

## **The Portrayal of Gender in the ELT textbook issued by Non-Governmental Publisher in Indonesia**

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**Abstract:** The study was conducted to investigate the portrayal of gender in English Language Teaching (ELT) for senior high school in Indonesia. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Semiotic by Roland Barthes's (1977) framework was chosen as the tool to elaborate on how is gender represented through visual and textual material depicted. The finding reveal that the materials contain various gender issues such as stereotypes, imbalance, and inequality. However, several illustrations emerge from the positive image of a female. The textual study suggests that as English textbooks play an important role in transferring ideologies and values, therefore the textbook writer should pay more attention to the gender issues in the educational sector.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, ELT textbook, Gender, Inequality.

### **Introduction**

*Social justice for all Indonesian people* is the principle that is highly adhered to by Indonesian citizens. The statement becomes the vision to build a fair country that deserves equal rights to its community. For this reason, gender is one of the parts that need to equally construct since inequality issues are still occurring in the country. As reported by the United Nation Development Program, gender inequalities are still entrenched and pervasive in every part of society (UNDP, 2016). Although the Indonesian government has shown a strong commitment to advancing equality between male and female, and some programs have been taken to eliminate the issues, however, inequalities between male and female (e.g. discriminative access to education, health care, employment, participation, and decision-making) persist in Indonesia.

The policies of gender equality were advocated by the Indonesian Government for decades ago. Historically, before Indonesia became an independent state from colonialism the equal rights between males and females in obtaining an education were struggled by one of the Indonesian female heroes, Raden Ajeng Kartini. Since then, there have been several policies regarding gender equality that is valid until now. As an example, the 1945 constitution number 20, 2003 article 5, concerning the National Education System states that every citizen has the same right to obtain a quality education. It is supported by Article 11 which affirms that the government and regional governments are obliged to

provide services, facilities and ensure quality education for every Indonesian citizen without discrimination.

Gender matter in the educational sector has become one of the attracted issues, especially in the textbook. This is because textbooks play an important role in learners. Kobia (2009) reports that textbooks play a pivotal role in creating the learners' worldview of male and female gender in society. As a result, how male and female genders are depicted in textbooks can extremely affect the images that learners develop of males and females in society. Additionally, the textbook has a big impact and plays an important role to shape students' character. Through the textbook, students' character might be formed positively or negatively. As Romera (2015) declares that an educational institution model gender identities construct the idea of what is male to female (p.206).

The studies on gender representation in ELT textbooks have been investigated widely in several countries previously. To begin with, Sulaimani (2017); Ozer et al. (2018) conducted the study by employing a document analysis model. These studies have similar findings in terms of frequency appearance which mentioned that female characters are underrepresented in the textbooks. Gebregeorgis

(2016) applying Fairlough's three-dimensional approach in his study, while Lee (2018) using Manual analysis and Corpus Linguistic tools as the method. The finding of the two studies indicates that male characters tend to have a higher power physically and cognitively. This leads male characters to become more active in social roles than female characters. In the Indonesian context, Ariyanto (2018) conducted the study regarding the junior high school textbook by using the CDA framework. The result found that the textbooks contained some gender biases and stereotypes. However, Setyono (2018) investigated the portrait of women in the EFL textbook for junior high school students via CDA found that some data of the textbook represent the positive image of women, while some others support the continuation of gender biases and stereotypes.

Since in the Indonesian context governmental textbooks are mostly selected to conduct the studies and the study of gender issues on senior high school textbooks are rarely conducted, therefore to fill this gap, the researcher tends to answer –How is gender portrayed in the ELT textbook for tenth-grade students issued by non-governmental publishers in Indonesia?

## **Literature Review**

### **Gender Equality Policy in Indonesia**

As a country that has a democratic ideology, the 1945 constitution (Chapter X, section 27) explains that residents of Indonesia must respect diversity and protect their citizens to have an equal position under the law (Blackburn 1999). The 1945 constitution explicitly declares that men and women deserve equal rights, yet the concept of equal rights is tailored to the different cultural traditions and legal systems in Indonesia. Thus, all Indonesian citizens from different religious, political, ethnic, or gender have equal rights before the law and are given equal prospects to take part in building the nation.

In eliminating the discrimination and gender equality issues between males and females, several government policies have been implemented in Indonesia since decades ago. As an example, it is listed in the Law number 7, 1984 concerning ratification of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women due to it does not follow the Pancasila and the 1945 constitutions. Besides, to reduce the gap between males and females in obtaining and accessing development benefits, the government is also issued a policy contained in Presidential Instruction number 9, 2000 regarding gender mainstreaming in national development. This aims to improve the position, role, and quality of women, as well as efforts to realize justice and gender equality in family, community, national, and state life.

### **The Portrayal of Gender in ELT Textbooks**

As the important tools in learning activities, the content of the textbooks is selected deliberately to meet curriculum objectives. The content selection of textbooks both text and assignments are influenced by curriculum ideology to a certain extent. Thus, textbooks are viewed as an ideological agent embedded in the prescribed curriculum (van Dijk 2001, Widodo 2016). Textbook ideology is a strong social group belief that has goals to affect other people to think in certain ways or get others to do certain things (Widdowson 2007, 6).

Whitcomb (1999, p. 1) affirm that –the forms of gender bias mostly come from unintended actions of teachers, teaching methods, and textbooks/resources. The bias can be against male or female, but regularly it is against female. Likewise, Lee and Collins (2008) and Britton and Lumpkin (1977) argue that ‘within schools, textbooks play a significant role in the gender socialization of children’. Gender bias continually shows

itself in English as a Second Language (ESL) textbook with a higher percentage of males (Ansary and Babaii 2003; Johansson and Malmsjo 2009) and with a female often depicted and assigned roles and stereotypical actions. Male tends to be positioned as a vigorous and has a greater range of occupational roles (Gupta and Yin 1990) however, predominantly, a female is an inferior status (Harashima, 2005).

Gender bias in the forms of stereotyping implicitly and explicitly must be avoided. Intellectually, the depiction of gender bias in textbooks affects students' motivation and life choices (careers), the development of their self-esteem and sense in society, and students' negative viewpoints on women's competence in nowadays world (Ullah and Skelton 2013). Research findings on gender bias indicate that students' poor performance in school subjects is influenced by the illustration of gender imbalances in the textbook. Good, Woodzicka, and Wingfield (2010) reported that female students have a higher comprehension score after seeing the opposite stereotypical pictures (female scientists) than after seeing stereotypical pictures (male scientists).

### **Previous Studies on Gender Representation in Textbooks**

Previous studies on gender representation in textbooks have investigated widely in several countries. To begin with, Thomson & Otsuji (2003) examined the Business Japanese textbook in two-level perspectives: macro (social practice) and micro (linguistic discourse) by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the tools. The result found that the textbook presents a stereotypical and exaggerated version of social practices based on idealized native-Japanese norms. Female characters have minimal access to managerial positions, and fewer opportunities to participate in the business. The analysis also highlighted the invisibility of non-Japanese female characters in the textbooks. Ndura (2004) investigated stereotypes and other cultural biases in English as a Second Language (ESL) textbook that currently used in some elementary and secondary schools in America. He discovered three major forms of bias: stereotyping, invisibility & reality. Males were portrayed using sophisticated tools. They were involved in more difficult and complex activities and also good at fixing things.

However, females were shown using elementary tools performing light work such as cooking, cleaning, and knitting.

Ullah & Skelton (2013) examined gender biases in 24 textbooks (Urdu, English, and Social studies) from classes 1 to 8 by implementing a qualitative content analysis approach. The finding revealed that the school textbook still *uptight* with gender-biased messages and stereotypical representations of males and females. The new textbook ideologically participated and contributed to the continuation of gender inequality. Gebregeorgis (2016) examined how gender was constructed in English books for Ethiopian students in grade 4 by using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA. The finding revealed that female characters are depicted in lower positions both activity and attribute-based representations. However, in the texts regarding the characters, females are made as interactive as males. Further, female characters are created to identify themselves as moral persons who are aware of the environment and responsible parents.

Lee (2018) examined whether the government's effort to promote gender-equal society is reflected in three contemporary Japanese EFL textbooks. The result shows that in terms and vocabularies are displayed balanced. The two textbooks also display the balanced distribution of the speaker and their amount of talks between males and females. However, underrepresentation of female and their achievements are still prevalent. Male is portrayed as more active in social roles than female. Besides, the male tends to be depicted using material and cognitive process whereas female use a rational process which shows that male are more active physically and cognitively than female. Further, male characters are described to provide information while females as recipients of the information.

A study recently was conducted in Indonesia by Ariyanto (2018) to examine how female and male are represented in the Indonesian ELT textbook by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. The result found that the textbook materials inadequately depicted gender equality. Besides, it also showcases stereotyped gender differences. Similarly, Setyono (2018) investigated the portrait of women in the Indonesian EFL textbook for junior high school students. The finding revealed that some contents of the textbook support the continuation of gender biases and stereotypes towards female characters and social actors. Meanwhile, some others show the positive image of females.

## **The Study**

### **Research Design**

The present study aimed to examine the portrayal of gender in ELT textbooks issued by non-governmental publishers in Indonesia. The gender representation that will be analysed contained learning material & tasks for language skills and some visual artifacts such as pictures as non-verbal depictions of gender in the textbook. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was chosen as the research design to analyse the issues. CDA is an interdisciplinary study of discourse that views language as social practice (Fairclough 2001) and takes into the context of language use (Wodak 2001). Moreover, CDA can be implemented to examine the relationship between the use of language, political, and social context in which it occurs (Paltridge, 2006). Further, CDA is concerning with the critical analysis of written and spoken text to assert the source of imbalance such as the dominance, power, inequality, or biases and how they are initiated and preserved (Dijk, 1997)

### **Research data and analysis**

The study applied a documentary method to collect the data on the textbook entitled *Talk Active for Senior High School Year X* published by *Yudhistira*. The data collected were visual and textual forms that might provide information about gender issues such as gender bias, stereotypes, and inequality in the textbook. The textual or linguistic texts covered dialogues, reading passages, and exercises. However, the visual or pictorial texts covered any visual images of people. The data of the present study in the textbook were identified and coded by the writer in each chapter of the textbook (see **Table 1**).

The gender representation in the textbook can be portrayed through texts and/ or images. The present study, however, analysed both texts and images depicted in the textbook. The reason was that both images and texts might provide information about gender inequality or gender bias. Thus, the semiotic analysis was the appropriate method to choose. Semiotic is the study of meaning-making through signs (Danesi and Santeramo, 1999). In a semiotic context, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects (Eco, 1976). Moreover, semiotics can be used as the key to finding the hidden meaning in both texts and images (Barthes, 1977). Therefore, the semiotic approach in this study was used to explore the portrayal of gender in the ELT textbook through the texts and images that were depicted in the textbook.

In implementing semiotic analysis, both texts and images were identified through two different perspectives; denotative and connotative. Those perspectives were based on Roland Barthes's visual semiotic analysis. Denotation is what people see without considering their society, culture, or ideology (Bouzida, 2014). In other words, denotation means the literal meaning of signs. However, connotation refers to the socio-cultural and 'personal' association (ideological, emotional, etc) of the sign (Chandler, 2007). In this study, however, both textual and visual data were analysed denotatively and connotatively to identify the portrayal of gender in the ELT textbook.

The liberal feminist point of view was chosen as the criteria/ consideration in analysing gender issues in this study. Liberal feminists explained the position of the female in terms of unequal rights based on artificial barriers in female's involvement in public life (Kensinger, 1997). Male have access to more lucrative and prestigious jobs in the formal sectors of the economy. Meanwhile, females are involved in less productive and less paid activities in the position of lacking the property, skills, capital, and education (Saptarshi and Bhagat, 2005). Therefore, these conditions force females to receive jobs with low quality, pride, paid, etc. (Bandarage, 1984).

### **Research Results and Discussion**

The textual and visual data analysed in the textbook are in the form of dialogue text, a dialogue accompanied with pictures, and any visual images of social actions. In the dialogue between Charlie and Edward, the stereotypes were found. They ask some general questions of introduction, including their parent job.

*1. My father is a taxi driver. It's a difficult job, but he works hard to support the family*

*2. She helps run a store with some of my older brothers and sisters*

The conversation presents the stereotype occupation of males and females. Edward's father was depicted as a taxi driver. It strongly implied that hard, risky, and physical power occupations were deserved to the male characters. Meanwhile, Edward's mother was depicted as a shopkeeper. It indicated that female occupations were limited to certain criteria related to the stereotypical traits of females. According to Ullah and Skelton, (2013) stated that the female's depiction in the public domain was a limited number of occupations, predominantly school teachers, nurses, shopkeepers, telephone operators, and newspaper assistant. Therefore, this textual data presents the stereotype occupations of males and females. The next data is found in the dialogue between teacher



and students. The teacher asks the student's parent job.

1. *Well, he's a college professor, and he is in Scotland at the moment.*
2. *She works full at home.*

Stereotypical occupation of males and females is found in the data. 'He' in the expression refers to the student's father. He was illustrated being a college professor in which it was recognized as a stereotypical occupation of males. Male occupations tend to associate with higher educations. Meanwhile, 'she' refers to student's mother. She is illustrated as a wife that was responsible for the household roles. It seems to send a message that the female character only deserves domestic roles such as cooking, cleaning, and rising child. Even though in reality females can be carriers of women and share domestic responsibilities to the males.

The dialogue of male and female shows the positive image of female. In this conversation male character congratulate his female friend, since as the manager she succeeded in clinching the deal.

1. *By the way, I just want to say, well done on clinching that deal!*
2. *You're a great manager, you know.*

Through the expression, it can be identified that female is competent and deserve a higher position at the job (manager). Since the man gave compliments to her, it means that she was adorable. She had done an amazing thing to improve their office. It obviously showed that females were also capable to handle the things that males do since most of the manager positions were always engaging to males. Setyono (2018) stated that females are portrayed to suffer from unequal treatment in doing business and in achieving managerial and political positions. Therefore, this illustration shows the positive image of females.

The textual materials portray both positive and negative gender stereotypes. In fact, the negative portrayals are most found in the text. For more data, the table of categorisation in the textual materials was depicted as followed;

Chapter	Text	Gender Issues
Self-Introductions	A dialogue introduction of Charlie and Edward	Gender stereotypes
	A dialogue introduction of Teacher and students	Gender stereotypes
	A dialogue introduction of Tom and Jenny	Gender stereotypes
Compliments &	Larry's victory in an International game for education competition.	Gender equality Gender stereotypes
	Jaka's Promotion in his office	Gender



	Congratulations		stereotypes
		A dialogue of succeeding woman clinching the deal.	The positive image of female
	Good Plan!	A dialogue of picnic preparation	A fair view of male Gender stereotypes
	Past Actions	A dialogue of major at the university	Gender equality
		Biographies of Anies Rasyid Baswedan	Unfair view of female



*Image 1*

Image 1 illustrates a young male introducing himself. He introduces his name, address, hobbies, and his mom's and dad's occupations. Denotatively, a young male whose name is Ivan was depicted holding a racket. He was wearing a blue-striped t-shirt. Connotatively, the picture shows the stereotypical image of the male. Stereotypically, the male character tends to be interested in outdoor activities. As what Yonata & Mujiyanto (2017) stated that male characters engaged with higher education, social, and outdoor-based activities. It is in line with the picture that depicted a young male with a strong physical appearance and holds a racket. It indicates that he loves outdoor activities such as badminton sport. Besides, his hobbies are also proved by the reading material listed. He likes to spend his free time hiking, playing badminton, and hanging out with his friend. These activities show that male characters tend to be engaged in sport and outdoor activities. Since sports activities require more physical power, therefore it can be concluded that male characters are active, energetic, strong, and likes challenges.



*Image 2*

Denotatively the picture depicts a male and three females wearing black-white formal dress standing in one of the areas of the office. One of the female workers received compliments from her friends accompanied by a handshake and clapping hand. All of them were smiling happily. Connotatively, the picture shows gender imbalance since the number of females over the male. There are three females and a male depicted. However, both male and female characters in this picture are depicted equally in terms of occupations. It can be seen through the dress they wear that indicates they are office workers. Besides, it can be identified that they had equal education since their occupations required a certain level of education. Moreover, the picture also showed the positive image of the female. From the gaze and gesture all of the people depicted, it can be concluded that a female with blonde hair has been promoted and having a good presentation in their office. As a result, she got some compliments from her friends. This implicitly shows that female characters are active, responsible, and competent. This removed stereotypical views which mentioned that female viewed as an emotional, incompetent, and unqualified (Setyono, 2018). Therefore, the picture shows the positive image of the female.



*Image 3*

Denotatively, the picture depicts a female teacher who sit in front of her students. She wears a green dress with black shoes. She has short blonde hair. Some students wear a mixed colour of light blue and navy uniforms. Two of them raised their hand to answer the teacher's questions. Connotatively, the picture displays the stereotypical occupations of females. The teacher has traditionally seen as the appropriate job for females since it resonated with stereotypes view of females being the ones who were responsible for young children (Newman 1994; Oyler, Jennings, and Lozada 2001). Female occupations tend to be associated with some traits such as gentle, nurturing, and other feminine characteristics. As reported by Crawford and Unger (2004; 366) the job of male and female who work outside the home or in the public area was different, female jobs like

school teachers, nurses, and secretary, whereas male’s jobs were mostly as mechanics, computer scientists, and engineers. It implicitly declares that female characters do not have the ability to handle a hard job. Therefore, the picture contains stereotypical occupations of females.



*Image 4*

Denotatively, the picture depicts some of the collage students attending their graduation events. They are lined up alternately between males and females. The Males are depicted wearing a blue toga while the females are yellow. Connotatively, the picture illustrates the fair view of male and female in gaining

an education. They are depicted equally as the participants of their graduations. It indicates that they had the same level of educations. This shows the improvement in eliminating gender stereotypes in the textbooks. As what Dominguez (2003) reports that gender-sensitive in the visual presentation of EFL/ESL textbooks has received more attention from publishers in the last two decades. Since this illustration do not follow any stereotype or traditional culture, therefore this picture shows equality between males and females in terms of education.

More depictions of visual materials that contain some gender issues are portrayal as follow;

Chapt er	Visual Description	Gender Issues
Self- Introduction	A male and two females discussing something at the canteen/ food store	Gender Imbalance Gender equality
	A young male introduces himself.	Gender stereotypes
Compl iments & Congratulatio ns	A male and three females are giving compliments	Gender imbalance Gender equality Positive image of female
	Two males are giving a compliment to his performance.	Gender stereotypes
	Two males give a compliment to his new store.	Gender stereotypes

		A father compliments his son for passing the exam	Gender stereotypes
		A male congratulates his match	Gender stereotypes
		A female teacher teaches her students.	Gender stereotypes
Plan!	Good	A young female looking forward using binoculars paper.	Positive image of female
		A male and female make a flight reservation	Positive image of female Gender stereotypes
		A female taking photograph	Positive image of female
		A male singer sings a song	Fair view of male
		A young male read a book	Gender stereotypes
	School events	Males and Females attend graduation events	Gender equality
	Past Actions	Two females whispering	Gender stereotypes
Stories	Folklore	A young male read a book	Gender stereotypes
		Two young females studying	Positive image of female
		A male playing skateboard	Gender stereotypes
		A father playing sand with his daughter	Fair view of male
		A male holding a laptop	Gender stereotypes
		A male hanging a telephone.	Gender stereotypes
		A female playing a guitar	Positive image of female

## Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the portrayal of gender in the ELT textbook issued by non-governmental publishers in Indonesia. The finding revealed that there were some gender issues depicted in the textbook, that was gender stereotypes, gender imbalance, gender equality, underrepresented female role models, and the positive image of a female. These issues were depicted both in visual and textual materials. Stereotypically, males were depicted as deserve higher education and occupations. They were also engaged in sports activities and hard job. Meanwhile, females' depiction was portrayed traditionally. They depicted as deserve domestic roles and certain occupation that relates to females' trait such as a teacher. Besides, the depiction of the female as a role model was underrepresented. However, the textbook also displayed gender equality and some positive depiction of females. In several illustrations, females were depicted having equal education as the male. Further, they were also depicted having broader occupations and even higher positions in their workplace. This result indicates that the author of the ELT textbook has been aware to infuse positive issues about gender.

Based on the result of the analysis, some suggestions are provided. Since the textbook

is used for public and free, the materials in the textbook should be seriously considered. This is because the content of the textbook has a big impact on the teacher and the students. Besides, The English teachers are expected to be more aware of the hidden message depicted in the textbook. Besides, they are supposed to balance the treatment of students regardless of gender. The last, Future researchers are open to conducting similar research focus with a different approach for the wider and deeper elaboration of gender representation.

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