

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This social construct affects how people act, connect with others, and speak in daily life. It shapes communication too. Gender can influence language function, word choice, and the way a message is delivered. Hall & Bucholtz (2013) explain that people often adjust how they speak to fit social expectations tied to gender. Because of that, speech linked to masculinity is often seen as direct, firm, and focused on goals. Speech linked to femininity is more often viewed as warm, caring, and emotionally involved.

Sunderland (2011) develops this idea further. She says gender is shown through what she calls gendered discourses. These are repeated ways of speaking that create familiar images of men and women. So gender is not only found in single words or grammar. It appears through wider patterns in language. A text may keep showing figures like the caring mother, the emotional woman, the rational man, or the dominant man. These images are built through repeated expressions, forms of address, emotional wording, directive, and the way stories place someone in a certain role.

For Sunderland, gender is not something fixed inside a speaker. It is performed through discourse. It can shift. Context matters. Audience matters too. Purpose matters as well. The medium also plays a part. In digital spaces this becomes even more visible because creators can deliberately choose a certain gendered function to attract attention, connect with viewers, or support a message.

Sunderland (2011) also argues that gender representation usually serves a purpose. People choose certain ways of speaking because those choices help them do something. They may want sympathy. They may want authority. They may want to sound more convincing. In promotional or advertising content, gender can become a strategy. A feminine, for example, may help a speaker connect with women audiences, seem more relatable, or make persuasion feel softer. That is why gender in promotional language should not be seen only as culture. It should also be read as a rhetorical choice that can influence how people respond.

Experiential metafunction also helps explain how a text builds context. It shows the setting around an event. This includes time place and the way something happens. These details give extra support to the process and the participants so the experience feels clearer and more complete. Faradina & Emilia (2024) explain that circumstances help answer simple questions like when something happens where it happens and how it takes place. Because of that language does not only show an action or event. It also creates the setting that makes the event feel real and specific. A speaker or writer can also choose which details to stress. Stressing time can make something feel urgent. Stressing place can build atmosphere. Stressing manner can show the quality of an action or how it unfolds.

Experiential metafunction through process participant and circumstance helps build a richer picture of experience. People do not only see the action. They also see the roles inside it including gender roles. Allen (2023) says language is not only a tool for communication. It also shapes how people understand the world including gender. Through word choice sentence form and the way experience is

represented in experiential meaning gender can be built maintained and even challenged.

Gender is not something people simply carry by nature. It is shaped through society. The way people are seen as men women or other gender identities often grows from roles behavior and expectations that a community keeps repeating. Nagymzhanova et al (2024) explain that gender is formed not only by biology but also by values norms culture and social interaction. This means what people think is proper or normal for men and women usually comes from social agreement, not from something fixed from birth.

Language shapes the process. Texts that repeatedly portray men and women in certain roles slowly normalize those images. Men are often placed as the main doers. Women are more often shown in emotional or descriptive roles. Over time this can make those roles look natural even though they are socially created. Berger & Luckmann (2023) state that social construction is a process where meaning values and reality are formed through human interaction culture and shared habits in society. So what people accept as truth is often built little by little through social life.

Krijnen & Van Bauwel (2021) explain that gender representation is about how men women and other gender identities are shown and shaped in language texts and media. It is not only about who appears. It is also about how they are described. What kind of role they are given matters too. Through language and media people learn how to see men and women. Sentence patterns word choice and role design often make men look strong active and in control. Women are often pictured as soft emotional or passive. Still, his pattern does not always stay the

same. Some texts show gender in a more open way and move beyond the old stereotypes. Alongside this, the growth of technology and digital media continues to reshape how people understand gender roles and social values in everyday life. Mehrad (2023) explains that social values help shape ideas about how people should behave, speak, and interact with others. In many societies women are often linked with empathy, softness, and care in social relationships. This can be seen in the way they communicate, work with others, and show concern. Men are often linked with firmness, logic, and decision making.

These gender roles and social values also appear in communication. People speak differently. They choose words in different ways too. That difference can affect how someone understands a message. Aririguzoh (2022) explains that these patterns often come from different social values, culture, and life experience between men and women. So someone deliberately chooses how to share ideas show feelings and present opinions in content.

Content can be seen as a digital video that carries information, ideas, or messages through online media. People use it to express thoughts, share knowledge, and connect with a wider audience. Content is also often used to show identity, personal experience, and views about the roles of men and women in society. To catch the attention of netizens, creators usually choose language that feels interesting and easy to follow. The goal is not only to make people watch. It is also to make them understand, respond, and think about what is being said.

Lee & Theokary (2021) explain that influencer content is usually planned carefully. The theme matters. The language function matters too. The way the message is delivered is also made attractive so netizens can receive it more easily.

Because of that influencers do more than create entertaining content. They also pass on messages, build communication with audiences, and shape the way people understand information in the digital era.

The creator create a content to convey important messages about gender that the public needs to understand through engaging, communicative, and easily understood language to reach and influence their followers. Gender roles in content are displayed through language function that are characteristic of women and men, for example, the use of emojis and tone. Arias-Rodriguez & Sánchez-Bello (2022) state that states that gender roles are often used by influencers in their content creators through language function emoji use, and tone. For example, female influencers often use affiliative, emotional, and visually appealing language, while male creators may prefer a more assertive or humorous tone.

Gender roles, often displayed through language function, emoji use, and tone, are intended to capture netizens' attention, thereby enabling gender expression to become a commercial spectacle that generates income for the influencer. However, many influencers still fail to create content that captures netizens' attention, even though they have utilized gender roles, language function, emoji use, and tone. Several content creators responded that the communication elements used are still superficial. Function, emojis, and tone are only part of the message delivery, but they don't convey the deeper meaning of gender roles in social life. Without strong explanation or context, messages about gender can be unclear to the netizen.

A different opinion was expressed by digital media users who enjoy content, stating that netizens differ in their understanding of the messages conveyed. Everyone has different cultural backgrounds, social values, and experiences, so

messages about gender roles in content can be interpreted differently by each netizen. A teacher also said the content was too focused on entertainment and visuals, so it did not explain gender issues clearly. To make messages about gender roles more visible, content needs to include narratives, examples of experiences, or more in-depth explanations.

Furthermore, digital media observers noted that the influence of gender stereotypes in society still strongly influences gender roles, making it difficult for netizens to accept or understand gender roles differently. Therefore, the success of influencers in conveying gender roles in content depends not only on language function, emojis, or tone of communication, but also on the depth of the message, clear context, and the ability to convey social values in a more reflective and meaningful way to the netizen.

There are some theories about gender in content were put forward by Lou et al (2024), who stated that the relationship between social media algorithms, content creators, and gender bias is mutually influential. Social media algorithms can strengthen existing gender bias, and creators often adjust their content to fit those systems. Because of that platforms need more transparent algorithms and content strategies that are more aware of gender issues, so gender representation can be fairer and more balanced. This means considering the use of social media algorithms that are appealing to netizens, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This way, everyone can see different content even when using the same app.

Ningrum et al (2023) stated that language differences are influenced not only by gender but also by the content's purpose and netizen characteristics. Therefore, influencers adapt their communication function to increase engagement

and the effectiveness of their message delivery through function and expression. These two theories both discuss gender in content creation, but they focus on different sides of the issue. Lou et al (2024) pay more attention to social media algorithms and explain that these systems can shape how successful a content creator becomes. Ningrum et al (2023), on the other hand, focus more on language. They show that communication function can change because of gender, the purpose of the content, and the platform where the content appears. Some scholars also study gender in content creation from an educational point of view. Arias-Rodriguez & Sánchez-Bello (2022), for instance, showed that content on YouTube and Instagram does more than entertain. It can also open up space for people to develop a more critical understanding of social issues, including gender.

Similar research findings were reported by Afzal & Zubair (2025) who state that there is an interconnected relationship between influencers, content, language, and gender. Language is a primary tool in creating content, while gender influences how language is used, all contributing to the formation of influencer power and identity on social media. However, a different study was reported by Ilmi & Arimi (2023), who stated that the language used by influencers is influenced by gender identity, which shapes their communication and persuasion strategies. This means that an influencer's gender influences their language function and the way they build rapport, contributing to the effectiveness of brand promotion.

The three studies outlined previously, it can be concluded that gender roles within content creators can be used as a platform for gender education, the use of inclusive language as a tool to reduce stereotypes and discrimination, and the role

of gender influencers within content creators can be leveraged commercially to promote brands that generate wealth and success.

One content creator who is quite famous and successful in providing gender messages in @Sonu_Paii content on TikTok is Mamak Karbol, whose short-form video content seamlessly blends humor, regional dialects, and persuasive messaging to promote a variety of products. Operating under the TikTok handle @sonu_paii, his account currently has approximately 785,000 followers and gained more than 2,900,000 likes, showing a strong level of netizen engagement. He presents paid promotional content using localized expressions, casual phrasing, and relatable storytelling that makes his endorsements appear natural and authentic. @sonu_paii often uses frequently presents himself wearing woman's clothing such as gamis (dress) and jilbab (headscarf). This act can be interpreted not merely as humor or entertainment, but as a form of gender performance.

Using relevant theoretical perspectives, this study explores how globalization shapes product marketing on TikTok, especially through gender representation in everyday discourse. In many social settings, women and men are still portrayed in different ways. Women are often linked to caring roles and are seen as using more emotional language, while men are usually presented as more dominant and less expressive. For example, women in conversation may be shown as more expressive through words like “Aduh,” “ya ampun,” “oh my God,” or “astaga,” whereas men are more likely to be represented through shorter and more restrained responses such as “good,” “nice,” or “fine.” This fits Sunderland’s (2011) idea that gender representation does not simply come from single words or

grammar, but from wider discourse patterns that position people in certain ways, such as the “caring mother,” the “emotional woman,” or the “dominant man.”

Gender, in this context, should not be understood as a stable or inherent identity, but rather as a series of repeated actions, expressions, and language choices that convey particular social meanings. Through the way he dresses and speaks, @Sonu_Paii presents femininity and masculinity in a playful and exaggerated manner that both mirrors and critiques prevailing gender norms. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) explain that the experiential metafunction works through the *Transitivity System*. This system shows how a clause turns experience into meaning. It does that by using process types, participants, and circumstances. The clause becomes the main place where this happens. In other words, each clause represents an event, action, or situation that people can recognize as part of lived experience. Expressions such as “aduh, capek banget ya, dek” or “ya Allah, ribet kali hidup ini” are delivered with exaggerated prosody and facial gestures, creating an experiential meaning that portrays a humorous yet familiar feminine persona.

The experiential metafunction refers to how language encodes experiences of the world, including actions, perceptions, states, and relationships. It is realized through the transitivity system, which consists of processes (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, existential), participants, and circumstances. By analyzing experiential metafunction, we can see how speakers describe events and position participants within those events. For example, when an influencer says in a paid promotional video, “*Aku pakai serum ini setiap malam, dan hasilnya kulitku jadi lebih cerah (I use this serum every night, and as the result my skin becomes brighter)*” the clause represents experiential meaning. In this utterance, the word

pakai(use) shows a material process, the participant *aku(i)* functions as the Actor, *serum ini (this serum)* as the Goal, and *kulit ku(my skin)* as the Carrier with the Attribute *lebih cerah (becomes brighter)*, while *setiap malam (every night)* functions as a circumstance of time. Through this choice of words, the influencer presents concrete actions and results that reflect a real experience of using the product. The use of experiential metafunction in such statements is important because it provides netizens with evidence and personal narratives that make the advertisement appear more authentic and convincing.

Experiential metafunction helps content creators choose words, processes, and participants to represent gender roles. For example, female influencers might use expressive and emotional material and mental processes (e.g., "I feel excited to share this recipe"). Male influencers might use informative and assertive material or relational processes (e.g., "This workout builds strength"). Lind (2023) states that these choices shape how netizens perceive gender identity in content. This means that the way content creators choose language and convey messages will influence how netizens perceive or understand the gender roles and identities depicted in the content.

Experiential metafunction is a strategic tool for representing gender experiences and roles in content. Hoang (2021) states that experiential metafunction is an important tool for understanding how experiences are conveyed and interpreted. This means that by consciously choosing processes, participants, and contexts, content creators can display authentic gender identities, communicate social values and gender norms, increase netizen engagement, and prioritize inclusivity and equality.

In the context of paid promotional videos, such as those produced by @sonu_paii, content creators have a strategic role in authentically representing gender identity, communicating social values and gender norms, and encouraging netizen engagement while prioritizing inclusivity and equality. That is why, this researcher was chosen @sonu_paii who describes the phenomenon of language use in digital content. @Sonupaii is actually a man. However, his content on TikTok, particularly when promoting something, uses different languages. This linguistic difference is based on his appearance, sometimes as a woman, called "Mamak Karbol," which represents himself as a woman or mother, and as a man, called Sonupaii, which represents as himself. Behind choosing this title can be explained through the three main focuses of the research: experiential metafunction, and realization of experiential metafunction and gender represented.

The relationship between experiential metafunction and its forms of realization indicates that gender representation is not only explicitly present but also constructed through the structures of experience represented in language. Therefore, the urgency of this study comes from the need to understand how gender appears in @sonu_paii's TikTok content through experiential metafunction. This analysis helps show how process, participant, and circumstance choices build gendered experience in the videos. The study also matters beyond theory. Its results can help netizens, content creators, and brands become more aware of gender issues and create communication strategies that are more inclusive.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the research above, the problems of the research are formulated as follows:

- 1) What types of experiential metafunction were used by @sonu_paii in his paid promotional videos?
- 2) How were the realizations of experiential metafunction used by @sonu_paii in his paid promotional videos?
- 3) How was gender represented in the @Sonu_paii promotional tiktok videos?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the problems of the research, the objectives are:

- 1) To analyse of experiential metafunction were used by @sonu_paii in his paid promotional videos.
- 2) To investigates the realizations of experiential metafunction were used by @sonu_paii in his paid promotional videos.
- 3) To investigates gender represented in the @Sonu_paii promotional tiktok videos.

1.4 Scopes of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing experiential metafunction in selected paid promotional utterances by @sonu_paii. The analysis is restricted to 3 type of experiential metafunction based on Halliday (2014) such as process, participant, and circumstance. Then, there is also investigate the experiential metafunction are realized in the influencer's paid promotional through gender represented based on Sunderland's theory (2011) to show the differences between "Mamak Karbol" and

@Sonu_paii, who sometimes he use woman's clothing such as Gamis(dress) and Jilbab (headscarf) as a woman and he is also use T-shirt as a man. The data is limited to paid promotional utterances posted in @sonu_paii's official TikTok account.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretically

Theoretically, this research enriches the application of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014), particularly the experiential metafunction, in a modern digital context. While many previous studies have applied SFL to analyze school textbooks, speeches, newspaper articles, or literary works, only a limited number of studies have explored how experiential metafunction operates in social media promotional discourse. By focusing on paid promotional videos created by an influencer such as @sonu_paii on TikTok, this study contributes new insights into how experiential metafunctions are realized in short, that are increasingly influential in today's society. Thus, this study not only extends the scope of SFL applications but also shows gender represented by Sunderland (2011) gender representation is not merely embedded in single words or grammatical structures but arises from broader discourse practices that frame individuals in particular ways. For example, discourses of the "caring mother," the "emotional woman," or the "dominant man". Its relevance to contemporary communication practices in the digital era.

1.5.2 Practically

Practically, this study is expected to provide benefits for several related parties for:

1. Students who study SFL, especially the experiential metafunction, can explore how language is used to represent gender and construct meaning in promotional videos through the selection and combination of process types.
2. Content creators who understand the role of linguistic features in promotional discourse can produce more persuasive and impactful videos by strategically combining experiential processes and gender-based communication function.
3. For further researchers, this study is recommended to be developed by analyzing a wider range of data sources or different social media platforms in order to deepen the understanding of experiential metafunction and gender representation in promotional contexts.