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GENDER PORTRAYALS IN INDONESIAN AND INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS: A CRITICAL IMAGE ANALYSIS

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Refereed Article

Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that textbooks play a critical role in instilling sociocultural norms, values, and ideologies to learners. Within this role, they are also recognized to have significant contribution in the development of learners' gender roles, particularly during primary education. A great deal of information about gender-appropriate behaviour, traits, and social roles projected in the textbooks is available for children to model and imitate. As a result, textbooks can be effectively used to either promote or perpetuate gender (in)equality and (dis)parity. Unfortunately, in the last few years, Indonesia has witnessed little improvement in gender parity and equity, despite the continuously growing awareness in global contexts. Since textbooks play a paramount role in canalizing gender ideologies or values, this study is aimed at examining whether differences in gender equality in global and Indonesian contexts are reflected in gender representation patterns in English language textbooks (ELTs) distributed internationally and locally. Through a critical image analysis perspective, this study discloses emerging differences between the two ELTs in terms of the frequency of male-to-female appearances, where the international ELT depicts a fairer distribution between the two genders. However, the prevalence of gender stereotyping in three social domains namely, family, occupation, and leisure activities is evident in both ELTs under examination. This study suggests that ELT authors present a more equal direction of learning materials that delineate gender equity in any EFL textbooks, particularly those used in Indonesia.

Keywords

critical discourse analysis, critical image analysis, EFL textbook, gender stereotype, Indonesia

Introduction

Beyond their function as a channel of knowledge transmission, textbooks have been widely acknowledged to play a paramount role in infusing sociocultural norms, values, and ideologies to learners (Goyal & Rose, 2020; Lee, 2014b; Widodo & Elyas, 2020). As what Widodo (2018) explicated, school textbooks serve as “an instructional guide that helps learners engage with these value-laden texts in order to expect them to learn the appropriate ways of thinking, behaving, doing, valuing, and being in the world” (p. 132). It implies the prominence of textbooks, which are often viewed as authoritative by teachers and students, thus, accepted without any challenge (Lee & Collin, 2010; Lee & Mahmoudi- Gahrouie, 2020) in gender construction and socialization. In this regard, textbooks may serve as social agents of promoting gender equality and parity or perpetuating biases and stereotypes.

From the perspective of social cognitive theory (SCT) emphasizing the crucial role of imitation, observation, and modelling in human development (Bandura, 2001), textbooks are also recognized to have significant contribution in learners' gender role development,

particularly during primary education. ⁴⁵ A great deal of information about gender-appropriate behaviour, traits, and social roles projected in the textbooks is available for children to model and imitate. Furthermore, since students spend the majority of their classroom time using textbooks (Sadker & Zittleman, 2007), the constant exposure to the overt as well as covert gender practices and ideologies embedded in the textbooks subsequently shapes their gender view of the normative ways of thinking, acting, and behaving according to how gender is represented in them (Widodo & Elyas, 2020).

Considering its purported significant contribution to gender equality and parity, gender representation in school textbooks had become researchers' focus of interest since 1970s (e.g., Britton & Lumpkin 1977; Frasher & Walker, 1972; Nilsen, 1977). However, studies focusing on gender issues in language textbooks, particularly in the context of English language textbooks (ELTs) have only proliferated about a decade later (e.g., Graci, 1989; Hellinger, 1980; Porreca 1984) after the publication of ³ Hartman and Judd's (1978) seminal work 'Sexism and TESOL materials.' Since then, researchers' interests in this topic ¹ have been burgeoning in inner, outer, and expanded countries. Despite some demonstrable pro-women proclivities ⁸ (Gebregeorgis, 2016; Ghajarieh & Salami, 2016), the findings of these studies overall indicate ¹ gender inequality remaining in favour of males and the presence of stereotyped gender roles and gender-exclusive language in English language textbooks across the world (Ansary & Babaii, 2003; Namatende-Sakwa, 2018; Lee & Chin, 2019; Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2020; Yang, 2016).

While there was a surge in interest in gender issues depicted in ELTs in the early 1980s in the international setting, a similar development did not emerge in Indonesia until recently. Inequal and stereotyped depictions of male and female genders in textbooks were found to be prevalent (Ariyanto, 2018; Damayanti, 2014; Lestariyana et al., 2020; Setyono, 2018). To validate the findings from previous studies, further studies are needed to investigate biased messages and stereotypical representations of gender in ELTs from a gender role perspective.

Indonesian context was advertently chosen as the focus in this study because gender inequality is still prevalent in this country, despite the steadily increasing awareness of gender parity in global context. In the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Indonesia is posited in the exact same rank it has been occupied for the last three year, 85 out of 153 countries in terms of the ³³ most gender-equal country in the world (World Economic Forum, 2019). It is interesting to probe if differences in ¹⁰ community awareness of gender equality and parity in ² global and Indonesian contexts are reflected in the representations of gender in written

materials, particularly school textbooks in Indonesia. In order to fill the research void and to investigate such assumption, the present study aims to explore how females are represented in Indonesian ELTs for primary education. Based on the purpose of this study, the following research question guided this investigation: “How are male and female characters represented in the local and the international ELTs in terms of 1). frequency of occurrence; 2) their familial and occupational roles; and 3) leisure activities they are engaging in?”

Literature Review

School Textbooks and Gender (In)equality

Education plays a pivotal role in defining power relations, (non)discriminatory norms, and social (in)equality. It may be used as a tool to canalize cultural prejudice leading to discrimination, or to embrace multicultural and diverse society imposing the equal position of men and women. With regards to this function, the need to promote gender equality through the adoption of gender-fairness in all the educational policies, practices, and documents has long been campaigned by the international community. School textbooks, as one type of educational documents, are one of the most powerful agents for gender socialization (Foroutan, 2012; Setyono & Widodo, 2018; Widodo, 2018). One’s view of gender roles, expectations and values, commonly shaped by growing up in a particular culture and society will then be ‘reinforced and/or transformed with what is conveyed in textbooks’ (Luk, 2004, p. 3), not only through visual presentations but also the messages in text (Wu & Liu, 2015). Similar to this belief, Widodo and Elyas (2020) contend that textbooks could be the most salient agents of instilling gender-laden values such as gender equality, mainstreaming, and stereotyping, thus they play a fundamental role in shaping the learners’ worldview of the roles and responsibilities of males and females in a society (Kobia, 2009).

For primary education, the construction of gender equality in school textbooks are considered as particularly important. Children of primary schools undergo essential development cognitively and socially during which they learn the basic factual knowledge and appropriate social values and norms from their teachers, peers, and textbooks (Lestariyana et al., 2020). In addition, they spend a great deal of their school time on reading textbooks (Sadker & Zittleman, 2007). As a result, what the primary school children see in the textbooks will strongly influence their view of life and shape their belief, attitudes and values (Kereszty 2009; Wu & Liu, 2015). In this regard, if gender stereotype appears in textbooks, the subliminal implanting of this view may have an insidious impact on their development in various ways, which include inequality in learning opportunities,

Considering their crucial influence on children's gender role development, ideally, school textbooks should represent balanced gender roles while avoiding gender biases and stereotypes (Widodo & Elyas, 2020). Unfortunately, much empirical evidence proves textbooks paradoxically serve as a place for nurturing gender inequality, in various forms of manifestation including female omission, male firstness, linguistic sexism, and gender bias and stereotyping.

⁴⁰ Previous Studies on Gender Presentation in ELTs

Over the past few decades, voluminous studies have reported the existence of gender inequality in English language textbooks (ELTs) across the globe, in which stereotyping emerged as one common plaguing manifestation. Despite the growing ubiquity of better constructions favouring female gender in some recent studies (e.g., Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Yang & Yan, 2020), the preponderance delineates that males and females are mostly ascribed to specific attributes, characteristics, or roles overemphasizing the existing differences between the two genders. For examples, males are more likely to be described as active, aggressive, and competitive, while females as passive, emotionally expressive, dependent, and weak (e.g., Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Damayanti, 2014; Wu & Liu, 2015). Likewise, males are likely to be pictured doing more physically demanding work while utilizing high technology and other sophisticated tools in diverse social and occupational roles. Females, on contrary, are typically assigned domestic and nurturing tasks like cooking, dishwashing, knitting, and babysitting (e.g., Aguilar, 2021; Ariyanto, 2018; Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Hall, 2014; Lee, 2014b)

To begin with, Barton and Sakwa (2012) addressed the topic of gender representation in a secondary English textbook endorsed by the Ministry of Education of Uganda. Employing a mixed-methods approach, they demystified the overtly gender stereotype depicted in the textbook as men were attributed with better paying and high-status jobs, while women's occupational roles were not only limited but also restricted mainly to the domestic sphere. Furthermore, women were also often portrayed as helpless and weak wives or mothers-in-law with negative emotional state.

Focusing on a similar topic, Hall (2014) examined how males and females were represented in two EFL textbooks locally designed for Iranian secondary students. Although the findings indicate gender equity in job possibilities and leisure activities, a perpetuation of gender stereotyping was still evident through the delineation of women predominantly doing

traditional stereotypical activities such as cooking, serving food, and taking care of the children.

In the same year, Lee (2014b) delved into 12 primary English language textbooks published in 1988 and 2005 in search for any correlation between Hong Kong women's higher status in the last decades with how gender was depicted in the examined textbooks. The findings revealed a promising notion of gender parity in a certain extent, yet the prevalence of stereotyped images of both genders and women's more limited range of social roles were indisputable. Similar findings were also reported by Wu & Liu (2015) who compared three sets of primary English textbooks published by People's Education Press (PEP) of China from 1978 to 2003. Results suggested that in spite of some progress towards gender parity, females still suffered from gender stereotypes in occupational, familial, and educational roles and activities during the past over thirty years.

Curaming and Curaming (2020) conducted their study in the Philippines, a country that consistently ranks high in global gender equality indices. Inspired by the country's 'achievement' at bridging the gender gap, they investigated whether gender inequality was still prevalent in the Philippine's primary English textbooks. Using critical discourse analysis as the analytical tool, they discovered that, despite some fairly ambivalent patterns of gender relations in the textbooks, gender inequality and disparity continue to favour male characters.

In a more recent study, Aguilar (2021) examined male and female representation in ELTs used in Mexican public elementary schools. Employing quantitative and qualitative methods, the study looked at how male and female are depicted in the occupational sphere in three EFL textbooks used in early elementary grades through visuals and photos. The findings revealed that females are underrepresented in terms of visibility and occupational diversity. This study also revealed stereotypical gender attributions in terms of occupational roles, with females depicted in traditionally female-dominated nursing and caring occupations and males in traditionally male-dominated occupations.

Conducted in Indonesian EFL context, a number of studies probed gender representation in diverse primary and secondary English textbooks. As a beginning, Damayanti (2014) investigated four primary English textbooks published by four different renowned local publishers, with the focus on visual images accompanying written texts. Through the lens of Visual Grammar, the findings revealed the stereotyped portrayal of women as being dependent on men in doing activities. Furthermore, stereotyped portrayals of the two genders were also observed in other aspects, for examples male characters were associated with professional activities and female characters with physical attributes.

Similarly, Ariyanto (2018) examined gender representation in a government-endorsed EFL textbook for lower secondary education. The results indicated that gender stereotyping was prevalent in both visual artifacts and textual texts, with women dominating familial roles and men dominating occupational roles.

Slightly different findings were reported by Setyono (2018) and Lestariyana et al. (2020) who scrutinized English textbooks for lower and upper secondary education, respectively. The findings of both studies indicated better gender construction in favour of females who were portrayed in a wider range of social roles and associated with positive traits such as competent, rational, and professional. Nonetheless, despite the constructive images depicted in textbooks, gender stereotypes still persisted in some discussions.

³⁰ CDA as a Research Tool

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multi-functional approach to studying discourse that stems from a critical theory of language that views language as a social practice. CDA, which is anchored in Halliday's (1978) functional view of language emerged in the late 1980s as an amelioration of the broad field of discourse analysis (DA), which was perceived as inadequate to delve into discourse use in society and its dynamics with ideology and power relations. (Fairclough, 1992). Since discourse as text is viewed as both a process and a product, in which socio-political values and norms are inadvertently or advertently embedded, CDA serves to expose both hidden and visible ideologies, social power abuse, hegemony, and dominance (Fairclough, 2001). Furthermore, because textbooks also serve as a cultural text mediating the correlation of privilege and power in social interactions (Widodo, 2018), educational researchers have widely used CDA to decode covert messages in relation to a variety of social issues embedded in such a text, such as gender (in)equality and (dis)parity.

One key figure in the realm of CDA is the British sociolinguist, Norman Fairclough whose three-dimensional model of discourse (2001) has been widely utilized in exploring gender representation in the EFL textbooks. Fairclough's (1995) CDA model considers three simultaneous focuses of analysis: text (whether verbal, visual, or verbal and visual), discursive practice (the production, distribution, and comprehension of a text), and social practice (the text's place in society). Furthermore, these three areas of analysis necessitate three distinct stages of analysis: 1) text analysis (description), which is concerned with the text's formal properties; 2) processing analysis (interpretation), which is concerned with the analysis of the participants' cognitive processes and interactions; and 3) social analysis

(explanation), which is concerned with the relationship between social events and social structures that influence these events.

The Study

The present study attempts to make a comparative examination of how gender is portrayed through visual discourses in [Nationality] and international English language textbooks for Primary Students. Thus, an adapted version of CDA, called Critical Image Analysis (Giaschi, 2000) is deemed suitable to be utilized as the analytical tool.

The Corpus Data

The current study's corpus data includes two books: *English Chest 6*, which is widely used in private primary schools in Indonesia, and *Let's Go 6*, which is used for teaching English-language learners in over 160 countries around the world. These two textbooks were chosen because they have a lot in common in terms of the amount and type of visual texts they contain.

English Chest 6 was published in 2012 by Compass Publishing as part of a six-level English language study series authored by Liana Robinson and edited by David Paul. This series was specifically designed to cater Indonesian syllabus of General English class for primary students while still meeting two international standards: the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and Cambridge Assessment English. The selected book is divided into three parts, each with four lessons. Each lesson includes a wide range of activities such as conversations, stories, language builders, songs, games, and so on that are designed to improve learners' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

Meanwhile, *Let's Go 6* is the final volume of Ritsuko Nakata, Karen Frazier, Barbara Hoskins, and Carolyn Graham's seven-level American English course series, which was published by Oxford University Press in 2006. The book is divided into eight units, each of which contains authentic material from a range of sources with communicative situations that assist students learn how to use language rather than just how to utter words or sentences. Each session includes a variety of activities geared toward hearing and speaking, such as dialogues, pair work, and communicative games, with reading and writing exercises being deferred until the end of the course.

Methods of Data Analysis

The selected textbooks were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. An adapted version of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), called Critical Image Analysis (Giaschi, 2000) was used as the analytical tool to evaluate the images in the textbooks. Images and illustrations in the selected ELT textbooks were the main focus of analysis because pictures are believed to have the ability to communicate beyond what oral or written language can express (Giaschi, 2000) and have a greater impact than words for students, especially younger students (Law & Chan, 2004). In addition, pictures, which are quite dominant in most, if not all, primary English textbooks in Indonesia, can help motivate young students to learn (Jou 2010). To sum up, since the visual content has become significantly important in EFL teaching materials, Critical Image Analysis which is designed to examine these images (Giaschi, 2000) is deemed justified and appropriate to be used in this study.

In doing data analysis, I manually counted all images in each lesson unit while comparing female and male visibility in the two selected textbooks. I conducted a discursive analysis of male and female characters in the two textbooks, focusing on the visibility of male and female characters using three social context parameters: (1) family, (2) occupations, and (3) leisure activities. These contextual parameters were chosen because they highlighted how female characters were stereotypically portrayed in school textbooks (Lestariyana et al., 2020). Combining Rifkin's (1998) framework for a critical evaluation of gender representation in verbal and visual (pictorial) texts and Giaschi's (2000) framework for a critical image evaluation of gender stereotypes in ESL textbooks, I developed the following criteria as detailed in Table 1 to guide my analysis of gender portrayal in the two textbooks.

Criteria	Function in Analysis
1. Images including females/males only	Emphasize female/male visibility
2. Images in which females/males are depicted as children	
3. Images where females foregrounding males	Determine the actor
4. Images where females backgrounding males	
5. The activities of women/men in familial and occupational contexts	Establish field of activity
6. The activities of girls/boys in familial and occupational contexts	

7. The activities of women/men doing hobbies/interests	
8. The activities of girls/boys doing hobbies/interests	

Table 1: Criteria used in data analysis

7 Findings and Discussion

Male-to-Female Appearances

The first finding, concerning the frequency of occurrence of male and female characters in local and international ELTs, reveals that male characters were slightly more prevalent than their female counterparts in the two textbooks as a whole, with a proportion of 33.1% (154 images) to 31.8% (148 images) respectively. However, when examined separately, the two ELTs showcase contrasting results in terms of gender visibility. Despite the fact that the local ELT depicts female characters in every unit throughout the book, they are still less prominent in comparison to male characters, with a ratio of 1 to 1.2. This finding echoes some earlier ELT studies indicating female under representation (e.g. Aguilar, 2021; Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Curaming & Curaming, 2020, Lee, 2018; Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2020; Lestariyana et al., 2020). Female characters, on the other hand, enjoy more visibility than their male counterparts in the international ELT, with a ratio of 1.1 to 1. This finding is consistent with previous research (Yang, 2011; Yang & Yan, 2020), which suggests that females are no longer invisible in some educational artifacts.

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 of Gendered Characters	154 (33.1%)	148 (31.8%)	153 (32.9%)	10 (2.2%)	465

Table 2: Images with gendered characters

Surprisingly, females' lower visibility in *English Chest 6* is unrelated to their quantitative representation in overall activities. Female characters are depicted more frequently than male counterparts in the three sociocultural contexts used as the parameter in this study, as shown in Table 3, with a proportion of 51.8 percent (100 images) to 48.2 percent (93 images). Table 3 and Table 4 summarize the findings related to the portrayals of male and female characters in the three sociocultural contexts used as the parameter in this study. Interestingly, female less visibility in English Chest 6 is not coupled with their

quantitative representation in overall activities with a ratio of 1.1:1(see Table 3). Of 113 activities involving human characters, the appearance of females is slightly more dominant with a total of 100 (51.8%) characters compared to 93 (48.2%) characters of their male counterparts. In terms of age differs by actor gender, males (76.3%) are more likely than females (69%) to be portrayed as children. Concerning the field of activities, most of the images depict human characters doing activities related to hobby/interest (42%) followed by profession/work (23%), education/school (19%), and family (16%) respectively.

Field of Activities	Number of Activities	Actor				Total of All Actors
		Male		Female		
		Man	Boy	Woman	Girl	
Family	18 (16%)	1(4.5%)	3 (4.2%)	10 (32.3%)	6 (8.7%)	20 (10.4%)
Occupation						
<i>Profession/work</i>	26 (23%)	14 (63.6%)	1 (1.4%)	12 (38.7%)	1 (1.5%)	28 (14.5%)
<i>Education/school</i>	21 (19%)	2 (9.2%)	24 (33.8%)	1 (3.2%)	27 (39.1%)	54 (27.9%)
Leisure activities	48 (42%)	5 (22.7%)	43 (60.6%)	8 (25.8%)	35 (50.7%)	91 (47.2%)
Total of Actors		22	71	31	69	193
Total of Activities	113					

Table 3: Male and female representation in the three social contexts in *English Chest 6*

Let's Go 6 also portrays females in a slightly greater frequency with a ratio of 1.4:1. In total, there are 173 (51.3%) female characters compared to 164 (48.7%) males engaging in diverse activities in the three sociocultural contexts. A closer examination to the figures in Table 4 reveals that 51% of the total females are visualized as girls, while 54.3% of male characters are in the portrayals of boys, which gives the same impression that males are more likely to be illustrated as children. A slightly different result could be seen in terms of the most dominant activities the gendered characters engaged in. Although leisure activities and profession/work are still in the top two with 56% and 19.4% proportion, respectively, the textbook depicts family-related activities more often than the school-related ones with a comparison of 12.7% to 11.9%.

Field of Activities	Number of Activities	Actor				Total of All Actors
		Male		Female		
		Man	Boy	Woman	Girl	
Family	15 (12.7%)	4 (5.3%)	5 (5.6%)	6 (7.1%)	3 (3.4%)	18 (5.3%)
Occupation						

<i>Profession/work</i>	23 (19.4%)	40 (53.3%)	-	29 (34.1%)	-	69 (20.5%)
<i>Education/school</i>	14 (11.9%)	-	22 (24.7%)	1 (1.2%)	20 (22.7%)	43 (12.8%)
<i>Leisure activities</i>	66 (56%)	31 (41.4%)	62 (69.7%)	49 (57.6%)	65 (73.9%)	207 (61.42%)
Total of Actors		75	89	85	88	337
Total of Activities	118					

Table 4: Male and female representation in the three social contexts in *Let's Go 6*

One might readily assume that female-dominant portrayals in activity engagement in the two ELTs equal to gender imbalance in the three sociocultural contexts in favour of females. This assumption, however, cannot be confirmed until the next findings elucidating how both genders are portrayed in each of the contexts, namely: family, occupation (particularly work), and leisure activities, are examined more closely. It is crucial to keep in mind that the focus of my analysis is limited only on images with/out text accompaniment depicting human characters whose genders could be identified.

Gender Portrayals in Familial Setting

Social responsibilities are inextricably gendered, which serves as the primary drive for the conventional divide between men and women. Gender roles are the conventions of how one can be expected to function and comport according to their assigned sex in different sociocultural circumstances, and often contribute to gender stereotypes. The home sphere is frequently a socio-cultural milieu in which gender stereotypes are found. The following finding concerns the representation of men and women in a family context in respect to this question.

As seen in Table 3, there is strong female presence which is proven through the higher frequency of female characters than their male counterparts with the ratio of 4: 1. Females are also portrayed to be engaged in a wider range of activities than males (15 vs. 4 types respectively). Specifically, as seen in Figure 1, females are visualized to play a traditionally feminine role, such as performing nurturing duties and doing domestic chores in the kitchen, which are dominantly visualized with adult females (women) as the main characters. On the other hand, males are only depicted to be involved in familial activities in outdoor settings such as barbecuing, pet caring, and lawn mowing, which are dominantly done by child male characters (boys).



Figure 1: Some examples of gender portrayals in familial setting in *English Chest 6* (p.20, p.38, p.64, p.70)

Another stereotyped visualization of females in *English Chest 6* can also be seen in Figure 2 depicting the portrayal of a woman with a familial role as a mother. In this sociocultural situation, the mother seems to be angry with her son for his indiscipline. The stereotypical portrayal of an adult female as a mother becomes evident when we carefully inspect the text stating “when his parents came home, they were very angry” (para. 3, Lines 1-2). In this sense, Todd is acknowledged to have more than one parent, possibly a father and a mother. However, the image only shows a female parent/mother, rather than either both parents or the male one/father, rolling her eyes in exasperation signalling her anger at her son’s disobedience. The image may reinforce the depiction of a stereotypical behaviour a mother should regulate as a primary caregiver and children’s first educator (Cordry & Wilson, 2004). In this respect, she is expected to be the rule maker regarding her children’s activities and enforce it to teach them discipline and time management.

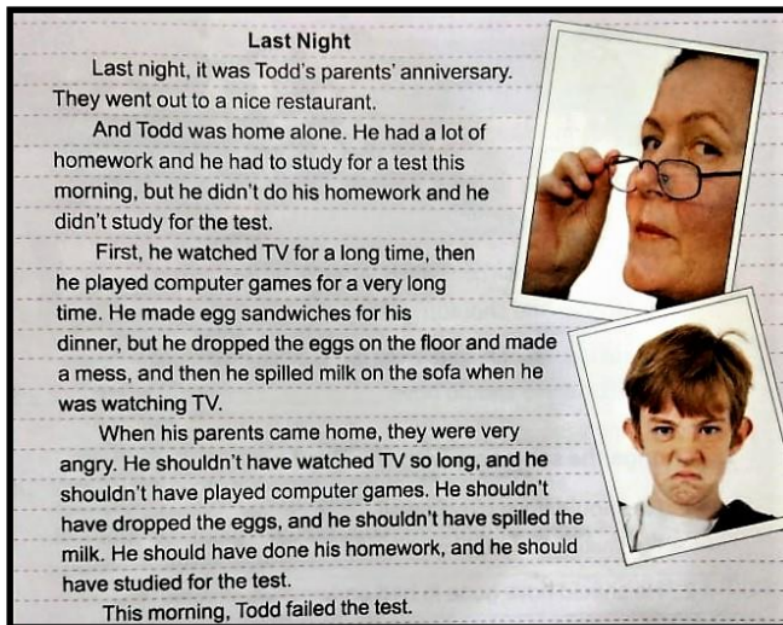


Figure 2: The depiction of a stereotypical behaviour of a mother in *English Chest 6* (p.79)

The imbalance visibility and engagement of the two sexes provided ample evidence that gender stereotyping in familial context is existent in *English Chest 6*. The activity engagement played by the two sexes as visualised in this book subtly conserves the sociocultural assignment of females in familial domain, which entrenches the traditional gender stereotypes portraying women in “the construal and perpetuation of a traditional, quiet, stay-at-home mother image” (Lee & Chin, 2019, p. 57). This stereotyped gender representation also infers males’ and females’ dichotomy in terms of the interests or responsibilities (Lestariyana et al, 2020) and the territories where the responsibilities conducted (Clarks, 2016) in the domestic domain. Furthermore, such images postulates two critical points; 1) female predominance in such sociocultural context may serve to reinforce female identity (Barton & Sakwa 2012) who, traditionally are obliged to do a wide range of household chores; and 2) boy’s domination in activity engagement by male characters may imply children’s domestic obligation when they are still dependent to their parents.

Contrary to the findings of the local ELT with a stronger tendency to depict women in domestic roles, *Let's Go 6* depicts a fairer distribution of both genders doing similar range of activities in familial setting. Even in absolute numbers, the genders are portrayed quantitatively equal with a ratio of 1:1 (see Table 4). Figure 3 shows equal involvement in household chores by females and males. Three out five pictures in Fig. 3 also note some

departures from the traditional gender stereotypes in which males are portrayed as setting the table, cleaning the room, and performing a childrearing duty, in this case reading the daughter a story book.



Figure 3: Some examples of gender portrayals in familial setting in *Let's Go 6* (p.27, p.45, p.48, p.49, p.53)

This finding is consonant with what Yang (2011) reported in her study where males were portrayed in domestic chores slightly more frequently than females although latter were depicted to engage in a wider range of activities than the former. Such cases indicate the textbook authors' effort to avoid gender inequality and stereotypes.

However, despite this apparent effort, some isolated instances still depict gender stereotypical portrayals. For example, Figure 4 showing male and female parents teach their children how to do different activities such as walking, writing, swimming, and riding a bicycle may depict stereotypical gender dichotomy between men and women in their familial roles. In this case, male parents are more frequently portrayed to teach their children outdoor activities, which are often considered accident-risky such as ice skating and hand-standing. This depiction may legitimise the hegemonic gender-stereotypic belief that men are audacious and adventurous, whereas women are weak and fragile, and thus should avoid risky activities (Lee & Chin, 2019).

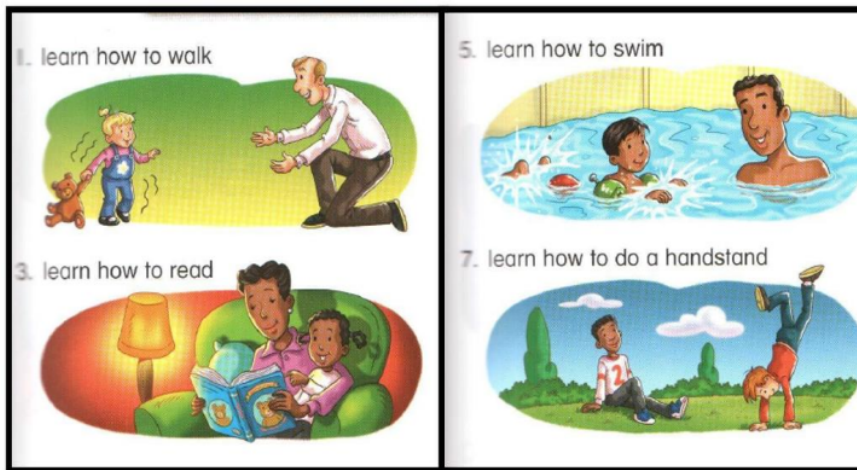


Figure 4: The stereotypical gender portrayals in familial setting in *Let's Go 6* (p.57)

Gender Portrayals in Professional Setting

There is widespread agreement that occupations are socially gendered. As a result, the workplace becomes the exact sociocultural milieu in which different forms of gender inequities exist. The findings presented in Table 3 shows that other than the domestic roles, *English Chest 6* portrays male and female characters, particularly the adult ones in diverse instances of professional activities with a qualitatively fairer distribution (15 and 13 times, respectively). However, in terms of the range of activities, the portrayal of professions is very unbalanced. In this case, males are visualized in a more diverse settings from professional and less skilled workers (e.g., doctor, show host, horse rider, gymnast, bus driver, and waiter), while females in very limited settings performing stereotypical jobs such as teacher, nurse, and shop keeper. This finding suggests that equal gender visibility in educational materials alone does not readily translate into gender equality (Lee, 2018), particularly in this professional domain. Furthermore, one interesting phenomenon is also noticeable in this ELT in which females are visualized to be teachers in six appearances, none of male teachers could be found. This validates the stereotypical portrayal of primary teaching as a female occupation, similar to that observed in Lee's (2016) and Yang's (2016) studies. From a different perspective, this finding also indicates male underrepresentation and invisibility in the domain of primary school teaching (Yang, 2016).

A closer examination of the book also reveals some hidden gender inequities 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. The picture in the top-left in Figure 5

portrays the interaction of a woman and a man in a workplace as a sociocultural space. The woman in this situation receives some money, most likely her wage, as the word "payment" is written on the paper handed to her. It's reasonable to presume that the woman is an employee and the man is an employer. Similar to this assumption, based on the clothing worn by the two characters, it may be assumed that the man has a better professional position than the woman because he dresses more formally, as evidenced by the inclusion of a tie as part of his attire. This graphic This illustration ratifies female inferiority in occupational domain.



Figure 5: Some examples of gender portrayals in professional setting in *English Chest 6* (p.23, p.64, p.70)

This finding shows a concordance to previous studies (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Clark, 2016; Lee, 2018, Lee & Chin, 2019) which indicates little improvement has been made in terms of gender equality in occupational context. In contemporary Indonesia, females form a high proportion of the workforce, and are occupied in a wide range of occupations, including in professions demanding high skills and educational backgrounds (Lestariyana et al., 2020). However, the ELT suggests that most sophisticated careers are associated only with men. These portrayals of women in more limited jobs and roles than males as found in this ELT imply that “males are superior to, stronger and more powerful than women in society” (Lee, 2018, p. 5). In addition, they embodied overt and covert gender inequality, squandering the potential to expose young generation for a more accomplishable future on equal social and economic participation (Clark, 2016). Consequently, such regular subliminal exposure to stereotyped gendered visualization in occupational context may create life-long dreadful

impacts on young learners' life aspirations (Wu & Liu, 2015), particularly on their academic and career choices (Lee, 2018).

Despite the unbalanced qualitative representation of male and female characters in professional context with a ratio of 1.4:1 (see Table 4), the discrepancy is less apparent in *Let's Go 6* when it comes to professional diversity. Both are portrayed in a wide range of activities as professionals and skilled workers (e.g., pilot, police officer, detective, tv presenter, musician, athlete, acrobat, dancer, magician). Interestingly, in contrary to the stereotyping portrayal of teaching profession in the local ELT, this textbook depicts a teacher as a gender-shared occupational role played by both female and male characters. This finding points out that this ELT attempts to draw upon a 'gender equality discourse' (Barton & Sakwa, 2012), which includes the idea that men and women are capable of operating in the same traditional nurturing professions such as teaching and waitressing.

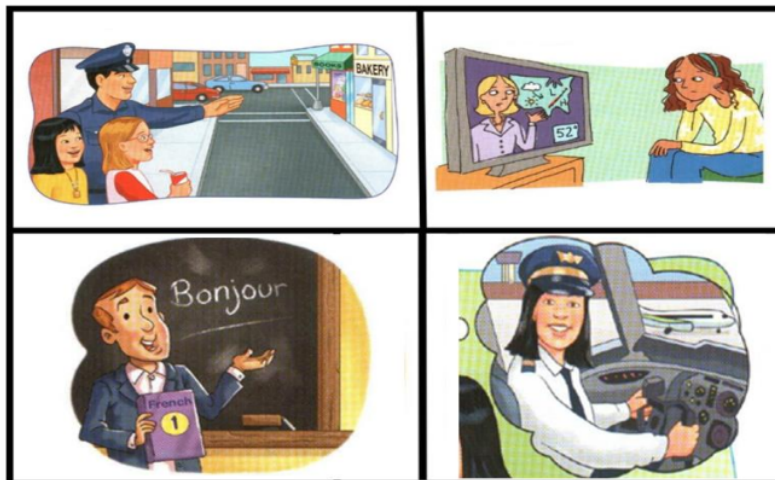


Figure 6: Some examples of gender portrayals in professional setting in *Let's Go 6* (p.16, p.28, p.46, p.47)

Furthermore, as seen in the bottom-right image in Figure 6, women in the international ELT are portrayed as having professional occupations such as pilots. This finding is in line with what Lestariyana et al. (2020) found in their study, which revealed that women have their own potential and capability for earning money and achieving professional success. This portrayal of a woman as a pilot implies that the textbook authors attempted to depict both genders in a similar light in order to promote women's empowerment and/or gender equality (Curaming & Curaming, 2020). In addition, they may seek to propagate the concept that women may pursue outstanding careers in response to the equality movement in

a labour-force role (Penner, 2008).¹² The discourse of being a career woman also emphasizes women's contributions to traditionally masculine occupations (Meeussen et al., 2020).

Gender Portrayals Engaging in Leisure Activities

Common stereotypes hold that males and females spend different amounts of time on leisure activities. Males are thought to be more inclined to 'thing-oriented' activities such as vehicle repair, carpentry, engineering, whereas females are more drawn to 'people-oriented' activities such as dancing, acting, and shopping (Lippa, 2010). The findings related to this topic discloses that the highest frequency of male and female representation in both local and international ELTs is depicted doing leisure activities (91 and 207 times, respectively). Both ELTs depicts females and males in a much wider range of settings which include participating in different kinds of indoor and outdoor sports, shopping, reading, playing music, etc. Furthermore, as shown in Tables 3 & 4, it is also found that the local ELT depicts a fairer distribution of males and females in this social context, while interestingly the international one portrays females engaging in leisure activities more often than their male counterparts. A closer examination to the figures in those two tables reveals that both genders are visualized more often as children when doing leisure activities with a ratio of 6: 1 in *English Chest 6* and 1.6:1 in *Let's Go 6*. These findings give impression that spare time is more affordable during childhood compared to adulthood.



Figure 7: The stereotypical depiction of females engaging in leisure activities in *English Chest 6* (p.64, p.69)

However, the equal depiction of both genders in diverse leisure activities does not mean that these two ELTs are free of gender stereotypical portrayals in this very context. In some units in both *English Chest 6* and *Let's Go 6*, females outnumber and dominate their

male counterparts, however their domination are only when engaging in activities stereotypically associated with female gender such as shopping and chit-chatting. In the local ELT, the first lesson of the third unit ‘I Think You Should Give Her an Apron’ has a strong female presence in which they are given much voice in providing advices to both male and female characters the appropriate things to purchase. As seen in Fig. 7, the female characters are being asked their opinions the appropriate items to buy for presents given to other people. A closer look of the accompanying texts, the suggestions given are also gender stereotypy-laden as the girl on the left suggests an apron, an item closely-related to doing domestic chore as a present for the boy’s mother while the girl on the left opines a webcam, a technological device which is often associated with male hobbies and interest, suitable for Father Day’s present.

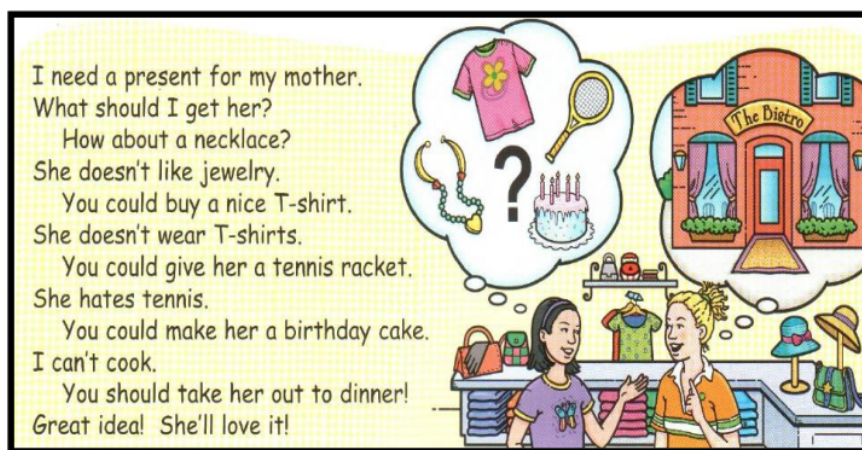


Figure 8: The stereotypical depiction of females engaging in leisure activities in *Let's Go 6* (p.26)

The third unit of the international ELT “Going Shopping” also embodies gender stereotype in which females are heavily depicted engaging in female-related activities, in this case, as the title suggest is shopping. Throughout this unit, female characters (n = 56) outnumber male ones with the ratio of 2.1:1. Furthermore, as seen in Fig. 8, the two female characters are conversing about the most suitable present given to the mother of one of the female characters. Similar to the gender stereotype-laden hidden in the offered opinion as discussed previously in the local ELT, the other woman also suggests some items needed to support one’s physical appearance/beauty such as jewellery and clothing. This dialogue implies that physical appearance/beauty becomes women’s primary interests, which is another form of subtle gender stereotyping. These findings corroborate prior research that

found female dominance in specific ELT units are stereotypically associated with this gender (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Lee, 2014a; Lestariyana et al., 2020; Setyono, 2018). Both ELTs contain subtle gender demarcation disclosing differences between the two genders in terms of hobbies and interests: men are portrayed as high-tech and gadget enthusiasts, whereas women as beauty and fashion lovers. As a result, despite the fact that the presence of female characters engaging in leisure activities significantly outweighs that of males in the two ELTs, there is a strong propensity for them to be portrayed stereotypically.

Conclusion

This comparative study has provided understandings on gender representation in the ELTs used in international and Indonesian settings. The results show that in terms of gender representation and responsiveness, both ELTs depict unequal portrayals of both genders. The international ELT authors evidenced a significantly higher tendency to present females more frequently. By contrast, the Indonesian ELT authors, nevertheless, paid more heed to the inclusion of males visually. The prevalence of male domination over women in Indonesia's ELT may be one of the reasons why gender awareness in Indonesia has only experienced a slight development in the last three years. Interestingly, despite the different awareness of gender equality the authors of both ELTs demonstrate, both educational documents under study are still found to portray genders stereotypically in family and hobbies/interest social domains. Despite having a significantly higher proportion of female mentions, the authors of both ELTs frequently produced highly stereotyped representations of the sexes. Specifically, females are still traditionally stereotyped as more engaged with beauty and physical appearances; while males with manly stuff and technological devices. To put it in other words, although the textbook writers have demonstrated their awareness of balanced gender visibility, gendered stereotypes in the two ELTs still persist. The (continued) presence of gender stereotyping messages on the two ELTs may have insidious consequences on the learners', particularly female learners', horizons and expectations, including restrictions on academic subjects and career choices (Lee, 2014a; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015), distortion of their self-image and images of the opposite gender (Lee, 2014b; Witt 2001), and impediment to their self-development (Khan et al, 2014),

The findings of this critical discourse study have a number of pedagogical implications. Because educational textbooks play a pivotal role in instilling gender-related values, it is critical that ELT authors present a more equitable direction of English language learning materials that represent gender equity by demonstrating equality in male-to-female

appearances and removing any ¹gender disparities, particularly the elimination of gender stereotypes and biases. English language teachers can also actively participate in developing students' proper gender concepts through the utilization of learning resources that emphasize gender equality. Furthermore, textbooks, ¹⁰as one type of agent for future generations' socialization, should depict the egalitarian gender construction aspired through ²accurate descriptions of contemporary practices and equal visibility for all gender identifiers.

Grounded in a general consensus that heteronormativity is prevalent in all aspects of life, it is of paramount importance that textbook writers and publishers use gender-neutral discourse to avoid the production and exposure to heteronormative language. It is hoped that this practice will make textbooks more inclusive of all gender identities and convey the message that all genders are equally valid and neutral, with none being an aberration.

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