GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SOME SELECTED ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR SMP STUDENTS IN INDONESIA
Saluddin Ahmad Husin

MENINGKATKAN PARTISIPASI PEREMPUAN DALAM RANGKA PEMBERDAYAAN PEREMPUAN DI INDONESIA
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PENINGKATAN KUALITAS PENDIDIKAN PEREMPUAN
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PEREMPUAN DALAM LINTAS SEJARAH SUFISTIK: SOSOK RABIAH AL-ADAWIYAH DALAM DUNIA TASAWUF
Rabiatul Adawiah

KONSEP GENDER TENTANG PEREMPUAN DALAM TELOGI: KLASIK DAN MODERN
Rabiatul Aslamiah

POLIGAMI DAN KESETARAAN GENDER
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PUSAT STUDI GENDER
IAIN ANTASARI BANJARMASIN
GENERIC STEREOTYPES IN SOME SELECTED ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS
FOR SMP STUDENTS IN INDONESIA

Saifuddin Ahmad Husin

Abstract

Gender responsive teaching and learning material is a very important element to reduce incident called gender stereotyping. In teacher-students interaction process, gender biased teaching and learning in the classroom is often reflected in a number of teaching and learning contents of material with gender stereotyping. Several studies on gender bias in language textbooks in several parts of the world have shown that gender bias and stereotyping still exist and are happening at schools. However, studies on gender analysis of the English language textbooks which are used in most Indonesian schools have been scarce and unknown, and therefore are open to be studied. This article is a research report on the frequency of use of masculine, feminine words and pronouns (he and she), and kinds of main verbs related to each gender, and common gender stereotyping roles of some selected SMP or junior high school English textbooks. Three junior high school English textbooks that are currently used by Indonesia's junior high schools, were selected.

Key words: gender stereotyp, bias, English school textbook.

A. Introduction

The right for education is the basic right of every individual, because it makes possible (for the individual) to be aware of other rights and prepares individuals to be able to play a role as equal fellow citizens in the society.  

Educational processes and relations within the school system contribute to the formation of gender identity and
maintenance of socially accepted gender roles. Schools develop and reinforce gender bias, stereotypes, and even discriminations which exaggerate the negative aspects of sex roles in the outside world when they could be trying to alleviate them.²

Gender responsive teaching and learning material is also very important element to reduce incident called gender stereotyping. Male and female students need to understand that they have equal right and responsibility to learn anything thus the teaching and learning as well as the instructor can create gender equality.

In teacher-students interaction process, gender biased teaching and learning in the classroom is often reflected in a number of types of teaching and learning contents of material with gender stereotyping. Teachers are often unaware of the existence of special needs for boys and girls. Discrimination practices are often unintentionally carried out by not giving equal opportunity for boys and girls.³

Children's literature, in addition to being one of the favorite choices for reading among students as they are growing up, is commonly used in the context of reading practices in ESL/EFL classrooms (Lazar, 1993). A great number of teachers tend to employ picture books, chapter books, and fairy tales because they think these teaching materials can help students build a repertoire of narratives and create a world of their own while improving their literacy. However, many researchers point out that gender bias is still prevalent in contemporary children's and young adult literature and continues to fuel hot debate (Christensen, 2001; Evans, 1998; Garner, 1994; Louie, 2001). As a result, Mem Fox(1993) argues that teachers need to be sensitive to their teaching materials or they will easily fall into "a passive acceptance of everything literature presents to us" (p. 86).

Several studies on gender bias in language textbooks have been conducted by some experts. Sameer and Jalabneh, for example, paid maximum attention to the length of utterance related to the question of male and female dominance. They counted the number of turns in dialogues and they discovered that the male has the control in initial conversation. While Babai and Ansary also made an experiment on secondary Iranian EFL textbooks and illustrated that male were present in 67 % of the topics as compared to female (209:52).⁴ Their studies have shown that there is a gross bias in the representation of women and men in textbooks. Further, the roles assigned to women in some textbooks are he stereotypical roles of mother and homemaker. This depiction of women in such stereotyped roles only helps to reinforce the outdated notion that women stay at home and men go out to work. Ansary and Babii (2003) concluded that women often appeared less visible than men and women were more visible in indoor passive activities and were placed in traditional roles.⁵

John M. Kobia (2009:69) conducted study on English primary school textbooks in Kenya. The results were to be free from gender bias. This is because the government of Kenya has tried to achieve gender equity in various sectors of the country.⁶

In Indonesian school textbooks we can also find inequality of gender roles like Bahasa Indonesia, Physics, History, and etc. This is because gender is a construction of culture that can be

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² Sameer Hamdan and Atef Jalabneh, Topics in EFL Textbooks and the Question of Gender Dominance: A Case Study from Public School of Jordan, Amman Arab University for Graduate Studies, the International Journal of Language and Culture, 2005, p. 52.
found in any cultures of ethnics in Indonesia. Construction of values and beliefs on gender in the cultures of Java, Bali, Minangkabau, Madura, Balak, and Bugis is obviously visible. In these ethnic cultures women are to work in domestic sector, while men dominated the of public sector. Construction of gender can also be found in cultures of formal religions in Indonesia. Semantically speaking, all of these religions made an impression that God is a man.

Study about gender in Elementary School textbook in Indonesia has been done by Logdson in 1985 with the title Gender Roles in Elementary School in Indonesia. The result shown that textbooks used in Elementary school contain gender concept, as well as have a standard role for each gender expected to do.

Similar study was also done by Astuti, Indati, and Sastroiyani in 1999 with the title Bias Gender dalam Buku Pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia. The research revealed that content of gender bias can be found in Indonesian textbooks that are used in Elementary School, Junior High School, and Senior High School. The study confirmed that woman’s public roles were lower than men’s, access and control of woman to property of goods and decision making is much more lower than that of man.

Studies on gender analysis of the English language textbooks which are used in most Indonesian schools have been scarce and unknown, and therefore are open to be studied. This article is a research report on the frequency of use of masculine, feminine words and pronouns (she and he), and kinds of main verbs related to each gender, and common gender stereotyping roles of some selected SMP or junior high school English textbooks. Three junior high school English textbooks, that are currently used by Indonesia’s junior high schools, were selected, namely:


To justify even and fair distribution of the male and female authors, the gender of the authors of each book selected is taken into account. The first book is co-authored by three male writers; the second book, by all-female writers; and the third, by mixed gender, one male and two females.

Simple and basic frequency counting was used to find out the occurrence of pronouns he and she in each chapter of each book. The same method was also employed to count the frequency of verbs and their association with each of the two pronouns. Each verb was analysed according to its use or context with respective gender-stereotyped role.

B. Research Findings

Data in Table 1 illustrates that the first book shows only a very slight difference of the average use of pronouns he and she; the difference is only 1 percent, 49% for he and 51% for she. If we look at the gender of the authors of this book, interesting fact is worth noting; all of the authors are male, yet they show no tendency of preference to any gender. However, the fact that all of the writers of this book are male will not be automatically considered as a justification that there is no gender inequality in this book. To make it as a justification of the existence of such inequality a closer look into to each chapter of the book and each topic or theme and agent of the sentences in which pronoun he and she are used is needed. Unfortunately, this research has not yet taken those considerations into account for some reasons. The first reason being a preliminary research it does not involve a deeper or closer analysis of semantic and cognitive aspects of the data acquired for this study, although some socio-psychological views and analysis are used especially when it is deemed necessary.

The total number of main verb in this book is 112. Out of these, 53 are mentioned or used in association with females and 59 with males. The number within parenthesis presents the number of times the verb has occurred in the text.

To present an elaborate explanation for each word is probably not necessary for some reasons. First, not all the verbs used in association with either gender can be said as gender-specific or gender-stereotyping. Besides, it is also time and space-consuming to elaborate the verbs that are gender-neutral such as like, look, say, etc. Accordingly, some selected verbs which traditionally associated with either of the genders are worth explaining. For example, the verbs bargain, cook, serve, and consume are all associated with females according to Indonesian culture. The word bargain associates with going shopping in traditional market for groceries, food, and kitchen-related articles in which negotiation of price is usually practiced. The verb cook and serve implies traditional domestic role of Indonesian women. Cooking is usually and generally done by women in Indonesian household. The same is true with the verb serve, which is closely
related to cooking and presenting the food by the women to the
men, is also closely related to female role. In many Asian dining
cultures, and Indonesia is no exception, men (including boys) eat
first or are served first, women eat after the men. Likewise the
word consume is associated with female activity. The occurrence
of the verb consume in association with female shows that what
women can do is only receiving from men and consuming what
they receive in contrast with men being portrayed as agents of
production who can give or provide.

On the contrary, the verbs plough, prohibit, and work are
associated with male, although the verb work is also frequently
used in association with female. The verb plough requires physical
work and therefore implies hard work and strong physical state.
This implication is a common gender bias in many cultures and
traditions which dictates that labor division for men and women is
rigid; outside of the house, hard and physically demanding job is
delegated to men, while domestic and fine handling works are for
women.

The verb prohibit demonstrates power of men over others.
This indicates that men are the decision makers. Finally and
interestingly, the verb work occurs almost evenly in association
with both male and female. However, the frequency of this verb
being associated with men is higher.

2. Data from book “Let’s Surf in English for 7th Grade that written by
Shelina Shakira Bhakti and Tri Utami, (Jakarta, Rajawali Cilik
2009).”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Number of Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the second book in this study is written by two
female writers, nevertheless the disparity of pronoun use between
male and female is higher than the first book which is nota bene
written by all male writers. Data in table 3. illustrates that the
second book shows considerable difference of the average use of
pronouns she and he; the difference is 16 percent. 42% of she and
58% of he.

Table 3 presents the result of she and he in a book that is
written by women, in the first unit, pronoun she frequency is 15
times out of 24 with the percentage of 37.5% as compared to the he
occurred 9 times with percentage of 37.5%. In the second unit,
there is only one pronoun, that is he, gets one point with the
percentage 100%. Nine times of occurrence for she out of 21 with
the percentage 43% in the third unit, while he dominates over 12
points with the percentage of 57%. Fourth unit also indicates she
only has 18 points out of 74 with percentage 24%; but he covers
more dominance in the sense that he dominates 56 points with the
percentage 76%. Likewise, in unit six, 12 points out of 38 are
dominated by she with the percentage 32%; while he dominates
merely 26 points with the percentage 68%. In the ending of the
units, frequency of she is 23 points out of 27 with the percentage
85%; and he does 4 points with the percentage 15%.

In short, this book contains seven units, the total number
of females is 78 points out of 185 with the percentage 42, but males
get 107 points with the percentage 58%. It shows males preference
and gender bias are there.
If we look at the gender of the authors of this book, it is interesting to note the fact that all of the authors are male, yet statistically these female authors have, whether consciously or unconsciously, shown a preference to male gender. This could mean that on an individual personal level the two authors were not at all aware of gender equality and therefore did not consider making some balance in the frequency of use of male versus female pronouns during the process of writing and editing the book.

Table 4. Verbs Associated with Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male-Related Verbs</th>
<th>Female-Related Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appear(1)</td>
<td>Accept(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask(1)</td>
<td>Think(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break(1)</td>
<td>Deliberate(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth(1)</td>
<td>Deliver(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come(1)</td>
<td>Ask(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cry(1)</td>
<td>Wash(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die(1)</td>
<td>Run(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die(1)</td>
<td>Brake(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die(1)</td>
<td>Brake(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die(1)</td>
<td>Brake(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give(1)</td>
<td>Prepare(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go(1)</td>
<td>Spend(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live(1)</td>
<td>Stand(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love(1)</td>
<td>Start(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marry(2)</td>
<td>Remember(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance(1)</td>
<td>Leave(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of main verbs that related with subject of gender words is 99, out of these, 37 are mentioned in association with females and 62 with males. Several verbs are used in connection with female and male with the same unit, such as come and die. The verbs turn, wash, and marry are used twice only for women; while, continue, explain, set, and work for men, never with female.

In this book, get appears once in association with women and twice with a man. This indicates that males more aggressive. Likewise, think is mentioned once in connection with woman and tree times with man. It appears as if men think more than women. The verb want shows twice with women and once with man. Moreover, as mentioned above, the verb run comes tree times in related with women and only once with man. This means that women are very aggressive than man and it’s contrary to common belief.

From the point of view of Indonesian culture, some action verbs are believed to be more appropriately carried out by a specific gender. Such words include invent, drive, attack, recruit, create, and fix (repair) are verbs of male specific, while accept, apologize, sacrifice, etc. are of female specific. However, such stereotyping of these verbs are untrue in this book. Interestingly, verbs connoting activeness or even aggressiveness of a male gender are used with female pronoun. Such verbs include invent, create, recruit, work, and attack. Conversely, verbs involving the actions of caring, softness, and emotion are used with pronoun he in this book. Such verbs include love, marry, and cry.


Table 5. Number of Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun (s/he)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Pronoun (he)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Unit 4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Unit 5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Verbs Associated with Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Male-Related Verbs</th>
<th>Female-Related Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clean(1)</td>
<td>need(1)</td>
<td>arrange(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comb(1)</td>
<td>make(2)</td>
<td>become(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cook(1)</td>
<td>send(1)</td>
<td>break(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoy(1)</td>
<td>stay(1)</td>
<td>cook(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get(2)</td>
<td>twist(1)</td>
<td>cut(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give(1)</td>
<td>walk(1)</td>
<td>finish(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep(1)</td>
<td>want(1)</td>
<td>help(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like(1)</td>
<td>wear(1)</td>
<td>get(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>live(2)</td>
<td>love(1)</td>
<td>give(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look like(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>write(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>look like(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table (9) shows the total number of main verbs in this book is 61. Out of these, thirty one are got in association with female and thirty with males. Looking at those verbs in the table, the verbs cook, give, look like, and want, appear with same number in association with females and males. Moreover, the verbs like, make, and study are used twice too in association with the women and never with man; while, the verb plan does twice with men and never with a woman.

C. Analysis

In common gender stereotypes, the traits of women are submissive, emotional, quiet, clean, clumsy, artsy, housewife, and child-rearing while, the traits of aggressive, no emotional, loud, messy, athletic, math and science oriented, money maker, and naughty for men. Other verbs that could be considered in this context are for example get is mentioned twice in association with the female and once with male, but the verb win shows tree times for males and never with woman. It indicates that male does most aggressive. The verb wear is used once in association with woman.
and four times with males. It appears man artier than women. That is contrary to common gender stereotypes.

Gender bias as portrayed in children's literature is still as prevalent today as in past decades, and remains a problem in light of the fact that gender stereotypes and sexism in children's picture books affect the development of gender identity in young children. Numerous studies of children's literature content indicate that male figures dominate the majority of books. This condition affects children's development and perceptions. Children adopt certain roles and behaviors as part of their socialization process. Many of these gender-based, behavioral roles arise from identification with others. The development of gender-role identity is important to children's self-perception, and influences adults' and peers' treatment of children. Gender affects others' expectations of children and youngsters often do not understand the expected behavior. As for the English language textbooks for SMP (junior high), although pictures consist or appear less than those children's literature of picture books, however imbalance representation of certain gender group may affect expectations of these early teenagers about certain behaviors towards certain gender role. This, in turn, will shape their mind and perception towards gender equality. Given that there are still many imbalance practices and representations of gender equality in the books for junior high, more deliberate and direct actions to make junior high school stakeholders more aware of gender bias and gender inequality are urgently needed to be done.

As mentioned, literature is one of the homes of gender stereotypes. The books that children read are not read to them have psycho-social uses at a time when children are continually constructing ideas from information around them and assimilating new knowledge with previous knowledge. In general, children's literature is said to provide characters and events with which children can identify and through which they can consider their own actions, beliefs, and emotions. The characters and situations in books introduce children to what the world may look like through others' eyes, and offer opportunities for children to further construct their own views of self and the world.

Strictly speaking, everything that children read contributes to the formation of self-images that help to construct children's self-identity. For example, girls can imagine themselves as women and boys can imagine themselves as men (Singh, 1998). Images and specific language used in picture books have the potential to affect children's developmental processes in various ways as a result of reading at crucial stages of development. Because that, changing the image of women or men represented in textbooks is one way of raising the awareness for the issue of developing critical thinking and creating a new, more acceptable notion of world and the place of women it.

Lawrence Kohlberg conceived of gender development as a three-stage process in which children first learn their identity ("I am a boy"), then gender stability ("I will always be a boy and grow up to be a man"), and finally gender constancy ("Even if I wore a dress, I would still be a boy"). Ilene C. Noppe said, in the middle period is a time that parents and educator played a significant role in gender socialization when children are very young. It is because before the period, children become aware of their gender, where play styles and behavior begin to crystallize around that core identity. After the period, Erik H. Erikson stated that adolescence represented a crucial turning point in the development of sense of identity.

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6516/is_3_45/ai_n285655966/.
Ziheo-Anima, Gender Stereotypes in elementary School Textbooks (Grades 1, 4 and 8) in Use in Montenegro, p.1.
Ilene C. Noppe, Ibid.
D. Conclusion and Recommendation

Many school textbooks still portray gender imbalance. Even a number of award-winning books were still replete with traditional and passive female roles. These children's books, investigated from feminist perspectives, fall into two categories. The first category is sexist books, in which female characters are largely recognized and accepted through their domestic accomplishments, their timidity of soul, [and] their gentle appearance and manners. The second category is comprised of cop-out books which implicitly express gender biases only by a crucial line, a paragraph, or the last chapter.

After almost half a century of research studies since the 1970s, such an insensitive mentality toward sexual imbalance is still present in contemporary children's literature. Under such circumstances, a great many writers have become more aware of the gender issues in their books. Some authors attempt to increase the number of female characters in their books, and points out that many of their books are intentionally dominated by main characters who are either girls, female animals, or dynamic elderly women. Others explicitly indicate that the purposeful treatment and balance of female/male characters in a story, while admirable, are not a realistic standard for all children's literature, and in fact, is impossible to maintain given to the volume and variety of books in the trade book market every year. Nevertheless, they suggest that books portraying gender balance can be used and considered in the classroom to offer teachers different perspectives on gender issues and help them enrich their reading materials and discussions. According to this viewpoint, it would be more realistic and especially important to come up with more books with strong female characters who are active, inventive, and in charge of their own destinies, thus placing more emphasis on the quality of female roles.
The persistent imbalance of gender representation in children's literature highlights the importance of children's literature in greatly shaping many children's minds and consistently influencing different cultures in the world. The stereotypes and worldview embedded in children's books have become accepted knowledge, and such deep-seated socialized thinking has created barriers that prevent authors or teachers from implementing their democratic and egalitarian beliefs, whether it be writing or teaching. Coping with relentless gender stereotyping requires increasing awareness of gender issues on the part of authors and teachers. Authors should devote their attention to the representation of female and male roles in their writing process, while teachers should attempt to empower their students with critical thinking and alternative reading. What follows in the next section are some instructional principles or strategies that teachers can incorporate into their classroom teaching.

Since language is closely connected with culture, language textbooks contain both collective cultural loads and personal perspectives of the authors. Writers who are raised and heavily influenced by collective cultural views on roles and practices that treat male and female differently or give preference over certain gender group will consciously or unconsciously portray these perspectives in their works. In order to eliminate or at least to decrease such gender biases and inequal treatment of certain gender group, teachers need to be more sensitive to their teaching materials or they will easily fall into "a passive acceptance of everything literature presents to us".

Based on the findings of research, the writer would like to propose the following recommendations: Textbooks need to be revised especially where the role of female is portrayed only as good housewives. There is a need to include achievements and heroic instances of the female gender in equity to the men. Teachers have to choose those textbooks for children that can help children recognize gender stereotypical message. For this, they have to choose those books in which girl are portrayed in a positive light with active, dynamic roles irrespective of their gender, the language used in the text is gender free, occupations are represented as gender free, achievement are not evaluated on basic of gender etc. Finally, a National Textbook Council should be set up to monitor textbooks.
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