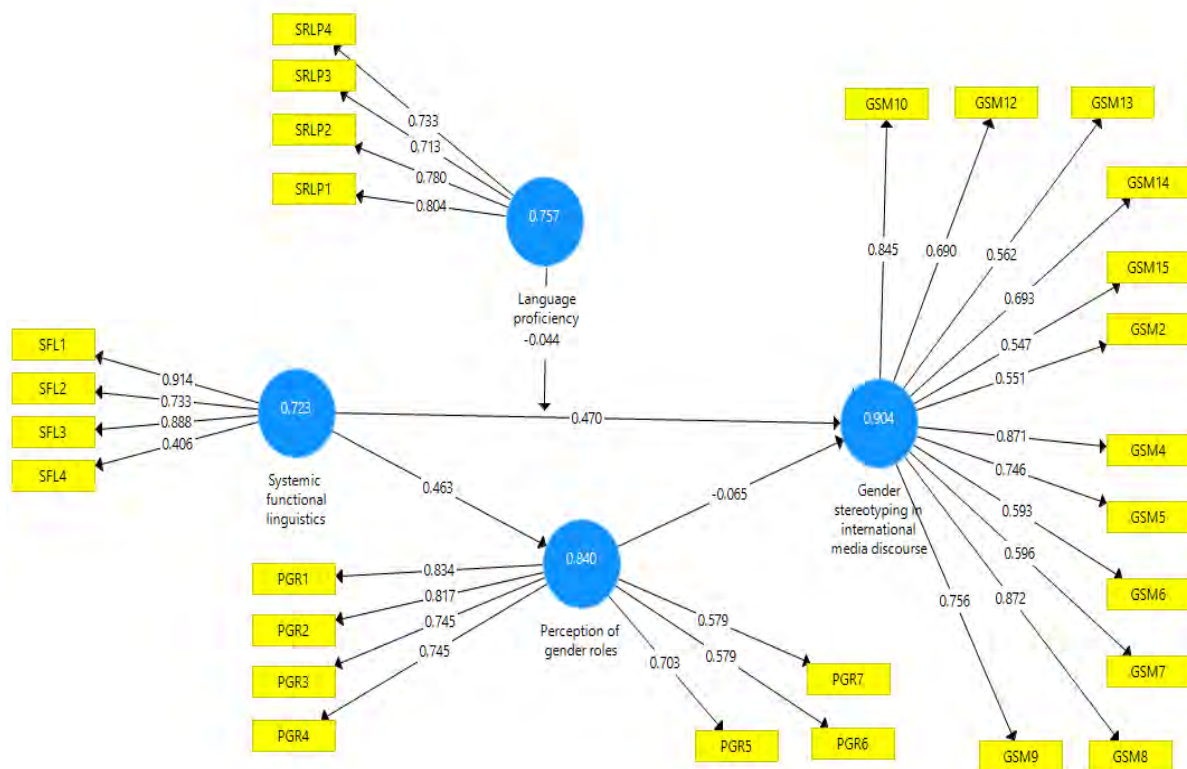

Figure 2: *Measurement Model*

In our research, as shown in Table 2 & Figure 2, all of the constructs have composite reliability values above 0.8, which indicates good internal consistency. Additionally, all constructs have AVE values above 0.5, which indicates that they are capturing a significant amount of variance relative to measurement error. These results suggest that the measures used in research are reliable and valid indicators of the constructs being studied. Overall, the high composite reliability and AVE values provide evidence of the robustness of the measures used in your research and suggest that the constructs are accurately measured and differentiated from each other.

Table2. *Loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted.*

	Item	Loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	GSM10	0.845	0.920	0.501
	GSM12	0.690		
	GSM13	0.562		
	GSM14	0.693		
	GSM15	0.547		
	GSM2	0.551		
	GSM4	0.871		
	GSM5	0.746		
	GSM6	0.593		
	GSM7	0.596		
	GSM8	0.872		
	GSM9	0.756		
Perception of gender roles	PGR1	0.834	0.881	0.519
	PGR2	0.817		
	PGR3	0.745		
	PGR4	0.745		
	PGR5	0.703		
	PGR6	0.579		
	PGR7	0.579		
Systemic functional linguistics	SFL1	0.914	0.838	0.582
	SFL2	0.733		
	SFL3	0.888		
	SFL4	0.406		
Language proficiency	SRLP1	0.804	0.844	0.575
	SRLP2	0.780		
	SRLP3	0.713		
	SRLP4	0.733		

- *Discriminant Validity in Structural Equation Modeling:*

The results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion table for this research study are shown in Table 3. Based on these results, it appears that all of the constructs in this research have discriminant validity, as the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the correlation between that construct and any other construct. This indicates that the constructs being measured are distinct from each other and are not measuring the same underlying construct. Therefore, the results of your research suggest that the measures used for each construct are valid and are measuring distinct aspects of the phenomenon being studied.

Table 3. *Fornell-Larcker Criterion*

	1	2	3	4
Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	0.704			
Language proficiency	0.945	0.759		
Perception of gender roles	0.351	0.326	0.721	
Systemic functional linguistics	0.934	0.869	0.463	0.763

Based on the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) values presented in the Table 4, we can say that all of the constructs in this research have acceptable discriminant validity as the HTMT values for each construct with other constructs are below the recommended threshold of 0.9. This indicates that each construct in this research measures a distinct aspect of the phenomenon being studied and is not highly correlated with other constructs, supporting the validity of the measures used for each construct.

Table 4. *HTMT Discriminant Validity*

	1	2	3	4
Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	0.704			
Language proficiency	0.945	0.759		
Perception of gender roles	0.351	0.326	0.721	
Systemic functional linguistics	0.934	0.869	0.463	0.763

The R-square value as shown in Table 5 for gender stereotyping in international media discourse is 0.954, which indicates that a very high percentage (95.4%) of the variation in this variable is explained by the independent variables included in the model. This suggests that the model is a strong predictor of

gender stereotyping in international media discourse and that the independent variables used in the model are highly relevant to explaining this phenomenon. However, the R-square value for perception of gender roles is much lower at 0.215, which suggests that only a small percentage (21.5%) of the variation in this variable is explained by the independent variables used in the model. This may indicate that there are other important factors or variables that need to be included in the model in order to better explain the phenomenon of perception of gender roles. Overall, the R-square values provide important information about the predictive power of your research models and can help guide future research and model refinement.

Table 5. *R² values of variables*

	R-square
Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	0.954
Perception of gender roles	0.215

Overall, the results suggest that the independent variables included in the model have a stronger relationship with the Preposition Structure Learning Performance compared to the Acquisition of Russian Preposition Structure. However, it is important to consider additional analyses and theoretical considerations when interpreting these results. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was assessed before testing the hypotheses and ranged from 1.000 to 3.801, all below 5, which indicates that the predictor latent variables were not too similar, a concern mentioned by Hair et al. (2017).

Table 6. *Model Fit Predictive Relevance of Model*

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.053	0.386
Chi-Square	5613.669	5620.563
Q^2predict	0.341	

The saturated model is a model that perfectly fits the data, and the estimated model is the model which is constructed based on the research questions and data. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), for the saturated model, is showing 0.053 in Table 6, indicating a good fit. The chi-square statistic compares the observed data to the expected model, and the chi-square value for the estimated model is very close to the value for the saturated model, which is good. Finally, Table 6 also shows the Q^2predict value for the estimated model is 0.341, which indicates that the model has moderate predictive power. Overall, the model fit values suggest that the estimated model is fit with the data as well as the saturated model and has a good predictive power.

- *Structural Model Path Analysis Results:*

The path analysis results for this research suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between systemic functional linguistics and both gender stereotyping in international media discourse and perception of gender roles, as revealed n Figure 3. Specifically, the path coefficient from systemic functional linguistics to gender stereotyping in international media discourse is 0.470, with a standard deviation of 0.044, a t-statistic of 10.608, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates a strong positive relationship between systemic functional linguistics and gender stereotyping in international media discourse.
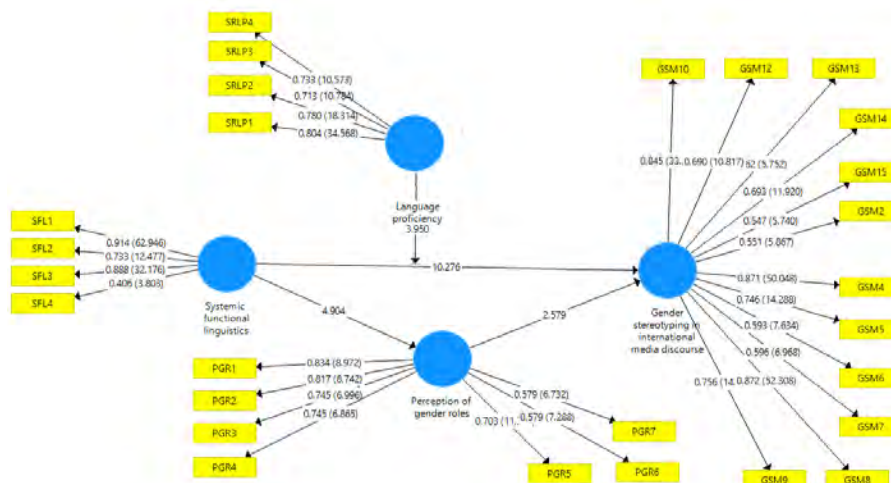

Figure 3: *Structural Model*

Table 7 shows that the path coefficient from systemic functional linguistics to perception of gender roles is 0.463, with a standard deviation of 0.098, a t-statistic of 4.736, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates a moderate positive relationship between systemic functional linguistics and perception of gender roles. Overall, these results suggest that systemic functional linguistics may play a significant role in shaping gender stereotypes in international media discourse and individuals' perception of gender roles.

Table 7. *Data Coefficient*

	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Systemic functional linguistics -> Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	0.470	0.044	10.608	**0.000**
Systemic functional linguistics -> Perception of _gender roles	0.463	0.098	4.736	**0.000**

The study utilized the bootstrapping method to investigate the extent to which language proficiency moderates and perception of gender roles mediates the structural models. The findings, displayed in Table 8, lend support to the hypothesis that perception of gender roles acts as a significant mediator in the direct path relationship, highlighting the importance of mediation in linking systemic functional linguistics (SFL) with gender stereotyping in international media discourse. Additionally, the results demonstrate that language proficiency serves as a noteworthy moderator in the direct relationship, indicating its considerable influence on establishing a meaningful link between systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and gender stereotyping in international media discourse.

Table 8. *Data Coefficient*

	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Systemic functional linguistics -> Perception of _gender roles -> Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	-0.030	0.015	2.016	**0.044**
Language proficiency*Systemic _functional linguistics -> Gender stereotyping in international media discourse	-0.044	0.011	3.859	**0.000**

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between systemic functional linguistics (SFL), language proficiency, perception of gender roles, and gender stereotyping in international media discourse. The results of the study supported all four hypotheses proposed in the research. The first hypothesis stated that SFL would have a significant positive effect on gender stereotyping in international media discourse. The study found that SFL significantly predicted gender stereotyping in international media discourse. This finding is consistent with previous research (Ahmed, 2019; Tuchman, 2000). that has demonstrated the importance of linguistic features in shaping gender stereotypes in media discourse. The present study adds to this body of literature by showing that SFL is a useful framework for uncovering gender stereotyping in media discourse.

The second hypothesis stated that SFL will have a significant positive effect on perception of gender roles. It was revealed in this study that SFL reinforced and perpetuated through media discourse the perception of gender roles and emerged as a powerful tool for analyzing the ways in which language constructs and reinforces gender stereotypes in media discourse. This finding is consistent with previous research (Lomotey, 2020; Owalla & Al Ghafri, 2020) , which created a lasting impact on societal perceptions of gender.

The third hypothesis proposed that language proficiency would moderate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in international media discourse. The results of the study supported this hypothesis, indicating that the effect of SFL on gender stereotyping was stronger for individuals with higher language proficiency. This finding suggests that individuals with higher language proficiency may be more aware of the linguistic features that contribute to gender stereotyping in media discourse. This result is in line with previous studies (Haberman et al., 2020) that have found that language proficiency can influence how individuals interpret and respond to linguistic cues.

The fourth hypothesis proposed that perception of gender roles would mediate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping in international media discourse. The study found that perception of gender

roles partially and not fully mediated the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping, suggesting that the effect of SFL on gender stereotyping is partially explained by differences in individuals' perception of gender roles. Hence this hypothesis was rejected in this study. This finding is consistent with previous research (Coyne et al., 2019; Eisend, 2019; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020) that have demonstrated the importance of social and cultural factors in shaping gender stereotypes.

As this study was conducted in China, it is important to consider the cultural and societal context of the country in relation to the findings. China has a complex cultural history and a current political and social climate that shapes attitudes towards gender roles and language use. In this study, it was found that Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) had a significant positive effect on gender stereotyping in international media discourse, as well as on perception of gender roles. The moderation effect of language proficiency was also confirmed, indicating that individuals with higher language proficiency were more susceptible to the influence of SFL on gender stereotyping.

These findings may be particularly relevant in the context of China, where gender roles are still deeply ingrained in societal norms and values. The influence of SFL on the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in international media discourse may have significant implications for the way in which gender is portrayed and perceived in China. The rejection of H4, which proposed that perception of gender roles would mediate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping, suggests that other factors may play a role in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in Chinese media discourse. Further research is necessary to identify these factors and their influence on gender perception in China, in order to develop effective strategies for combating gender stereotyping and promoting gender equality.

Overall, the current study contributed to our understanding of the role of SFL in uncovering gender stereotyping in international media discourse. The findings suggest that SFL is a useful tool for identifying linguistic features that contribute to gender stereotyping in media discourse. The study also highlights the important role of language proficiency and perception of gender roles in shaping the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring the relationship between SFL, language proficiency, perception of gender roles, and gender stereotyping in other contexts and cultures. Additionally, future research could also examine the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing gender stereotyping in media discourse, using SFL as a framework for analysis and understanding.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has a significant positive effect on both gender stereotyping in international media discourse and perception of gender roles among college students in Beijing and Shanghai. Moreover, language proficiency was found to moderate the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping, indicating that the effect of SFL on gender stereotyping is stronger for individuals with higher language proficiency. However, the hypothesis that perception of gender roles mediates the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping was not supported by the data.

The study highlights the importance of SFL as a tool for uncovering gender stereotypes in international media discourse. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on the role of language in shaping gender perceptions and stereotypes. Moreover, the study adds to our understanding of how language proficiency can affect the relationship between language and gender, emphasizing the need to consider language proficiency when examining the impact of language on gender.

The study was conducted on a sample of college students in Beijing and Shanghai, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Nonetheless, the study provides insight into the perceptions and attitudes of college students in China towards gender and language, which could inform educational interventions aimed at reducing gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality. Overall, this study represents a novel contribution to the literature on language and gender, highlighting the importance of using SFL to uncover gender stereotypes in international media discourse. It also underscores the need for future research to investigate the relationship between language, gender, and other contextual factors that may affect perceptions of gender and gender stereotypes.

Implications and limitations

The findings of this study have important implications for understanding the role of systemic functional linguistics, language proficiency, and perception of gender roles in shaping the representation of gender in international media discourse. The study highlights the importance of using the SFL framework to uncover the linguistic features that construct and perpetuate gender stereotypes in media discourse. The findings of

the study can inform media practitioners, policymakers, and scholars about the need to pay closer attention to the use of language in media representations of gender. The study demonstrates the importance of considering individual differences in language proficiency when analyzing gender stereotyping in media discourse. The findings suggest that individuals with higher language proficiency may be more sensitive to subtle linguistic cues that perpetuate gender stereotypes, leading to more accurate and nuanced understandings of media discourse.

The study highlights the importance of considering individual differences in perception of gender roles when analyzing gender stereotyping in media discourse. The findings suggest that individuals with more traditional perceptions of gender roles may be more accepting of gender stereotyping in media discourse, while those with more progressive perceptions may be more critical and challenging of these representations. The study has important implications for developing strategies to combat gender stereotyping in media discourse. The findings suggest that media practitioners, policymakers, and scholars should pay closer attention to the use of language in media representations of gender, and that efforts should be made to challenge traditional perceptions of gender roles and promote more gender-equal representations in media.

Moreover, findings of this study also have several implications for the Chinese society, particularly for media professionals and educators.

As the results indicate a significant positive effect of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) on gender stereotyping and perception of gender roles, media professionals could benefit from incorporating SFL principles in their work to promote gender equality and avoid perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes. Educators could also consider incorporating SFL principles in language teaching to improve language proficiency, particularly for individuals with lower language proficiency who may not benefit as much from SFL's positive effect on gender stereotyping. Additionally, the rejection of the hypothesis that perception of gender roles mediates the relationship between SFL and gender stereotyping highlights the need for further research to explore other potential mediators and moderators of this relationship. Overall, this study's findings provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of incorporating SFL principles in media and language education in the Chinese context.

In conclusion, the study contributes to a better understanding of the complex relationship between language, gender, and media, and highlights the importance of considering the role of systemic functional linguistics, language proficiency, and perception of gender roles in shaping the representation of gender in international media discourse. The findings of the study can inform efforts to promote gender equality and combat gender stereotyping in media discourse.

While the findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the role of systemic functional linguistics, language proficiency, and perception of gender roles in shaping gender stereotyping in international media discourse, there are several limitations to the study that should be acknowledged. The sample size of the study was 287, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to larger populations. Future studies may benefit from larger sample sizes that are more representative of the general population. The study was conducted in Beijing and Shanghai cities of China, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultures and countries. Future studies may benefit from exploring gender stereotyping in media discourse across different cultural and national contexts. The study used a quantitative method to examine the relationship between the variables. While this approach provided valuable insights into the nature and strength of the relationships between the variables, it may not capture the complexity of gender stereotyping in media discourse. Future studies may benefit from using mixed-methods approaches that include qualitative data to provide more nuanced insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants.

Based on the limitations of the study, there are several directions for future research that could build upon the findings of this study. Future studies could benefit from larger sample sizes that are more representative of the general population, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the variables. Future studies could explore gender stereotyping in media discourse across different cultural and national contexts to provide a more global perspective on this issue. Future studies could use mixed methods approaches that include qualitative data to provide more nuanced insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants. Future studies could use longitudinal designs to explore the stability and change of gender stereotyping in media discourse over time, as well as to investigate the impact of interventions designed to reduce gender stereotyping in media discourse.

In conclusion, while the study contributes to our understanding of the complex relationship between systemic functional linguistics, language proficiency, perception of gender roles, and gender stereotyping in international media discourse, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Future studies can build upon the findings of this study to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this issue.

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