

Gender representation in the visual illustrations of Indonesian high school English textbooks

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT		
Keywords: <i>English textbooks, representation of gender, visual illustrations.</i>	<i>This study investigates the representation of gender in visual illustrations of junior high school English textbooks (English in Focus) in Indonesia. It is to see how gender is depicted and how the portrayal of gender differs among the grades. The result shows that the females and males are depicted in terms of their occupations, activity types, stereotyped roles and stereotyped characteristics. The findings of this study also revealed that females and males are portrayed differently among the grades. In this case, the Grade 7 book depicts more pictures compared to the Grades 8 and 9 books in terms of the occupations, activity types and stereotyped gender roles, while females' and males' characteristics are represented in more equal ways among the grades.</i>		
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1. Introduction

English has been taught as a compulsory subject, ranging from schools to universities over the years in Indonesia. Therefore, the government has paid increasing attention to improving the quality of teaching and learning English every year, for example, by providing various textbooks in both printed and electronic formats.

The use of textbooks in the teaching and learning process is considered important because they provide resources for teachers and students. Furthermore, textbooks dominate what students learn and occupy the position of conveying the curriculum (Sleeter & Grant, 1991). It is important to note, however, that an effective teaching and learning environment requires textbooks and other instructional materials that reflect the diversity of students' social and cultural backgrounds particularly in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms in ESUEFL contexts (Ndura, 2004). This is because second or foreign language teaching textbooks no longer just develop concurrently with the development of second or foreign language pedagogy in a narrow sense, but they increasingly participate in the general cultural transmission with the educational system and in the rest of society (Cunningsworth, 1995). In line with the above elaboration, a textbook, if well-designed, can be the basis for learners' exploration, learning and enjoyment. For example, a textbook containing attractive and colorful illustrations could naturally attract students' attention and help their comprehension. Lee (1993, p.506) stated that "illustrations are not an extension of the text that simply

reinforce the meaning of the words, but are necessary for comprehension". Furthermore, Rankin-Erickson and Nielsen Hibbing (2003, p. 758) mentioned that illustrations could "help students show what is going on, see what they are talking about, put more ideas in the students 'head, and [it would] take a thousand words to get the true meaning of the picture". Therefore, visual illustrations in the textbooks and other teaching materials should nurture the minds of students, without enhancing or strengthening gender biases and stereotypes.

From this point of view, conducting a study in relation to the depiction of females and males in the visual materials of the textbooks is considered important. This is because illustrations in the English textbooks and other instructional materials which are currently used in Indonesian schools might still present an unbalanced portrayal of females and males and enhance gender stereotypes. This study investigates the representation of gender in visual illustrations of junior high school English textbooks (English in Focus) used in Indonesia. To be more specific, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How is gender depicted in the visual illustrations of the junior high school English textbooks English in Focus?
2. In what ways does the portrayal of gender in the visual illustrations of junior high school English textbooks English in Focus differ among the grades?

Literature review

English textbooks

Textbooks are considered to be one of the major tools for a foreign language teaching. As textbooks are so many and so varied in purpose, it becomes difficult to make accurate generalizations about them. As a result, language practitioners have come up with their own definitions and descriptions of their role and nature. For instance, Ur (1996), used the term coursebook to refer to a textbook of which the teacher and each student usually has a copy, and which is in principle to be followed systematically as the basis for a language course. Similarly, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) also consider textbooks as providers of input into classroom lessons in the forms of texts, activities, explanations and so on. Furthermore, Herawati (2003) defines textbooks as teaching materials which are designed to provide instructional objectives and the goals of education. It could be concluded from these definitions that textbooks are considered as constant companions of learners, providers of classroom input, and devices for educational interaction.

Textbooks are also regarded as media through which teachers and students communicate with each other in the teaching and learning process. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) stated that textbooks are considered the most convenient means of providing the structure that the teaching and learning process requires. In addition, Cunningsworth (1995) stated that textbooks can serve as guidance for teachers who are inexperienced or occasionally unsure of their language knowledge, and as a medium for initial teacher training.

Furthermore, Richards (2001) and Ur (1996) mentioned several principal advantages of textbooks in the EFL/ESL classroom, such as textbooks could provide structure and syllabus for a program, provide a variety of learning resources, provide effective language models and input textbooks, provide readymade texts and tasks, and they could help standardize instructions. Needless to say, with responsibility for these functions, textbooks must be well designed to support students' learning in ethical ways.

Roles and Functions of Visual Illustration in-the English Textbooks

The use of visual illustrations in the teaching materials is considered important. This is because visual materials could help students show what is going on, see what they are talking about and put more ideas in their heads (Rankin-Erickson & Nielsen Hibbing, 2003). According to Hewings (1991, p. 237) Illustration is "everything that would not be considered 'text' in teaching material. This includes, for example, drawings, cartoons, photographs, flow charts, pie charts, graphs, and Tables". In this study, illustrations mainly mean pictures.

Researchers have revealed numerous roles and functions of illustration in the textbooks. Hewings (1991, p. 237) stated that illustration functions as "a means of contextualizing language or stimulating a language practice". Furthermore, Gene (2004) mentioned that visual materials in foreign language course books could make learning the target language easier and could help readers understand the culture's socio-cultural background of the culture more understandable.

Gender representation in the English text books

The concept of representation entails how something or someone is expressed or described. This study focuses on the gender representations in the visual illustration of English textbooks used in Indonesia. Ba sow (1992: 35) stated that gender refers to "the socially-determined personal and psychological characteristics associated with being female or male."

It is often considered that there is an imbalance in the representations of gender in the English textbooks. Singh (1998) revealed that not only are girls portrayed less often than boys in children's books, but also both genders are frequently presented in stereotypical terms. In addition, Filak (2001) has shown that women are predominantly portrayed as devoted mothers and wives who take care of the household, children, and husband, and who perform tasks such as washing, cleaning, and cooking. Therefore, the textbook writer should understand that gender equality concepts need to be prominent in the design of a textbook (in this case it is English textbooks) since the content may influence the readers' worldview. A number of research studies have been carried out to analyse gender representation in English textbooks. For example, Warouw (2008) investigated the changing of gender values in two editions of an English coursebook series Contextual English published in Indonesia in 2004 and 2007. She mentioned several categories related to gender values in the Contextual English, such as gender based language, gender-related job possibilities, gender-based activity types, stereotyped sex roles, progressiveness, and neutrality. In addition, Law and Chan (2004) examined the textbooks in terms of the proportion of male and female characters represented; the settings in which they appear, their portrayal in domestic or non-

domestic roles, and the kinds of occupational roles male and female characters were portrayed in. Furthermore, Ansary and Babaii (2003) mentioned several categories related to sexism in English textbooks, such as sex-linked job possibilities, sex-based activity types, stereotyped sex roles, firstness, and masculine generic conception. All frameworks presented above are applicable in investigating the gender representation in the English textbooks but this project combines and adapts the most suitable framework for my analysis, which will be discussed in the following section.

2. Research Methodology

This research is classified as a qualitative study because it mainly uses nonnumeric qualitative data obtained from the textbooks. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006, p. 430), qualitative research aims to investigate "the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials". In addition, Merriam (1998:5) has contended that qualitative research is "an umbrella concept covering several forms of enquiry that help understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible". In line with data collection, the researcher identifies and collects the relevant materials (textbooks), makes suitable categories, identifies visual illustrations in the main sources in relation to gender representation, scrutinizes the data and validates the interpretation of the data based on the relevant theories.

Data sources

The main sources of the data in this study are the pictures in the English textbooks (English in Focus Grade 7 to 9) for junior high school in Indonesia. These textbooks are published for public purposes by the Department of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of electronic book. Therefore, these can be categorized as official documents and these are classified as secondary data.

Data analysis

The data in this study are analysed using content analysis method. Krippendorff (2003, p. 18) stated that content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use". This means that the data may cover many forms of messages communicated through the text, including words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, or themes. However, the data for this study comprise the visual illustrations which contain gender ideas only. The content analysis procedures proposed by Krippendorff (2003) are adopted in this study. He mentioned that content analysis comprises three main components: First, data making, which includes unitizing, sampling, recording/coding and reducing data to manageable representations; second, inductively inferring contextual phenomena; third, narrating the answer to the research questions.

In terms of the framework for analysis, I only took the most suitable and applicable categories for my framework. In this case, I adapted categories/criteria from the previous categories that

had been used before by other researchers. From many categories provided by such researchers as Warouw (2008), Law and Chan (2004), Ansary and Babaii (2003), the following categories were considered the most applicable for the analysis of gender representation in the visual images in this project. Those categories are gender representation in occupation, gender portrayal in activity types, stereotyped gender roles and stereotyped characteristics.

3. Findings

This research aims to see how gender is represented in the visual illustrations of the Indonesian junior high school English textbooks English in Focus (Grade 7 to 9) using four categories, namely gender representation in occupation, gender portrayal in activity types, stereotyped gender roles and stereotyped characteristics. It is also to see how gender is depicted among the grades.

Gender representation in occupation. There are various occupations mentioned in these books. The depiction of occupations held by men and women, respectively, was investigated. In these series of textbooks (English in Focus), imbalanced representation of gender still remains. For example, women are portrayed as having occupations such as a nurse, tailor, typist, and hairdresser, whereas men are depicted as having jobs such as a soldier, carpenter, policeman, and pilot. In this case, men are depicted as a soldier or policeman who has physical strength and need physically demanding work, whereas women are portrayed as performing less physically demanding work, such as a typist and tailor, or more emotionally demanding work, such as a nurse. In addition, men are more visible in out-door workplaces, while women are more visible in in-door places.

Furthermore, English in Focus Grade 7 depicts many imbalanced pictures between females and males in occupation, the Grades 8 and 9 textbooks show a less even spread of occupations between genders. There are few depictions of females and males in occupation. For example, teacher and nurse are represented as female professions, while radio broadcaster and postman are depicted as male jobs.

Gender portrayal in activity types

The representation of gender can also be observed in the types of activities typically performed by women and men. In terms of sports, women tend to be portrayed in less physically demanding sports (e.g. running), whereas men are depicted in more demanding or dangerous sports (e.g. playing basketball and skateboarding). Regarding dancing activities, women are portrayed more than men in these books. Women characters in dancing tend to be feminine, while men are portrayed as long as they have masculine characteristics.

In terms of distribution of activity types, the distribution in the Grade 7 book is mostly in sports type, such as running and playing basketball. In this case, females are represented as doing less physical contact sports compared to males, whereas in the Grade 8 book, females and males are portrayed more equally in doing sports, such as in biking. However, there is no depiction of genders in sports activities in the Grade 9 book.

Gender-role stereotypes

There are several images in the English in Focus which portray gender-role stereotypes. In this case, women are mainly depicted working in the home and engaged in household chores. For example, shopping, cooking or preparing food and taking care of children are activities presented in these books. On the contrary, males are doing harder activities, such as working in the office or in the farm.

The gender role stereotypes are depicted in all grades of this book even though the proportion is different among the grades. The Grade 7 book has the most pictures which portray the gender role stereotypes, such as shopping, taking care of children, cooking and preparing food, while in the grade 8 and 9 have pictures in relation to take care of the children and go shopping.

Stereotyping gender characteristics

Gender stereotypes have been around since the beginning of time, and are still very prominent today. Gender stereotypes are not only underrepresented women's roles but also their characters. In this case, females are described as having more passive and weak figures compared to males. For example, we could see from the data how boys get involved in playing soccer, whereas two girls only stand and watch the game. In addition, the visual illustrations taken from the English in Focus textbooks also contain male-stereotyped characteristics such as being disobedient and naughty, whereas females' characters are described as being diligent and obedient. The picture of a male student coming late in the class and borrowing a book from a female student may represent these stereotyped male characteristics. In contrast, the picture of a female student erasing the blackboard and practising conversation in front of the class may indicate that they are diligent and obedient.

The illustrations showing the stereotyping of gender characteristics could be found only in Grades 7 and 8 books. In the grade 7 book, males are portrayed as disobedient and lazy students, while females are depicted as the opposite. Furthermore, in Grade 8 book, women are illustrated as having weak characters, while men have stronger and more active characters. In contrast, the Grade 9 book has no picture showing this kind of stereotype.

4. Discussion

Based on the findings above, the writer could see that females and males are still depicted unequally in the images of the English textbooks English in Focus Grades 7 to 9 used in Indonesian schools in terms of their occupations, activity types, roles, and characteristics even though the quantity of the portrayal of genders among the grades is different.

The first is gender representation in occupation. We could see that the images used in these textbooks reflect various types of occupations for men and women. In this case, the types of occupations that women or men have are mainly depicted based on stereotyped feminine or masculine characteristics. For example, women work in in-door workplaces or work in less physically demanding work (e.g. tailor, typist and hairdresser), while men work in outdoor workplaces or need physically demanding work (e.g. soldier, a carpenter and a

policeman). In terms of gender portrayal in occupation among the grades, the Grade 7 textbook depicts more pictures in relation to women's and men's occupation compared to the books for Grades 8 and 9. This might be because the topic of profession is only discussed in this grade.

The second is activity types portrayed in the textbooks. For example, doing sports and dancing. In terms of doing sports, women are depicted as doing less physical contact or less dangerous sports compared to men. For example, men are playing skateboarding, while women are running. In addition, females are portrayed as having feminine characters in dancing activities, while male have masculine characters. In addition, women are portrayed more in dancing compared to men. The distribution of images portraying women's and men's types of activities is different among the grades. The Grade 7 book depicts more in sports activities, while the books for Grades 8 and 9 represent more in dancing activities. In addition, the Grade 7 textbook still represents females and males unequally in doing sports, whereas in the Grade 8 textbook both gender are depicted more equally. The third is the portrayal of gender-role stereotypes. It could be found that males' public roles and females' domestic roles are clearly reflected in these textbooks. Domestic jobs such as cooking, shopping, and taking care of children are done by women, while working in the office or out-door workplaces are done by men. The depiction of females and males' roles in the textbooks could be found in all grades. However, the quantity of the pictures portraying the gender-role stereotypes is mostly found in Grade 7 book. On the other hand, in the texts for Grades 8 and 9 are rarely found. This is might be because the Grades 8 and 9 books used few pictures to illustrate the content of the textbooks.

Finally, the portrayal of stereotyped characteristics between females and males are also still found. Females are represented as having more passive and weak figures compared to males. In this case, males are doing various kinds of activities, while females are being watchers. In terms of bad stereotyped characters, it seems that males are more often depicted than females. In this context, males are depicted as lazy and disobedient students, whereas females appear as diligent and obedient students. Women and men are represented differently among the grades. Women are depicted as the weak and passive persons in the Grade 7 book. However, in the Grades 8 and 9 books, they are represented as diligent and obedient students. In contrast, males are portrayed as strong and active persons in the Grade 7 book. But, they are represented as lazy and disobedient in the Grades 8 and 9 books.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the depiction of gender in the visual illustrations of the English textbooks English in Focus used in the junior high school in Indonesia. The important findings of this study could be summarized in the following points; First of all, females and males are depicted in the English in Focus in terms of their occupations, activity types, stereotyped roles and stereotyped characteristics. The occupations in these books are depicted in various types but they are still based on feminine and masculine characteristics. Furthermore, females are represented in less physical contact or less dangerous activities, while males are depicted in more challenging activities. In addition, males' public roles, such as working

in out-door workplaces and females' domestic roles, such as cooking, shopping and taking care of children are often reflected in these textbooks. Finally, females' characters are represented as having more passive and weak figures compared to males. However, they are portrayed as being more diligent and obedient compared to males.

Regarding genders depiction among the grades, the findings of this study revealed that females and males are portrayed differently among the grades. In this case, the Grade 7 book depicts more pictures compared to the Grades 8 and 9 books in terms of the occupations, activity types and stereotyped gender roles, while females' and males' characteristics are represented in more equal ways among the higher grades. The results of this study cannot be generalized to other English teaching materials. However, the results of this research are important because they encourage an awareness of gender issues and enhance better understanding of the gender portrayal in the teaching materials.

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