

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN EDUCATIONAL TEXTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIAN AND INTERNATIONAL PRIMARY ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

Rahmah Fithriani

Abstract

Despite the claim that the world is progressing toward gender parity, gender stereotyping continues to be a challenge for many countries, including Indonesia. This critical discourse study sought to investigate if gender stereotypes (still) exist in English language textbooks (ELTs) utilized in international and local (Indonesian) contexts. To this end, this study analysed visual texts portraying male and female characters from the student books of *English Chest 6* and *Let's Go 6* from a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) perspective. In terms of gender representation and responsiveness, both quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that both ELTs depict unequal portrayals. Furthermore, gender stereotypes were identified in both educational documents under investigation in two social settings, namely family and occupation/profession. This empirical research implies that, in order to achieve more equality in education, both textbook authors and schoolteachers around the world should be fully aware of gender issues encapsulated in educational documents.

Keywords

feminist critical discourse analysis, gender representation, gender stereotype, Indonesia, language textbook, visual grammar theory

1 Introduction

In the educational context, textbooks not only teach content knowledge and skills, but also instil sociocultural norms and value-laden ideologies into learners (Lee 2014, Widodo & Elyas 2020). This suggests that, as a teacher's silent partner that helps shape learners' "ways of thinking, behaving, doing, valuing, and being in the world" (Widodo 2018: 132), a textbook conveys different moral, cultural, and ideological values. To put it another way, textbooks are overtly or covertly loaded with norms and beliefs which are appropriate and accepted by society. Therefore, critical pedagogy needs to be introduced at all levels of education in order to empower both educators and learners to deal with such value-laden texts, particularly those loaded with gender issues.

It is widely acknowledged that all educational artifacts are ideologically and institutionally gender laden. As a consequence, the inclusion of gender-related

values, such as gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and gender responsiveness has been the central focus of discussion and research among scholars in the areas of language education and applied linguistics, particularly since the seminal work of Jane Sunderland (2000). Since then, researchers' interests in this topic have proliferated in inner, outer, and expanded circle countries (Kachru 1985), with special attention given to gender portrayal in educational textbooks. In line with the escalation of the feminist movement in the last decades, one topic that has attracted applied linguists' attention is the substantiation of gender stereotypes, segregations, and asymmetries which are either materially or symbolically enacted in school textbooks through a feminist perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The focal point for Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) is "discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order, that is, relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group" (Lazar 2005: 5).

During the last five years, gender (in)equality, gender (a)symmetry, and gender stereotypes in educational textbooks in general and language textbooks in particular have been well-documented. Despite some demonstrable pro-women proclivities (Yang 2011, Gebregeorgis 2016, Ghajarieh & Salami 2016), overall, the findings of these studies indicate gender inequality remains in favour of males (Clark 2016, Lee & Chin 2019, Curaming & Curaming 2020) and the presence of stereotyped gender roles (Yang 2016, Namatande-Sakwa 2018, Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei 2020) and gender-exclusive language (Lee & Collins 2010, Lee 2019) in English language textbooks across the world.

While in the international context a burgeoning interest in gender issues depicted in ELTs occurred as early as about three decades ago, it was not until recent years that a comparable development occurred in Indonesia. The findings of previous research essentially yielded similar themes emphasizing the prevalence of inequal (Damayanti 2014, Saputra 2019, Lestariyana et al. 2020) and stereotypical (Damayanti 2014, Ariyanto 2018, Setyono 2018, Lestariyana et al. 2020) representations of male and female genders in textbooks. A plethora of studies on male and female representations in English language textbooks (ELTs) have been conducted around the globe, with the vast majority employing a CDA analytical lens. Furthermore, relatively little empirical evidence focuses on the comparison of gender stereotypes in ELTs published for Indonesian and international usage. In addition, the existing work on gender representation in the Indonesian context has focused mainly on ELTs for adolescent learners in secondary education. Hence, there is a paucity of studies on ELTs for primary students. Since children at primary schools spend a great deal of their school time on reading textbooks (Sadker & Zittleman 2007) through which socially

acceptable or socially desirable viewpoints are instilled, such research is deemed necessary to further demonstrate the danger of gender-laden devaluation and the paramount role of educational textbooks as a silent agent in children's gender development.

In order to fill the aforementioned research void, the present study aims to explore how males and females are portrayed in local and international ELTs for primary education, specifically in two social context parameters, namely familial and professional contexts to find out if gender stereotyping is still an issue. The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. What are the ratios of female to male characters in local and international ELTs?
2. How do local and international ELTs portray males and females in familial contexts?
3. How do local and international ELTs portray males and females in professional contexts?

2 English language teaching in global and Indonesian contexts

The continued domination of English as an international or global language is underpinned by its widespread use in a variety of disciplines such as politics, economics, science and technology, media and communication, and education. As a result, an ever-increasing number of people in what Kachru (1985) mentions as the three concentric circles – the inner, the outer, and the expanding circle countries – are speaking and/or learning the language either as a first/native language, a second language, or a foreign language. Interestingly, the highest number of English speakers, estimated at 500 million to a billion, live in the expanding circle countries such as Japan, Iran, and Indonesia, where English has no official status but is recognized as the *lingua franca* (Crystal 2003). Reflecting the importance of English as the world's *lingua franca*, these countries have adopted English language instruction in their educational system, and many begin at the primary level so their students can learn the language at younger and younger ages. For them, English proficiency has been perceived as an essential resource to be able to compete successfully globally. Overall, English has become the *de facto* standard means of communication around the world and thus most, if not all, countries consider English language instruction to be an integral part of their educational system, and Indonesia is no exception.

English has been the most prominent foreign language taught at Indonesian schools for the past seven decades. Alongside the importance of English as a global language, Indonesia's English language teaching and learning (ELTL) curriculum has undergone more than five changes since the country obtained

its independence in 1945, with the 2013 curriculum now in use. This current curriculum focuses on improving students' oral and written communication skills, as well as raising their awareness of the nature and importance of English in order to improve the country's competitiveness in a global society (Astuti & Lukman 2019). To that purpose, English textbooks in Indonesia should cover a wide range of themes that are relevant to daily life in school, at home, and in the community.

In the earlier ETLT policy, the Indonesian government imposed English as a mandatory subject from primary to upper secondary education. However, since 2012, the government has changed their policy, stating that English is only mandatory for students in lower and upper secondary schools while those in primary schools may receive it as a local content. This means that the practice of primary English is regulated by the local government (provinces, cities, or regencies), and that schools are permitted to offer English subjects as an elective course to their students as long as they can manage the pedagogical practice. As a result, many Indonesian primary schools offer English classes to their students without necessarily constructing a proper curriculum or having certified instructors to teach it (Jazuly et al. 2019). Furthermore, because it is merely a local matter, the service does not require any specific approach, techniques, or materials and media. There has been no standard in how English teaching and learning should be handled and thus what to bring into the classroom is at the absolute discretion of the individual school, including designing curriculum documents and choosing the appropriate textbooks to use with their students. Since textbooks are a curriculum tool that helps both instructors and students perceive and understand social values (Widodo 2018), it is paramount for both school decision makers and teachers to have a critical awareness of any moral, cultural, and gender-related values instilled in the chosen educational literature.

3 Previous studies on gender stereotypes in ELTs

Over the last ten years, numerous studies have reported the existence of gender inequality and asymmetries in ELTs across the globe, with stereotyping emerging as one of the most pervasive manifestations of this problem. To begin with, Yang (2011) investigated how gender is represented in a Hong Kong government-endorsed English language textbook series for grade one primary students. The results, showing equal representation and portrayals of males and females in a similar range of activities, indicate a promising future moving towards gender equality and parity, which is consistent with the country's relatively recent policy.

However, in another study conducted in the same country about five years later, Yang (2016) reported contrasting findings of the visualized gender representation

in two popular English language textbook series for primary education in Hong Kong. Employing a qualitative approach, she thoroughly reviewed the selected illustrations of male and female characters with a particular focus on their hair and apparel. Results indicate a continuation of gender stereotyping distinguishing the commonly-acceptable physical characteristics of the two genders. In many cases, females were characterized as having long hair and wearing skirts rather than short hair and pants. However, the colour of gender stereotyping where females tend to be associated with pink and males with blue was not evident.

A similar result indicating the entrenched institutionalised patriarchy and gender stereotyping was also reported by Barton and Sakwa (2012), who analysed Ugandan English textbooks for students aged 14-15. Framing their study through the lens of CDA, they revealed female under-representation and negative portrayals in occupational and emotional spheres, which was further enhanced by the teachers' ignorance towards this gender inequity and exclusion.

In a more recent study, Curaming and Curaming (2020) explored the prevalence of gender inequality in primary English textbooks in the Philippines. Using critical discourse analysis, this study reports the perpetuation of gender stereotyping favouring male dominance. These findings indicate the existence of gender disparity, even in a highly-ranked country in global gender equality indices like the Philippines.

In the same year, Lee and Mahmoudi-Gahrouei (2020) delved into three newly published English for school textbooks from the series *Prospect* for Iranian students of Grade VII, VIII and IX in search for the perpetuation of gender and conformation of Islamic gender ideology of male predominance. Combining manual and computational analyses as the data analytical technique, they pointed to the efforts that the authors made in reducing gender bias through the use of gender-neutral dictions and an equitable distribution of male and female dialogues. However, a perpetuation of gender stereotyping and a repetition of Islamic culture were still evident through the delineation of women predominantly doing traditional stereotypical activities in familial and educational domains.

Conducted in the Indonesian EFL context, a number of studies probed gender representation in diverse primary and secondary English textbooks. Damayanti (2014) analysed visual images accompanying written texts in four primary English textbooks. Using Visual Grammar as the analytical framework, she exposed the stereotyped portrayal of women as being dependent on men in doing activities. Furthermore, male characters were predominantly related with professional activities, whereas female characters were strongly associated with physical attributes.

In a different study, Ariyanto (2018) examined gender representation in a government-endorsed EFL textbook for lower secondary education in Indonesia through the lens of CDA. With one textbook, namely *When English Rings the Bell* for the seventh grade, as the data source, the results revealed the presence of gender stereotyping in both visual and textual artifacts, where women were portrayed predominantly in familial roles and men in occupational roles. Utilizing the same data source with an additional volume (*When English Rings a Bell* textbooks for Grade VII and Grade VIII), Lestariyana et al. (2020) scrutinized the selected English textbooks to investigate how female characters were represented in both verbal and visual texts in four social contexts, namely family, occupations, school participation and achievement, and hobbies and interests. The findings indicated a slightly better gender construction in favour of females, who were portrayed in a wider range of social roles and associated with positive traits such as competence, rationality and professionalism. However, in spite of the constructive images depicted in the textbooks, gender stereotypes were still persistent in some discourses.

All in all, although the world is reported to have made progress in achieving gender parity, particularly in education (Peace Corps n.d.), empirical evidence seems to substantiate that gender stereotyping remains a challenge for many countries and Indonesia is no exception. Thus, more studies on the topic of gender representation in educational textbooks need to be conducted to validate these findings. Furthermore, despite a multitude of empirical evidence having documented the pervasiveness of gender stereotyping in EFL textbooks around the globe, relatively few studies have compared the persistence of gender stereotyping in locally- and internationally-distributed ELTs, which are analysed through a feminist CDA and a Visual Grammar Theory lens. Thus, this current research intends to contribute to the burgeoning research on gender stereotyping in ELTs, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context.

4 The present study

4.1 Research context

Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country, in which women make up slightly over half (50.1%) of its population (Countrymeters n.d.). With a population roughly balanced between men and women, gender equality enshrining the principle of equal rights between the two genders is officially incorporated in the country's fundamental principles through the 1945 Indonesian Constitution (Lestariyana et al. 2020). Nevertheless, rhetorical support for gender equality from the government has yet to be converted into substantial policy drives which

should be aimed at addressing inequality issues in Indonesia. As a consequence, Indonesian women continue to suffer from gender disparity, particularly in terms of women's participation in legislative decision-making (Tarahita & Rakhmat 2018). In line with this inauspicious state and in spite of the steadily increasing awareness of gender parity worldwide, Indonesia ranks 85th out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, the same position it has held for the past three years due to low scores gained in the areas of political empowerment and education (World Economic Forum 2019).

The stagnant ranking that Indonesia attained indicates that the country is still a long way from accomplishing social and political gender equality. Given the importance of education in raising younger generations' awareness of gender parity and equality (Foroutan 2012, Lee 2018), it is worth investigating whether differences in gender awareness in global and Indonesian contexts are reflected in stereotypical representations of gender in written materials, specifically school textbooks. The findings of this study can sensitize textbook writers, teachers, and teacher educators to the importance of identifying gender stereotypes and developing strategies to address gender inequality in textbooks in order to cultivate a gender-aware generation.

4.2 The corpus data

There are two ELT textbooks being evaluated in this study: the student book of *English Chest 6*, which is widely used in private primary schools throughout Indonesia, and the student book of *Let's Go 6*, which is used to teach English to students in over 160 countries. These two textbooks were selected due to their similarity in terms of the quantity and types of visual texts they contain. *English Chest 6*, as the locally-published ELT textbook, is one volume of the six-level English language learning series authored by Liana Robinson, edited by David Paul, and published by Compass Publishing in 2012. This series was specifically designed to cater for the Indonesian syllabus of General English for primary students while still following two international standards Cambridge Assessment English and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The book consists of three units with four lessons in each unit. Each lesson contains a wide variety of activities in the forms of conversations, stories, language builders, songs, games, etc. which were specifically developed to improve learners' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Like all other volumes in this series, this book is enriched with full-colour illustrations and photographs, which make it a rich data source for this study.

Let's Go 6, as the internationally-published ELT textbook, is the last volume of the seven-level American English course aimed at children aged five to thirteen

years old (levels beginner to pre-intermediate). This series is authored by Ritsuko Nakata, Karen Frazier, Barbara Hoskins, and Carolyn Graham and was published by Oxford University Press in 2006. While its origins are in English as a second language (ESL) teaching in the US, the series is now in widespread use with English-language learners in over 160 countries worldwide. The book has eight units containing authentic material from a variety of sources with communicative settings to assist the student in learning how to use language rather than just how to say words or sentences. Each lesson offers diverse activities which are initially oriented toward listening and speaking through dialogues, pair work and communicative games, with reading and writing activities delayed until the later part of each unit.

4.3 Data analysis

Language textbooks are educational literature that depict a wide range of social practices. Because the aim of this study is to find out whether there are gender stereotypes in educational texts, the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as an adaptation of CDA from a feminist viewpoint is deemed an appropriate analytical framework to critically evaluate how gender is constructed and depicted in the selected textbooks' discourse. I used two social context parameters: family and profession/occupation, in which female characters are usually stereotypically portrayed in educational textbooks (Lestariyana et al. 2020). Furthermore, since the data includes images or pictorials depicting human characters only, the FCDA is combined with Visual Grammar Theory (VGT). VGT considers language as a social semiotic form, which can be combined with other semiotic forms such as images to make a discourse meaningful and colourful to the readers (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

To operationalise this analysis, I adopted Giaschi's (2000) framework for a critical image evaluation of gender stereotypes in ESL textbooks, using the following criteria to guide my analysis:

1. The number of images including females/males only;
2. The number of images with the figure(s) visualized in a familial or professional context;
3. The activity(es) shown in the image(s);
4. The active figure(s) shown in the images;
5. The passive figure(s) shown in the image(s);
6. The way female and male characters are represented; and
7. The suggested relationships between the characters.

To answer the first research question, I began by identifying visual (pictorial) texts portraying the presence of both gendered characters found in the two

textbooks. For the general quantitative analysis (percentage), I calculated the number of gendered characters found in each lesson unit manually and tabulated the data in Excel worksheets. Using the two aforementioned social context parameters, I calculated the frequency of each social context represented in the textbooks. Qualitatively, as seen in Table 1, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) ideational, interpersonal, and textual parameters were employed to analyse the images in capturing how males and females are represented engaging in social encounters within the two parameters. I connected these metafunctional discourses to Barnard’s (2002) interpretations of fashions and physical appearances to further elucidate how gender is represented in the language textbooks.

Table 1 demonstrates how I applied the two theories for textual analysis.

Theory	Analysis	Sources
Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) Visual Grammar Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational/ Representational Meaning: There is interaction in the context of ‘payment activity’ between the two characters 	Fig 3. <i>English Chest 6</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal/Interactive Meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The gaze is ‘offer’ as the characters do not make eye contact with the readers ✓ The frame is in medium shot, drawing attention to both the characters by giving them equal space in the frame. ✓ The eye-level horizontal angle which appears to have been taken slightly to the left or right of the nearby characters most likely produces the same psychological effect to the readers. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textual/ Compositional Meaning The man is in the right vector, as the ‘given structure’. This vector represents him as the centre of attention, signalling male visibility over female one. 	
Barnard’s (2002) Fashion for Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The man dresses more formally signified with the shirt worn as a formal menswear, which has a collar and necktie. Meanwhile the woman wears a T-shirt, which is usually worn at home or during any causal event. 	Fig 3. <i>English Chest 6</i>

Table 1: Sample data analysis

For the purpose of the study reliability, inter-rater agreement and peer debriefing were utilized to test the interpretive and factual accuracy of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses and to offer evidence of their credibility. A fellow researcher with expertise in gendering in educational documents was invited to serve as the rater and peer assess whether or not a key point was

missing, a minor one was overemphasized, or one or more points were repeated in my analysis. To this end, I scheduled multiple sessions with the rater/debriefer throughout the data analysis process. In addition, the peer debriefer acted as a sort of critical detective to review and evaluate the aspects that required a more in-depth analysis.

5 Findings and discussion

5.1 Male-to-female appearances

The first result of the data analysis is the quantification of female and male visibility in both locally- and internationally-distributed ELTs entitled *English Chest 6* and *Let's Go 6*. A general quantification of gender representation was conducted by enumerating the number of images with male and female characters in the textbooks. Overall, it was discovered that male characters are depicted more frequently in the two textbooks as a whole than their female counterparts. As shown in Table 2, of the 465 images depicting humans in the ELTs, 154 images (33.1%) depict males only and 148 images (31.8%) depict females only. In other words, male characters were slightly more predominant than female ones.

ELTs	Images with Gendered Characters				Total of Images
	Male	Female	Mixed-Sex	Unidentified	
<i>English Chest 6</i>	69 (35.5%)	57 (29.4%)	63 (32.5)	5 (2.5%)	194 (41.7%)
<i>Let's Go 6</i>	85 (31.4%)	91 (33.6%)	90 (33.2%)	5 (1.8%)	271 (58.3%)
Total	154 (33.1%)	148 (31.8%)	153 (32.9%)	10 (2.2%)	465 (100%)

Table 2: Images with gendered characters

A closer look at the figures in Table 2 reveals that the two ELTs showcase contrasting depictions of male to female representation. Despite the fact that female representation is embroidered in all units throughout the book, *English Chest 6*, in general, shows an imbalanced visibility of the two opposite genders. Male predominance over females in this book is evident through a more frequent representation with the ratio of 1.2:1. This finding affirms the prevalently numerical dominance of male representation in ELTs as reported in a myriad of studies conducted in many parts of the world (Barton & Sakwa 2012, Curaming & Curaming 2020, Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei 2020, Lestariyana et al. 2020) indicating that the dominance of males persists in educational artifacts despite a prolonged endeavour to promote gender equality and some progress achieved (Lee & Collins 2010, Lee & Chin 2019). On the contrary, *Let's Go 6* depicts a relatively balanced distribution of male and female characters, with a ratio of

1:1.1 favouring female characters over male ones. This finding is consistent with some earlier studies (Yang 2011, Yang & Yan 2020) indicating females are no longer invisible in some ELTs, which could help promote the UNESCO gender parity campaign emphasizing “equal opportunities, choices, capabilities, power and knowledge” (UNESCO n.d.) for women and men.

Table 3 summarizes the findings related to the portrayals of male and female characters in the two sociocultural contexts used as the parameter in this study. Interestingly, the lower visibility of females in *English Chest 6* is not coupled with their quantitative representation in the activities in the two social contexts with a ratio of 1.5:1. In 44 activities involving human characters, the appearance of females is significantly more dominant than their male counterparts with 60.9 per cent to 39.6 per cent. *Let's Go 6*, on the contrary, portrays females in a lower frequency with a ratio of 1:1.3. In total, 38 female characters compared to 49 male characters are depicted engaging in various activities in the two sociocultural contexts.

ELTs	Social Context	Total of Actors	Gender of Actor		Total of Activities
			Male	Female	
<i>English Chest 6</i>	Family	20 (41.7%)	4 (20.0%)	16 (80.0%)	18
	Profession	28 (58.3%)	15 (53.6%)	13 (46.4%)	26
	Total of Gendered-specific Actors		19 (39.6%)	29 (60.4%)	
	Total of All Activities				44
<i>Let's Go 6</i>	Family	18 (20.7%)	9 (50.0%)	9 (50.0%)	15
	Profession	69 (79.3%)	40 (58.0%)	29 (42.0%)	23
	Total of Gendered-specific Actors		49 (56.3%)	38 (43.7%)	
	Total of All Activities				38

Table 3: Male and female representation in the two social contexts

However, when the analysis of gender representation is limited to each sociocultural context, the two ELTs delineate different gender portrayal in gendered-stereotyped domains. The local ELT portrays females more dominantly in doing activities within the domestic sphere with a ratio of 4:1, while males are

seen to be visible in professional-related activities with a ratio of 1.9:1. Meanwhile, in spite of men's higher visibility in the workplace with 58 per cent presentation compared to 42 per cent, the international ELT represents both genders equally in the familial domain in which each gender is portrayed nine times doing domestic chores. These findings suggest that both local and international ELT textbooks perpetuate the stereotypical depiction of gender inequalities in specific social areas. Women are underrepresented in the professional sector in this instance. However, when it comes to gender representation in familial settings, the two ELTs produce very different results. While the local ELT retains the conventional depiction of women dominating home activities, the international ELT depicts strong male participation in a variety of domestic tasks. This fairly proportional presence of both genders in this sphere promotes a positive image of domestic responsibilities that men and women in the modern era can share.

5.2 Gender portrayals in familial context

Social roles are inevitably gender-based, which becomes the foremost impetus for the traditional dichotomy between males and females. In diverse sociocultural contexts, gender roles become the norms for how one is expected to act and behave based upon their assigned sex, which in turns contributes to gender stereotypes. One sociocultural context in which gender stereotyping is often found is the home sphere.

Figure 1 depicts the portrayal of two women doing childrearing activities with two baby girls as found in the national ELT. This portrayal in a glance shares same points of similarities. First, both of the women position their infants on their left sides so they can keep their right hand free for other tasks. Second, they seem to enjoy their activities which can be proven through the presence of smiles on their faces while interacting with the babies they are taking care of. Third, since babies usually cry when being left with people they are not familiar with, it could be assumed that they (the women and the babies) have a personal relationship, most likely mother and daughter.



Figure 1: Two female characters doing childrearing activities (Source: *English Chest 6*, p. 70 & p. 38)

A closer look at the data reveals detailed information regarding the babies' ages and the parenting behaviour the two women demonstrate. In the first picture (on the left), the woman is holding the baby, placing her on her left leg with her hands around her body. From the way the woman places her left hand around her waist and the right hand on her tummy, she is trying to support her sitting position to prevent a possible fall. As shown by typical baby milestones that a baby nearing the independent sitting stage ages from seven to nine months (Dewar 2019), it could be hypothesized that the baby in the picture is one year old or younger and the activity is likely to be done regularly as the mother helps her baby practice to sit independently.

In the second picture (on the right), the woman is taking care of the baby who seems to be at the milestone of learning to stand and walk independently. Thus, it could be predicted that the baby is between one to one and half years old. Similar to the woman in the left picture, this woman also seems to do this regular activity to make the baby practice standing independently while showing her natural nurturing and protective instincts which could be presumed from her hand gestures. As we can see, the right hand is holding a baby rattle to grab the baby's attention so she will think that it is playtime instead of independently standing practice time, while the other hand is positioned on the baby's upper back to support her standing position as well to protect her from falling backwards. Furthermore, her protective instinct is also manifested in her sitting position.

The woman sits on the right side because there is no safety cushion that could protect the baby if it fell on that side, while there is a sofa back behind her and the arm of the sofa on her left side. Furthermore, the woman positions her legs to the right side towards the baby indicating that she is ready to use them as a barrier if the baby falls forwards.

These two portrayals of women doing domestic chores convey a stereotypical message that women are responsible for child rearing and every mother is supposed to have maternal responses and thus she should automatically be ready to nurture her offspring, Furthermore, this visual representation indicates the existence of a subtle, persistent inequality in domestic chores, especially in nurturing, and highlights male and female dichotomy in terms of domestic responsibilities, in which women (mothers) are expected to hold child rearing obligations and accept them as legitimate while men (fathers) do neither. This finding echoes some previous studies (Lee & Collins 2010, Barton & Sakwa 2012, Gebregeorgis 2016, Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei 2020), which perpetuates traditional stereotypes associated with women’s and men’s gender roles in household settings, and shows that women are still confined to their traditionally ‘female’ roles, ranging from nurturing to home making.

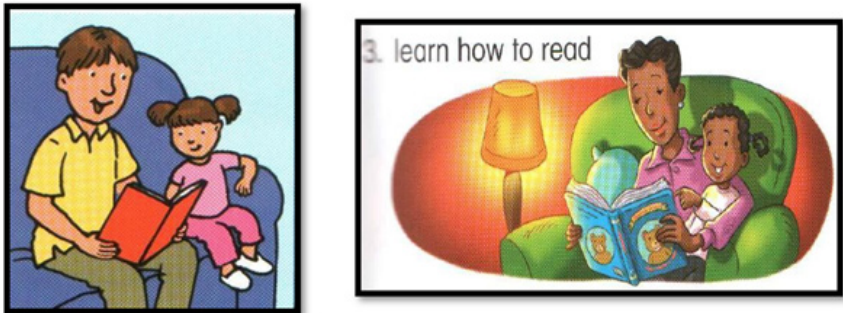


Figure 2: Male and female characters doing childrearing activities (Source: *Let’s Go 6*, p. 27 & p. 57)

A different gender visualization in the domestic domain is found in the international ELT in which childrearing activities are performed by male and female characters as shown in Figure 2. The first picture on the left and the second picture on the right seem to share similar portrayals of male and female parents enjoying reading time activities with their daughters. These depictions may introduce the concept of shared emancipation, which emphasizes the equitable

responsibilities of men and women within the context of familial tasks (Feldman 2000, Lestariyana et al. 2020). However, a deeper analysis of the data reveals at least two substantial differences leading to subtly stereotypical portrayals of the two genders, namely the sitting and reading position, and the parents' attire. From the sitting position perspective, the first picture depicts a father with his little girl sitting on a couch during a reading time activity. The girl is seated on the edge of the couch between him and the couch arm which implies the father's protective act to keep her safe and give her protection from falling. A further analysis of the girl's gesture provides deeper information related to the girl's age. Since she leans her left elbow on the couch arm indicating that she is able to sit by herself and dangles her legs above the floor indicating her small stature, it could be predicted that the girl is about two to four years old. A similar protective instinct is also implied by the parent character in the second picture. The mother puts her daughter on the left side of her lap while her left arm wraps around her tiny body. This sitting position does not only provide protection from falling but also a comfortable and warm backrest.

Focusing the analysis on the reading position, it could also be concluded that the two pictures reveal a stereotypical portrayal of male and female parents childrearing. In the first picture, the father sits in the middle of the couch while holding a book precisely in line with his line of sight, while the daughter is seated on his left side with some space left between them. The daughter, who seems interested in what the father is reading, tries to lean her small body towards the book to have a better view. This portrayal suggests that this is not a reading time activity when parents read a story book to their children, but rather a regular portrayal of a father spending some leisure time by reading a book with a daughter who happens to sit next to him. The second picture suggests the opposite where the mother seems immensely involved in the mother-daughter reading time activity. This reading time activity between the mother and the daughter can be observed through the selection of the book with kid-theme cover and its placement in the line of sight of both characters. These two portrayals delineate the different sitting and reading positions of male and female parents when doing reading time activities with their children, covertly sending the stereotypical message that females make better parents than males, particularly in childrearing-related tasks. In this case, mothers are portrayed as providing better protection and comfort when taking care of their offspring, while fathers always act aloof and are often detached from their children. As a result, mothers are believed to have a stronger bond with their children during pregnancy, while fathers appear to have a weak bond with their children and are more likely to abandon them.

Regarding the way the male and female characters dress, the two pictures send underlying messages differentiating the two genders' domestic roles and responsibilities. In the first picture, the man is visualized wearing casual dress which may indicate that this activity is done on either weekdays (before or after office hours) or at weekends. On the contrary, the woman in the second picture is more well-dressed and wearing make-up and accessories suggesting she is either dressing up for an event or has just arrived home from her daytime activities. However, since the light behind is on, it is more likely that this activity is done in the evening or after office hours when the mother comes home from work. These two portrayals of the characters' appearance suggest that male and female parents have different responsibilities in terms of childrearing. For male parents, reading time with children is only done when they have spare time and are not busy with their work as the family breadwinners, while for female parents childrearing is viewed to be their main obligation, including those who have professional careers.

The two figures found in local and international ELTs subtly assert a mother's social role in the domestic sphere regardless of her socioeconomic status and educational and professional choices. From a cultural perspective, taking care of domestic chores and children becomes a cultural standard and tradition for all women, whether they choose to work or stay at home as full-time housewives (Eagly et al. 2020, Lestariyana et al. 2020). Although numerous studies have documented men's changing attitudes toward women in recent years, indicating universal support for women to pursue careers and a greater acceptance of the concept of gender equality, traditional values still reign supreme in the home (Donner 2020). In other words, while it is true that men of modern generations have become more open-minded and egalitarian over time in regard to the sexual division of labour, this is not the case in the home. Furthermore, these portrayals in Figures 1 and 2 reinforce the lay beliefs that women have better childrearing skills than men. In the Indonesian context, homemaking which includes childrearing duty is considered a traditionally feminine role that should be maintained by fulltime housewives and working women. Most Indonesian parents assign their daughters roles that involve caring and nurturing. They grow up practicing it by engaging in motherly activities like caring for their dolls or younger siblings. Therefore, by the time they become adults, they have perfected these skills.

5.3 Gender portrayals in professional context

There is a general consensus that occupations are socially gendered (Lestariyana et al. 2020), resulting in the existence of gender-stereotyped jobs,

which are shaped by social expectations about whether particular jobs are a better fit for men or women (e.g. dealing with machinery is perceived as a man's job, whereas cooking a woman's job). Within the gender-role stereotyping framework, a series of empirical studies have reported diverse stereotypes and misconceptions of gender roles and abilities at work, which become influential attributions to discrimination against women in recruitment, pay, and career development prospects (Mihail 2006). Consequently, the workplace becomes the very sociocultural context where multiple forms of gender inequalities are present.

The data in Figure 3 shows stereotyped portrayals of males and females in the working sphere as found in the national ELT. The picture portrays the interaction of a woman and a man in a workplace as a sociocultural space. In this situation, the woman is receiving some money, probably her wage from the man because there is the word 'pay' written on the paper handed over. Since the woman's hands are pictured in a lower position than the man's, it could be further assumed that the female character works as an employee and the man plays the role of an employer. This assumption can also be strengthened by the analysis based on the perspective of the outfits worn by the two characters. It could be presumed that the man holds a higher professional position compared to the woman since he dresses more formally which can be observed from the presence of a tie as part of his apparel.



Figure 3: Male and female characters in a professional context (Source: *Let's Go 6*, p. 70)

This particular illustration contains some hidden gender stereotypes that deserve attention. When females are depicted in the work sphere, they tend to be positioned as a subordinate instead of a superior or a coordinate. In other words, this portrayal ratifies female inferiority in the occupational domain, which perpetuates society's stereotypes and prejudices against women in positions of power (Catalyst 2002, 2005). Women are perceived to be less skilful and motivated to take on managerial responsibilities effectively in organizational settings, whereas men are believed to be more skilled and are therefore frequently connected with higher-paying positions (Damayanti 2014). As a consequence, despite the fact that gender-related barriers and biases have decreased over the past year, gender stereotypes continue to impede women's career advancement. This finding shows a concordance with previous studies (Clark 2016, Lee 2018, Lee & Chin 2019), which indicates that gender inequality exists in the occupational context. In line with the current reality, women's attainment in the corporate world has made limited progress with only 29 per cent of women in senior management positions worldwide (IBR 2020).

In association with the findings related to gender portrayal in the domestic domain, it could also be presumed that negative beliefs about women's competence to perform management roles are affected by their primary responsibility for homemaking and childrearing hence they would need more breaks from work and, as a result, they would be given fewer working hours compared to their male co-workers. From this viewpoint, women are associated with behaviours and attitudes that contradict the demands of a successful managerial position (Schein 1973, 1975, Terborg 1977).

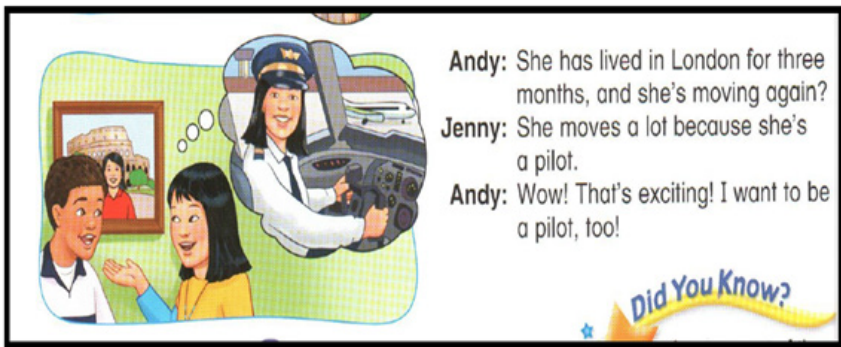


Figure 4: The stereotypical gender portrayal in professional context in *Let's Go 6* (p. 57)

On the contrary, the data from the international ELT portraying a woman as a pilot (Figure 4) depicts a challenge to gender stereotype in the professional domain at least in two aspects. Firstly, a pilot is a job which requires both skills and high academic achievement, two attributes which are rarely associated with women. Secondly, a pilot is also perceived to be a traditionally masculine job. Thus, this portrayal of a woman pursuing a career as a pilot promotes the movement of equality in a labour-force position (Penner 2008).

Another positive message reinforcing the contribution of females in professional contexts can also be observed in the text accompaniment. It depicts a conversation between the female character, Jenny, and the male character, Andy, who confirms Jenny's sister's nomadic lifestyle as a result of her career choice as a pilot. At the end of the talk, Andy shows his excitement at following in Jenny's sister's footsteps as a pilot regardless of whether his desire is motivated by the profession itself or the lifestyle the pilot leads. This example provides a positive portrayal of a woman as a role model, even to the opposite gender. The data also reveals the authors' level of commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (Curaming & Curaming 2020). This could indicate that the textbook authors are aware that the gender equality movement has resulted in more women choosing to pursue a career nowadays. The portrayals of women in their professions convey a positive message that women, too, can pursue an excellent career, such as being a pilot.

However, the positive messages of the female characters in professional domains depicted in Figure 4 do not readily mean that this image is gender stereotype free. As seen in the data, the female pilot is visualized to have visited the Colosseum in Italy. This indicates that the female character spends her spare time traveling to popular places in the world as the benefit of being a pilot. It is important to note that the woman is portrayed to have her touristy activities by herself, which suggests that she is a single woman. Given the previous discussion implicating that it is quite common to assume professional women who have family would prioritize their maternal responsibilities over professional ones, it could be concluded that the woman in the picture can pursue her career as a pilot because she is a single woman with no familial responsibilities. Young women with good careers may be self-sufficient, confident, and completely dedicated to their professional roles, but when they have family to care for, these qualities are often overlooked. Meanwhile, as part of their multiple responsibilities as wives and mothers, married women who have paid employment due to a necessity to support their families financially or a desire to harness their professional potential and capacity must nevertheless perform domestic tasks (Lestariyana et al. 2020). In conclusion, this portrayal may perpetuate the stereotype that women's career opportunities are frequently hampered by motherhood responsibilities.

6 Conclusion

The goal of the present study was to evaluate how gender is portrayed in two ELTs for primary schooling distributed in Indonesian and international contexts in a quest to determine if gender stereotypes are still perpetuated in the currently-used educational documents. It is worth noting that the focus of this study was limited to visual texts with male and/or female characters. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding and to provide some evidence of gender stereotypes in two social contexts, namely family and occupation/profession. The results show that in terms of gender representation and responsiveness, both ELTs depict unequal portrayals of both genders, in which females are more visible in the local ELT while males are more visible in the international one. Furthermore, both genders are also portrayed stereotypically where females are stereotyped as performing very well in the domestic domain while males in the professional sphere. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude gender stereotypes still exist in educational texts.

Despite textbook authors' efforts to promote gender equality, this empirical research reveals that there is still a long way to go in terms of reforming schoolbooks to build global and Indonesian egalitarian norms. To achieve gender parity, a joint effort of all stakeholders is needed, notably textbook authors and school instructors around the world who can act as agents of change to ensure that the next generation has mutual respect and may reach their full potential regardless of gender. Textbook authors must be completely aware of gender stereotyping and sensitivity in order to present balanced gender roles in language textbooks. Teachers can assume a more dynamic part in promoting gender equality among young learners through the utilization of supplementary teaching materials with balanced portrayals of males and females doing similar activities.

References

- Ariyanto, S. (2018) 'A portrait of gender bias in the prescribed Indonesian ELT textbook for junior high school students.' *Sexuality & Culture* 22, 1054-1076. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-018-9512-8>
- Astuti, S. and Lukman, M. (2019) 'The urgency of designing national English curriculum for elementary school in Indonesia.' In: *Proceedings of the 3rd UHAMKA International Conference on ELT and CALL (UICEL)*. Online document. Retrieved on 10 January 2021 from <<https://journal.uhamka.ac.id/index.php/uicell/article/view/4165>>.
- Barnard, M. (2002) *Fashion as Communication*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315013084>
- Barton, A. and Sakwa, L. (2012) 'The representation of gender in English textbooks in Uganda.' *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 20(2), 173-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2012.669394>.

- Catalyst (2002) 'Women in leadership: A European business imperative (report).' Retrieved on 9 February 2021 from <<https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-leadership-a-european-business-imperative/>>.
- Catalyst (2005) 'Women "take care," men "take charge;"— Stereotyping of U.S. business leaders exposed (report).' Retrieved on 9 February 2021 from <<https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-take-care-men-take-charge-stereotyping-of-u-s-business-leaders-exposed/>>.
- Clark, I. (2016) 'A qualitative analytic case study of subliminal gender bias in Japanese ELTs.' *SAGE Open* 6(3), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016653437>
- Crystal, D. (2003) *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Curaming, E. M. and Curaming, R. A. (2020) 'Gender (in)equality in English textbooks in the Philippines: A critical discourse analysis.' *Sexuality & Culture* 24, 1167-1188. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09750-4>
- Countrymeters (n.d.) 'Indonesia population.' Retrieved on 20 February 2021 <<https://countrymeters.info/en/Indonesia>>.
- Damayanti, I. L. (2014) 'Gender construction in visual images in textbooks for primary school students.' *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3(2), 100-116. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v3i2.272>
- Dewar, G. (2019) 'Motor milestones: How do babies develop during the first two years?' *Parenting Science*. Retrieved on 15 February 2021 from <<https://www.parentingscience.com/motor-milestones.html>>.
- Donner, F. (2020) 'The household work men and women do, and why.' *The New York Times*. Retrieved on 2 February 2021 from <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/12/us/the-household-work-men-and-women-do-and-why.html>>.
- Eagly, A. H., Nater, C., Miller, D. I., Kaufmann, M. and Sczesny, S. (2020) 'Gender stereotypes have changed: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of U.S. public opinion polls from 1946 to 2018.' *American Psychologist* 75(3), 301-315. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000494>
- Feldman, R. (2000) 'Parents' convergence on sharing and marital satisfaction, father involvement, and parent-child relationship at the transition to parenthood.' *Infant Mental Health Journal* 21(3), 176-191. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-0355\(200007\)21:3<176::AID-IMHJ3>3.0.CO;2-4](https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-0355(200007)21:3<176::AID-IMHJ3>3.0.CO;2-4)
- Foroutan, Y. (2012) 'Gender representation in school textbooks in Iran: The place of languages.' *Current Sociology* 60(6), 771-787. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392112459744>
- Gebregeorgis, M. Y. (2016) 'Gender construction through textbooks: The case of an Ethiopian primary school English textbook.' *Africa Education Review* 13(3-4), 119-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2016.1224579>
- Ghajarieh, A. and Salami, A. (2016) 'Gendered representations of male and female social actors in Iranian educational materials.' *Gender Issues* 33, 258-270. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-016-9157-6>
- Giaschi, P. (2000) 'Gender positioning in education: A critical image analysis of ESL texts.' *TESL Canada Journal* 18(1), 32-46. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v18i1.898>
- IBR (2020) 'Women in business 2020: Putting the blueprint into action.' In: *Grant Thornton Report* (pp. 1-7). Online document. Retrieved on 20 February 2021 from <https://www.grantthornton.global/globalassets/1.-member-firms/global/insights/women-in-business/2020/women-in-business-2020_report.pdf>.

- Jazuly, A., Indrayani, N. and Prystiananta, N. C. (2019) 'The teaching of English in Indonesian primary schools: A response to the new policy.' *Linguistic, English Education and Art (LEE) Journal* 3(1), 17-25. <https://doi.org/10.31539/leea.v3i1.609>
- Kachru, B. (1985) 'Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: English language in the outer circle.' In: Quirk, R. and Widdowson, H. (eds) *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 11-36.
- Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. (2006) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Lazar, M. M. (2005) 'Feminist CDA as political perspective and praxis.' In: Lazar, M. M. (ed.) *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 1-28.
- Lee, J. F. K. (2014) 'Gender representation in Hong Kong primary school ELT textbooks: A comparative study.' *Gender and Education* 26(4), 356-376.
- Lee, J. F. K. (2018) 'Gender representation in Japanese EFL textbooks: A corpus study.' *Gender and Education* 30(3), 379-395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1214690>
- Lee, J. F. K. (2019) 'In the pursuit of a gender-equal society: Do Japanese EFL textbooks play a role?' *Journal of Gender Studies* 28(2), 204-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2018.1423956>
- Lee, J. F. K. and Chin, A. C. O. (2019) 'Are females and males equitably represented? A study of early readers.' *Linguistics and Education* 49, 52-61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2018.12.003>
- Lee, J. F. K. and Collins, P. (2010) 'Construction of gender: A comparison of Australian and Hong Kong English language textbooks.' *Journal of Gender Studies* 19(2), 121-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589231003695856>
- Lee, J. F. K. and Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, V. (2020) 'Gender representation in instructional materials: A study of Iranian English language textbooks and teachers' voices.' *Sexuality & Culture* 24, 1107-1127. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09747-z>
- Lestariyana, R. P. D., Widodo, H. P. and Sulistiyo, U. (2020) 'Female representation in government-mandated English language textbooks used in Indonesian junior high schools.' *Sexuality & Culture* 24, 1150-1166. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09752-2>.
- Mihail, D. (2006) 'Gender-based stereotypes in the workplace: The case of Greece.' *Equal Opportunities International* 25(5), 373-388. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02610150610706708>
- Namatande-Sakwa, L. (2018) 'The construction of gender in Ugandan English textbooks: A focus on gendered discourses.' *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 26(4), 609-629. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2018.1436583>
- Peace Corps. (n.d.) 'Global issues: Gender equality and women's empowerment.' Retrieved on 15 February 2021 from <<https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/global-issues-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/>>.
- Penner, A. M. (2008) 'Gender differences in extreme mathematical achievement: An international perspective of biological and social forces.' *American Journal of Sociology* 114 Suppl, S138-170. <https://doi.org/10.1086/589252>
- Sadker, D. and Zittleman, K. (2007) 'Gender bias from colonial America to today's classrooms.' In: Banks, J. A. and McGee Banks, C. A. (eds) *Multicultural education: Issues and Perspectives*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. 135-169.

- Saputra, F. D. (2019) 'Gender representation in EFL textbooks.' *Edukasi* 6(1), 247-259. <https://doi.org/10.19109/ejpp.v6i1.3109>.
- Schein, V. E. (1973) 'The relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics.' *Journal of Applied Psychology* 57(2), 95-100. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0037128>
- Schein, V. E. (1975) 'Relationships between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers.' *Journal of Applied Psychology* 60(3), 340-344. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076637>
- Setyono, B. (2018) 'The portrayal of women in nationally-endorsed English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks for senior high school students in Indonesia.' *Sexuality & Culture* 22(4), 1077-1093. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09747-z>
- Sunderland, J. (2000) 'Issues of language and gender in second and foreign language education.' *Language Teaching* 33(4), 203-223. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800015688>
- Tarahita, D. and Rakhmat, M. Z. (2018) 'Indonesia needs to address persistent gender inequality problem.' *The Globe Post*. Retrieved 15 February 2021 from <<https://theglobepost.com/2018/06/18/gender-inequality-indonesia-women/>>.
- Terborg, J. R. (1977) 'Women in management: A research review.' *Journal of Applied Psychology* 62(6), 647-664. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.62.6.647>
- UNESCO (n.d.) 'Priority gender equality.' Retrieved on 6 February 2021 <<https://en.unesco.org/genderequality>>.
- Widodo, H. P. (2018) 'A critical micro-semiotic analysis of values depicted in the Indonesian ministry of national education-endorsed secondary school English textbook.' In: Widodo, H. P., Perfecto, M. R. G., Canh, L. V. and Buripakdi, A. (eds) *Situating Moral and Cultural Values in ELT Materials: The Southeast Asian Context*. Cham: Springer. 131-152.
- Widodo, H. P. and Elyas, T. (2020) 'Introduction to gender in language education.' *Sexuality & Culture* 24, 1019-1027. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09753-1>
- World Economic Forum (2019) 'Global gender gap report 2020.' Retrieved 6 February 2021 from <<https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-equality>>.
- Yang, C. C. R. (2011) 'Gender representation in a Hong Kong primary English textbook series: The relationship between language planning and social policy.' *Current Issues in Language Planning* 12(1), 77-88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2011.541390>
- Yang, C. C. R. (2016) 'Are males and females still portrayed stereotypically? Visual analyses of gender in two Hongkong primary English language textbook series.' *Gender and Education* 28(5), 674-692. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2015.1103839>
- Yang, C. C. R. and Yan, T. L. (2020) 'An analysis of gender representation in territory-wide system assessment English language papers for primary school students in Hong Kong.' *Sexuality & Culture* 24, 1128-1149. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09754-0>

Sources

- Robinson, L. (2012) *English Chest 6 (Student Book)*. Indonesia: Compass Publishing.
- Nakata, R., Frazier, K., Hoskins, B. and Graham, C. (2006) *Let's Go 6 (Student Book)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rahmah Fithriani is Associate Professor of English at the Education Department at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. She received her doctorate in Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies from the University of New Mexico, USA. Her current research interests include creative writing in EFL contexts, technology integration in L2 teaching and learning, and gendering in L2 teaching and learning.

Address: Rahmah Fithriani, Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Jl. Willièm Iskandar Pasar V Medan 20371, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. [e-mail: rahmahfithriani@uinsu.ac.id]