

## **The Portrayal of Male and Female Roles in English Language Textbooks Used in Vocational High School**

Nur Azizah<sup>1)</sup>, Budi Setyono<sup>2)</sup>, Made Andayani T. <sup>3)</sup>

*1) Jember University, Jember, Indonesia*

*Email : zahziel@gmail.com*

*2) Jember University, Jember, Indonesia*

*Email : bssetyono@gmail.com*

*3) Jember University, Jember, Indonesia*

*Email : madeandayani@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

Gender is a crucial topic to explore especially in education context because it will affect the students' understanding in a real life or around their society. It can not be denied if in textbook includes material which contains gender bias. Gender issues in the previous studies still depict gender stereotypes and biases, but some studies depict the positive images of gender. The present study examines through visual and verbal artifacts on ELT textbooks used in vocational high school and looks from gender roles. Using Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method. The reveal showed that gender roles on the materials still depict gender biases however some gender discourse represent positive images. From this research suggests that the textbooks author must pay attention for developing materials in the textbooks.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis; Male and Females Roles; ELT Textbooks; Vocational High School

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a democratic country, male and female genders are guaranteed to have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. This gender equality has been promoted extensively in the sectors of politic, economy, health, education and many others in other democratic countries as well as in Indonesia. Through promotion, it is expected that both genders play equal roles in the various sectors of life. However, because Indonesia is a multiethnic and multicultural country, views about gender to some extent are influenced by people's beliefs, customs, and traditions. In order to know the roles of female and male genders represented in an English textbook, the present study aims to analyze the textual and non- textual materials in an English textbook for vocational high school students.

Conducting analysis of gender roles in English textbook is important to do. Lee (2016) adds that teaching materials impact student's perception such as think, feel and behave. From these statements prove that gender is a crucial topic to explore especially in education context because it will affect the students' understanding in a real life or around their society. It can not be denied if in textbook includes material which contains gender bias. Ebadi, Salman and Marjal (2015) suggest that considering in gender representation, language in textbook must be sensitive from it. It should be avoided to learners because it may affect the learners'

behaviour in their future . In this case, the teacher must be critical on the exposure of gender biases in the textbook which may affect children's perceptions. In English textbooks itself, it contains aspect culture such as gender which relates with language. Students learn through textbooks can only by reading, if gender matters are represented in English textbooks, it may be possible students interpret gender perceptions by what they learn through reading regularly only. For that reason, textbooks should be constructed equally between male and female roles for conveying the materials to the learners

There have been many previous studies investigating the portrayal of gender in ELT textbooks in different contexts. Most of the findings revealed that male and female roles were not represented equally, even though some of them portrayed better images for women. Based on the findings of previous studies, the present study analyzed gender roles in the twelfth grade of vocational high school English textbooks through critical discourse analysis. This research is expected to be able to contain the representation of male and female which is a balance to build the knowledge and mindset of students about gender roles.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Gender as Social Construction**

Gender refers to a construction concept of social performing interaction, culturally and historically (Berkowitz, Manohar, & Tinkler, 2010 ; Lu and Luk, 2014. Lee (2016) adds "in the social construction of gender under the influence of parents, schools, peers and the mass media, children learn to walk, talk and behave in the way that their community expects boys and girls should". It means that gender as social construction is influenced by our social life around which is interact with us in daily activities. By it, boys and girls should act what they belongs to.

Gender as a product of social construction can arise gender stereotype in social real-life. Yang (2016) claims that gender bias is overemphasize reflect, between males and females is existing differences. Schools as social education have crucial role concerning with teaching culture and moral values (Gupta and Yin, 1990). Gender difference is also learned by the learners through schools and it can shape learners' perception about gender.

### **Gender Roles in Modern Society**

Over a long time, women's life were unequal and unfair. Thus, they were prevented to join many sectors of life. But, they could find their way to improve and change their position in life. Therefore, they could take their equal rights and change the negative image about women. Feminist movement proves that women can play the same role and opportunities in many aspects (Ghorfati and Medini, 2015).

Indonesia cultures, women held the household activities such as cooking, washing up and so on (Damayanti, 2014). Simorangkir (2011) states that in Indonesia, public relation has dominated by men rather than women . However, in this recent time, we can look that women can work outside of the home. Thus, gender roles have changed in over time. Women have the essential roles in many aspects of public life, (e.g educational attainment, social-economic, and political empowerment) and their roles are needed to develop their country because it is a demand in their government (Ahdiah, 2013 ; Giuliano, 2014).

For instance, in the twenty-first century decades, modern women in Indonesia have various jobs and get higher proportion (e.g banking and retailing) in private sectors (Simorangkir, 2011). Setyono (2018) adds that both of men and women are treated equally and have the same opportunities to build their nations, it is irrespective of their ethnic and

culture, religious, political, economic, and gendered backgrounds. It indicates that modern women have the crucial roles both in government and non-government.

### **Gender Roles in Traditional Society**

Traditional roles in our society are still appearing in this contemporary era and it is different case for both male and female. Females with an assumption is if they study in higher education, it will waste money. In people's opinion, they think that female finally will marry and nurturing (Damayanti, 2014). It means that female have responsibility to do all the housework, take care of children and they don't take a job in the outside.

On the other hand, "Men are presumed by traditional views of gender roles to be leaders and making important family decisions" (Blackstone, 2003). They are the crucial member of the family as the heads. Because men as the leader of the family and they can make the important decisions and they provide the financial support (Dicke, Safavian & Eccles, 2019). In job sectors, females role are limited because they are still expected to play in domestic roles such as a mothers and wives (Lestariyana, Widodo & Sulistiyo, 2020 ; Setyono, 2018).

### **Previous Studies on Gender Roles in ELT Textbooks**

There have been some previous studies analyzing the issue of gender roles in ELT textbooks in different EFL contexts. The first study by Sulaimani (2017) investigated gender representation in EFL Textbook used in a Saudi university. This study examined gender frequencies in conversations in three dimensions: gender relations, subject positions, and contents. The result revealed that female characters are underrepresented. Besides male characters are almost of a half part of the conversations there are male and male conversations. It has meaning that men are frequently portrayed in the textbook.

Second, Lee (2014) did research in Hong Kong which discussed about gender potrayals that are represented in ELT textbooks. The research investigated the improvement of the status of women in Hong Kong in recent decades. The researcher compared popular series of ELT textbooks (12 books in total) used in primary school published in 2005 with the same series published in 1988. The findings showed that gender equity increased in the more recent books both visually and textually. But the study also revealed that both in the visual and textual contexts in the contemporary textbooks, it was found some stereotyped images of two genders and women potrayals depicted prevalent. Women characters are more limited than men roles.

Third, a study by Setyono (2018) that examined the visual and textual discourses of feminist represented in EFL textbooks for secondary school in Indonesia. The study revealed that some gendered depicted in EFL textbooks support the continuation of gender stereotypes and biases but on the other hand, the findings of the study showed that some emerging discourses represent constructive images of women.

Fourth, Barton and Sakwa (2012) investigated the portrayal of gender in Uganda English textbook. The research elicited documentary analysis for analysing the data and using quantitative of Porecca's framework, then using CDA for qualitative analysis. The researchers analysed ELT textbook recommended by the Ministry of Education used in Ugandan schools by students aged 14-15. The study showed that positive female role models and the language of text are not represented equally.

The last is an article written by Ariyanto (2018) that examined the ELT textbook for

Junior High School students and published by the Ministry of National Education. Both visual and verbal texts showed that gender were portrayed unequally. The findings reported gender stereotypes or gender bias in the textbook, also showcased stereotyped gender differences.

The previous studies mentioned in the previous paragraphs have shown that gender representations in ELT textbooks have been explored widely in different parts of the world. Most of the findings show that ELT textbooks analyzed represent gender-biased and gender-stereotyped messages. To fill the gap, I conducted studies of gender portrayal in Indonesian vocational high school English textbook.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is designed as a critical discourse analysis (CDA) because it analyzed English language textbook as a value-laden curriculum document. As the value-laden curriculum document, language textbook does not only teach language but also values (Chapelle, 2009; Widodo, 2018). Therefore, language textbook is seen as an agent of ideologies embedded in the official/ prescribed curriculum (van Dijk, 2001). The selected ELT textbook was analyzed using Fairclough's (1995) model which consists of three stages of Critical Discourse Analysis; (1) Description, (2) Interpretation, (3) Explanation. In the description step, the gender roles represented in the selected textbook was analyzed in some chapters in terms of visual and verbal. Visual and verbal data classified according to; (1) the traditional roles of male and female genders, and (2) the modern roles of male and female genders. The next step is interpreting. In the interpretation stage here found the implicit and explicit meaning. The interpretation is based on the socio-cultural norms accepted by the Indonesian society. This means that in Indonesian context, it is free that people believe in the traditional values of gender roles or the modern ones. The last stage is explanation. The analysis here was thoroughly explained and supported by expert's ideas.

The data of the present study, i.e., the visual and verbal texts that contain male and female roles are collected from an ELT for 12th grade which is published by the Ministry of Education and Culture and used in vocational high school. The selected English textbook entitled "Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas XII" is the revised version published in 2018 adopting the Curriculum 2013.

There are some considerations why this ELT textbook is chosen to be analyzed. First, this textbook is written by a team of ELT practitioners having adequate experiences in writing ELT textbooks in Indonesia. Second, this textbook is used at the national level that already meets the curriculum expectation. Third, the textbook contains gender materials represented in the visual texts (e.g., pictures and photographs) and the verbal texts (e.g., interpersonal text, transactional text, and functional texts (short and long texts).

## FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the research findings in analyzing the roles of male and female both of verbal and visual provided by the English Language Textbooks used in vocational high school. It discusses the identification of images, texts and the result of the findings, also the results of analysis by comparing and contrasting the selected images with the related theories and findings of previous study.

### Gender Portrait in Traditional Roles



In the picture above, there are three people in the doctor's room. That's picture shows us the doctor who is checking the patient condition and a nurse is accompanying too. The patient appearance wearing black shirt. Black colour itself is the colour which demonstrates male look. Black describes the power and strength It describes the stereotype of job. Doctor is the famous occupation that is mostly indicated with a male role. It shows that beside of doctor standing a nurse which indicates a female job. The reader will be assume that doctor is suitable for male than female. In our societies, men typically appear as possessing greater agentic and leadership qualities than women, and higher aspirations and commitment at work.

#### **Text 4.1 A conversation**

Mom : If you don't put some cherries on it,  
your cake will look pale and dull.  
Etty : Yes, you're right. A cherry or two will help  
with the appearance.

In utterance above showing the dialogue between mom and Etty. They talk about the suggestion. Etty's mother is giving suggestion to the Etty about cake decoration. It means that Mom knows more about it. Mom gives Etty a suggestion how to garnish the cake for a beautiful cake. This activities indicate with female roles in domestic duties and its such a interest or hobby which is commonly done by Indonesian female. This utterance describes gender stereotype in hobby and interest subject. Mom's character strongly depicts the female portrait roles in traditional role. Cooking or make a cake such as the common activities which is done to female and it much more biased than equal gender treatment (Ariyanto, 2018). Beside that, female likes the beauty part. Etty's mom said that the cake will look pale if it's not cherries on it. This one has meaning that women can feel something good in a common practice such as decorating a cake if they do in their daily activities.

#### **Gender Portrait in Modern Roles**

In the recent area, the public sectors are not mostly dominated by men. Women also can be in outdoor for achieving their career. Setyono (2018) adds a positive text and images in ELT textbook are required to minimize bias or stereotype gender, those are can be judged as a good ELT textbook. Then it can be expected to the students to avoid them about the mindset of gender stereotype. Some examples below will analyze the gender roles who has bias freely from the picture.



The Pic 4.3 in (book Grade XII. This picture describes a male chef who is wearing a chef shirt and an apron. It seems in an event namely Pike Place Market. There are many people who are attending the event. Three women are visiting his stand. That man are serving them. A man chef is considerably rare especially in Indonesia because when talks about cooking, all fingers are usually pointed towards female as the



conventional practice in our society.



Attendees at the 3R Forum look at toy motorcycles made from recycled parts, Surabaya, Indonesia. (Petrus Riski/VOA)

The next is a picture depicting a female actor who is taking wide role in politic area and as a top leader in government system, Tri Rismaharani a City Mayor of Surabaya. Tri Rismaharani proves that woman can become a leader. In the report text explains the 3R event in Surabaya. Its forum was attended by 300 participants from nearly 40 Asia and Pacific countries. Surabaya was chosen the event of the 3Rs, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

Other findings of male and female roles on the textbook are showed in table below.

Table 4.1. Male and Female Roles in ELT Textbook “Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas XII” [adapted from the table “The Portrayal of Values in the Textbook” in Widodo (2018, p.7)]

Unit	Theme	Visual and Verbal Artifacts	Description	Grade (page)	Portrayal of Male and Female Roles in English Language Textbook
1.	May I Help You?	Group pictures (Visual)	-A picture showing the patient, nurse and doctor who are checking the patient.	XII (4)	-The picture indicates the stereotyped of gendered occupation
2.	Why Don't You Visit Seattle?	Two people in picture (Visual)	-A picture between teacher and student who talking about offering the chair of OSIS	XII (25)	-The stereotype of gender achievement which is male is appropriate to become the leader.
		Two people in utterance (Verbal)	- A conversation between mother and her daughter who is giving the cake decoration	XII (25)	- Gender stereotype about domestic activities which is the routinity of female roles.
		Group Picture (Visual)	- A text and picture the people buy food and there is a male chef	XII (18)	-The constructive view about male role who can take female role

4.	Do You Know How to Apply for a Job?	An application letter (Verbal)	- A woman writing application letter for the position of manager	XII (50)	- The woman can take the widerole of the company
7.	It's Garbage In, Art Works Out	Group picture (Visual)	- A text with a picture theMayor leader of Surabaya opened the recycling conference	XII (100)	-The picture fairness about thewoman portraight and has the crucial role

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study are 4 pictures and 2 texts representing gender roles in traditional and modern roles. examined gender roles in ELT textbooks used in vocational high school published by Ministry of Education and Culture, he result of analysis through visual and verbal artifacts by using Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis reveal 4 pictures and 2 texts representing gender roles in traditional and modern roles. The result were found that those artifacts still contain gender bias, it means that the textbook not all free from gender bias. Males are more powerful and active character than female appearance. Apart from that, also found some positive portraight images. From this research, the authors of ELT textbook can develop for balancing the materials to help their concept about gender and minimize gender misconceptions by including the positive images of woman and providing learning materials that support gender equality. The teacher should be aware about the selected textbook for teaching-learning process to avoid the learners' perception about gender stereotype.

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