

DO TEXTBOOKS REALLY PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY?: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER ROLES

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Abstract

Gender equality has been promoted by UNICEF since 1995. One strategical way to promote gender equality is through education by exposing the youth to nonbiased learning materials. This paper investigates the representation of gender roles in two English textbooks for senior high school students. Gender related images and texts are taken as the data. The data were analyzed using Bruggeilles and Cromer's (2009) framework for gender typical roles. Findings reveal that in both textbooks, males have the roles as leaders in domestic, social, and occupational sphere. In can be seen from the way both textbooks represent males as smart, capable, well-educated, competent, competitive, skillful, and brave. Furthermore, as leaders, males are portrayed as decision maker and risk takers. On the other hand, females have the nurturing roles in domestic and social sphere. In occupation sphere, females' occupations are basically an extension of their nurturing roles. Both textbooks depict female as affectionate, loving, passionate, and friendly figures. They are also represented as dependent, indecisive, organized, and meticulous.

Keywords: *gender representation, gender roles, multimodal analysis, textbooks*

Background

The issues of gender disparity and inequality have been happening in all over the world for decades. Driven by poverty, many families in developing countries send only their sons to school, while their daughters stay at home and help them with the household. This issue become one of UNESCO main concern since early 1990s. In 2000, UNESCO held Dakar Convention and one of the proposals offered is Education for All (EFA). The goals of EFA are everyone has equal opportunity to get education, especially primary and secondary education, equal chance to have good quality learning resources (UNESCO, 2014). To guarantee the success of this program, UNESCO had supported education from many aspects, such as balancing the numbers of male and female teachers, reforming the curricula

and textbooks, as well as making classroom practices more gender-sensitive and limiting the gender-bias.

Due to UNESCO continuous efforts and massive campaign, the issue of gender equality has been promoted all around the globe to balance distribution of power dynamic between gender. It raises a new set of beliefs that everyone has same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in every aspect in society, regardless of their gender. Moreover, people awareness of gender equality is increasing, too.

Education become one strategic mean to expose youths to gender equality so that they can develop equality and equity understanding since their early days, and then later when they become members of society, they would have set of gender equality and equity beliefs so that they would act upon those beliefs in all aspects of their lives.

Education in Indonesia is closely related to the use of textbooks. These textbooks reflect and represent the writers' belief, norm, and value as members of societies. These textbooks expose those beliefs to student and plant those values in their minds and shape their beliefs. One of the criteria of good textbooks is they must be non-gender biased (Tomlinson, 2012). Tomlinson (2012) states that non-gender biased means the textbooks have balance portrayal of males and females in every sphere, balance depictions of their actions and expressions, as well as the usage of gender free language in texts.

Once students are constantly and continuously exposed to such representations of gender, they will start to internalize these messages as true and natural. As a result, they will believe that both genders have the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in every field in society. This is one of the reasons why textbooks are an ideal means to promote gender equality.

This study aims at finding out the multimodal representation of gender in two English textbooks for senior high school students in Indonesia. The study investigates the way gender is multimodally portrayed in reading passages, illustrations, and conversations in those two English textbooks. Gender representation can be seen from the characters' typical roles, conversational roles, and semantic representation.

This study is different from the majority of previous studies in some extends. Firstly, this study focuses on gender representation as portrayed by each gender typical roles, conversational roles, as well as their semantic representation. Mostly, previous studies assess gender representation by their visibility in text or illustration (Wu & Liu, 2015; Karima, 2017; and Islam and Asadullah, 2018). None of them investigates the representation by the roles each gender has.

Secondly, the novelty of this study is related to the multimodal gender representation. This study examines multimodal gender representation in two senior high school textbooks. By multimodal, it means that the analyses focus on not only the verbal texts in the textbooks, but also their respective illustrations. Previous studies on gender representation concern only with their visibility in verbal text or illustrations (Rohani & Zatei, 2013 Hall, 2014;; and Dumalay & Rentilb, 2018), but rarely in both of them.

Research Methods

This study deploys content analysis as it makes replicable and inferences from texts (or other meaningful matters, such as work of art, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols and even numerical records) to the context of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). Since the data involved various semiotic resources, multimodality approach is also implemented in this content analysis.

The data in this study are taken from '*Pathway to English for SMA/MA Grade X*' (which then referred as PE) textbook written by Th. M. Sudarwati published in 2018 and '*Talk Active Senior High School Year X*' (which then referred as TA) written by Lanny Kurniawan and Kenneth W. Ament published in 2019.

This study has qualitative data in the form of reading passages, conversational texts, and images in those two textbooks. The qualitative data taken were the one which had gender issues in them, those without gendered characters or issues were not included. The images taken for data were the ones which related to readings texts and conversational texts, standalone images were not taken as data.

Purposive total sampling is applied in this study as the writer took all reading passages, conversation texts, and illustrations in both textbooks that have gender related issues to be analyzed.

The data, after collection, has to be processed and analysed. Adapting Creswell's framework of qualitative data analysis (2007), the data analysis in this study involves organizing the data, coding the data into categories, contrasting, or comparing the data, synthesizing, interpreting and drawing conclusion.

Finding & Discussion

Male Roles in Society

The first discussion goes to male typical roles in domestic sphere. Male roles in domestic sphere refer to their roles in families and homes. In domestic sphere, both textbooks depict males as breadwinners or financial backbones and leaders in their families. As breadwinners, they are represented as the main financial support for their families and earn money to provide their families' needs. As breadwinners, males are represented to do work actions to earn money. They are depicted as strong tall, young, muscular, bulky, big, and good looking (Yang, 2012; and Seker & Dincer, 2014). The following are examples taken from *Talk Active Senior High School Year X* representing male as a breadwinner.

Teacher : So, what does your father do now?
 Student : Well, he's a college professor, and he is in Scotland at the mo
 Teacher : How interesting. What does he teach?
 Student : Oh, I haven't a clue. Nah, just joking. He teaches Chemistry.
 Teacher : Oh, Chemistry, and uh, what about your mother?
 Student : She works full time at home.

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Figure 1 Teacher-Students Dialogue

In the conversation, the teacher asks for the student's parents' jobs. She answers that her father is a college professor and her mother works full time at home. From her answers, it implies that her father is the financial backbone in her family. He is the one who earns money and provides family needs. Her father's job as a college professor represents him as a smart and well-educated person. It also implies that her father spends most of his time outdoors and represents their family to the society. The action that the father does is to

teach, which refers to his job as a college professor.

As breadwinners, male characters in both textbooks are set mostly outside their homes, particularly in their working places. They do work-related actions and have work-related items as attributes. The representation found in the textbooks is provided as follows.



Figure 2 The Teacher Figure 3 The Doctors

Both figures show males in their working places. In figure 2, the man works as a lecturer, thus he is set in a classroom. He wears a shirt and trousers and has a map, papers, and a board as his work-related items. Figure 3 has a similar representation of males being set out of their home. Both doctors in figure 3 are in their working room. They discuss something on the chart, which is identified as their work-related actions. They have a doctor's gown, a stethoscope, and a surgical gown as attributes, which points out their professions as a doctor and a surgeon. In both figures, males as employees are represented to have sophisticated occupations, which are a lecturer, a doctor, and a surgeon. These imply that they have the opportunity to pursue education so that they are well-educated, competent, and skillful, which in turn enable them to have well-paid jobs so that they can provide for their families. The males are set in their working places which are not their homes; it indicates that they are mostly in the outside, facing the world and dealing with the society. They represent not only

themselves but also their family. The males in figure 2 and 3 are portrayed standing and are presented in full body. These suggest that they are confident in their actions, emanate power to their surroundings, and having control over others.

The depiction of male roles as breadwinners is strengthened by the congratulatory messages for males in PE and TA which emphasizes their success in business. These imply that society sees successful men are those who are able to provide for their family better than others by being successful in their careers or businesses. The examples are shown in following.



Figure 4 Congratulatory message 1

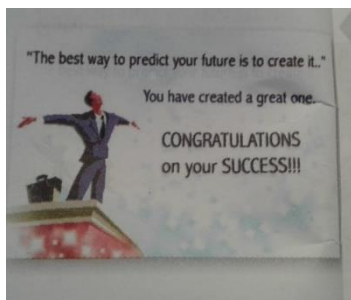


Figure 5 Congratulatory message 2

Figure 4 has an illustration of a man congratulating his friend for successfully opening a new store. In this figure, the man's action to start or expand business is considered as his achievement. Meanwhile, figure 4.5 shows an illustration of a man in full suit and a suitcase next to him. The man is illustrated to open his arms and face the sky. Eventhough there is no clarity of what the congratulatory message is about, the illustration implies that it is about a man's

success in his career or business. Both figures underline that being succesful in carrear or bussiness is a great achievement for men. By being succesful in their bussiness, men are able to earn more money, thus they are capable to provide more for their families. These congratulatory messages highlight succesful achievement in bussiness as one of male values. Males are considered as competent if they are able to earn and provide. This underlines their roles as breadwinners.

The second discussion is about male typical roles in social sphere. The findings show that males are depicted as leaders in social spheres. Their logical thinking, rational and calculated behaviors are represented as their strong points. Thus, they are also the decision makers and problem solvers in their communities. As leaders, males are also represented as risk takers and adventurers. They are not afraid to face new challenges and adapt well to new environment

The story of *Nusakambangan Island* (TA p.195) also illustrates males as leaders. In that story, *Aji Samosa* is addressed as *Prabu*, indicates his royal blood and position as the ruler of Kediri Kingdom. His power and determination are affirmed by his relentless efforts to find *Resi Karno*. He never backs down from challenges, proven by his bravery to fight a dragon and sail across the sea to get *Wijayakusuma* flowers. *Prabu Aji Samosa* represents males as strong, determined, goal oriented, competitive, decisive, and brave figures. He also depicts males as risk takers and adventurer. The story indicates that those are the characteristics of ideal leaders that males possess.

As leaders, both textbooks depict males to have strong physical build. They are illustrated as tall, bulky, muscular, and big. They are also portrayed to have serious and determined facial expressions. The example is provided as follows.

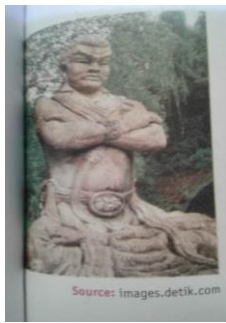


Figure 6 King Hayam Wuruk

Figure 6 illustrates King Hayam Wuruk, the ruler of Majapahit Kingdom. From the figure, it can be seen that Hayam Wuruk has a strong build. His muscular and bulky body represents him as a powerful leader that is to be honored by his people, respected by allies, and feared by enemies. His serious facial expression shows his determination in ruling his kingdom and making decisions. In the figure, his gaze indicates that he looks down. His gaze indicates that he demands respect and undivided attention from his subjects. King Hayam Wuruk is also illustrated in a long shot with his closed arms. This suggests impersonal relationship between him and his people. He, as a ruler, is someone to be look up to, not to be intimately acquainted. His royal blood differs him from commoners. Lastly, the vertical angle of the figure represents his power over others.

The last discussion is about gender typical roles in occupational sphere. In occupational sphere, males are depicted as capable and skillful leaders. Therefore, they have high position and well-paid jobs. The findings also reveal that males work in many sectors, such as education, agriculture, arts, literature, health and so on. These findings reveal that males are depicted to have more opportunities to pursue their career as their occupations have wide range of variety. The examples are shown as follows.

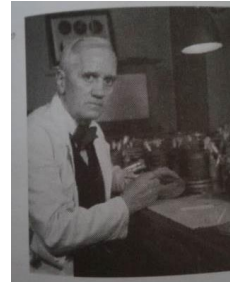


Figure 7 Alexander Fleming and Figure 8 Neil Armstrong

Figure 7 and 8 show two world most prominent figures as role models for students. Figure 7 shows Alexander Fleming in his laboratory doing research. His job as a scientist signifies that males are intellectual, determined, goal-oriented, and hard working. Meanwhile, Neil Armstrong in figure 8 illustrates that males are brave, adventurous, mentally, and physically strong, and intelligent. Both figures also suggest that males are able to work independently. Their gestures in the figures, gazing straight to the camera, indicate their strong confidence in doing their jobs.

Since males depicted as strong, some of the occupations are the ones that need physical strength. The examples are shown in the following figures.



Figure 9 The Battles of Surabaya

Figure 10 An Athlete

Figure 9 illustrates soldiers in a battlefield. All soldiers in the figures are males. Soldiers represents that males are strong, loyal, courageous, well-disciplined, and quick thinkers. On the other hand, figure 10 portrayed a male athlete. Being an athlete implies that males must have great stamina, perseverance, and endurance. Soldiers and athletes are professions that require great physical conditions. Both are

represented by males, this suggests that males are strong physically. Moreover, both professions also have competition in it which suggests that males are competitive in nature.

Males are also illustrated as competent, thus they are shown to have occupations that require technical competences. The examples are shown as follows

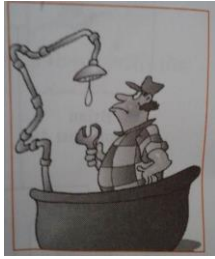


Figure 11 A Plumber



Figure 12 A Computer Analyst

Figure 11 illustrates a male plumber.

Being a plumber means one must master the technique of operating plumbing tools, equipment, and material. One must also have the competence to do technical drawing, numeracy, and calculation. As a plumber, one must also understand and master the principle of sustainability. The fact that PE illustrates a male plumber suggests that the job is a male job, only males possess the technical competences required to be plumbers. Similarly, figure 15 illustrates a male computer analyst. Computer analysts are also occupations that required technical competences such as operating systems, programming languages, and hardware platforms. TA also illustrates a male computer analyst, suggesting that only males master the required technical competences.

Female Roles in Society

In TA and PE, females are represented to have nurturing roles. They take care of their children and help them to develop. They are also represented as house makers.

Females are depicted to be responsible to manage the house and taking care of the families. They are also represented to provide services for families and supply family needs using the money earned by males.

Representation of females as nurturing figures is presented in the following letter.

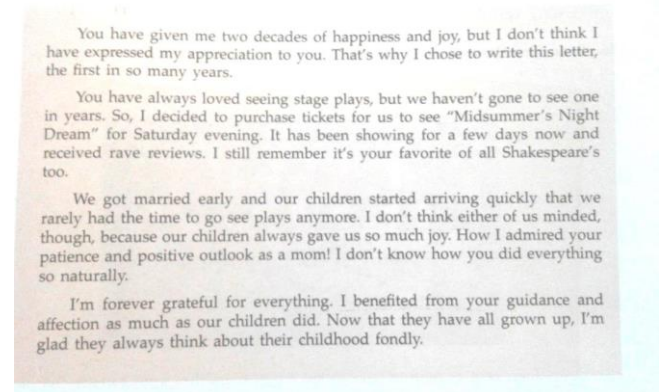


Figure 13 Gratitude Letter

The letter was written by a husband for his wife to express his gratitude. In his letter, he is thankful for her love, affection, patience, and guidance. He compliment her as a great mom. From this letter, the wife is acknowledged by her motherly nature. She is praised by her marvelous way to take care of their children so that they have wonderful childhood. This letter illustrates that female roles in family is nurturing roles. Therefore, they are expected to be affectionate, patience, and loving. They are also to focus on taking care of their family, especially their children so that they can grow up happily. Females are expected to put their families as top priority so that they can have happy life.

As nurturing figures, females in PE and TA are set inside their home doing domestic chores such as in the following.



Figure 14 Sweeping the Floor



Figure 15 Cooking

As a homemaker, females' responsibilities are to take care of the children and manage the house. Figure 14 illustrates a female doing one of her responsibilities as a homemaker. Sweeping the floor to keep the house clean is an example of her domestic chores. Meanwhile, figure 15 shows a mom and her daughter cooking together. Providing food for the families with the money earned by their husbands is considered as females responsibilities, too. The close distance between mother and daughter in figure 15 suggests that they do cooking as bonding activity. It also implies that the daughter is introduced to her domestic roles and learns to do it since her early age. In both figures, all females have happy expressions as they smile. It indicates that they do their roles happily, without burden. Both figures are also set inside homes, signifies females are to stay at homes and focus on their nurturing roles and do their domestic responsibilities.

Females are also depicted to be the followers of males. They do not take decisions by themselves but discuss their problems with their 'man of the family'. It is illustrated in the story of *The Green Knight* (PE p.174). The daughter in the story represents female in a family. When a problem arises, in this story the problem is the Green Knight' disease, the daughter comes to her father and asks for help. She does not try to find the cure by herself or learn about the disease, she consults her father and waits in her room while her father thinks of a solution. When her father

comes with a snake and asks her to go to the palace as a maid, she does not question her father and does as he says. The daughter represents females as follower of males. Females are represented as dependent figures that need supports and help from males to make decisions and solve problems

In social sphere, both textbooks depict females as the followers of males and the ones being affected by decisions taken by males. Females are illustrated as emotional and hot-headed. Therefore, they are dependent on their partners in term of solving problems and making decisions. This is illustrated in the story of 'Putri Tangguk'. *Putri Tangguk* represents females as emotional beings as she is easily upset when the situations do not favor her. When problems arise, she does not solve the problems by her own, she asks her husband to help her. She is dependent on her husband.

Female inability to solve problems is also portrayed in the story of *Batu Badaun* (PE p.187). The widow in the story has spoiled and disrespectful children. When her mean children rudely demand food and violently asks her to clean their house, she does not try to discipline them. She runs away and hides. She does not face her children and deals with the issues. The story represents females as weak figures that unable to stand for themselves.

Furthermore, females are depicted to be good in maintaining social relationships as they are friendly and approachable.



Figure 16 Introducing Yourself

Figure 16 illustrates a girl smiling to her friends. By smiling and looking her

friend in the eyes, she represents females as friendly, attentive, caring, and approachable figures.

In occupational sphere, both textbooks depict females as male's subordinates in their workplaces. Their occupations have less payment than males'. Females are represented to work as cashier, secretary, tour agent, cleaning service, and maid. Females also have limited range of occupations as they are only represented in occupations that are basically the extension of their nurturing roles such as in the following figure.



Figure.17 Teacher and Students

Figure 17 shows female as a teacher. Working as teachers is basically an extension of female nurturing roles. Teachers nurture their students. They help their students to learn new things, explore new worlds, and apply their new-gained knowledge into real world. Teachers basically helps student to grow and understand the world. In other word, teachers are extension of female nurturing roles (Karima, 2017).

Conclusion

The multimodal representation of gender typical roles is portrayed by their designations, actions, attributes, postures, and the settings in which they are set in.

Both English textbooks represent males as breadwinners in domestic sphere

and leaders in social and occupational sphere. Males are designated as fathers, whereas females as mothers and daughters. Males are represented as smart, capable, well educated, literate, and competent, so that they are able to get well-paid jobs which in turn enable them to earn money for their family needs. As leaders, males are depicted as smart, decisive, competitive, and brave figures. They dare to take challenge, capable to think of solutions, not afraid to take risks, and able to solve their own problems. Males are also designated as *King, Emperor, and Resi* shows their status as rulers. Their occupational roles are realized through their status in workplaces. Males are represented to work in various sectors. They are depicted as capable and skillful. Therefore, they have jobs related to machinery and technology. As they are also illustrated to be strong, they are also depicted to have jobs that require physical strengths.

On the other hand, females are represented to have nurturing roles in domestic sphere and followers in social sphere, and male subordinate in occupational sphere. Females are depicted as a motherly, affectionate, passionate, and loving figure. They spend most of their time at home taking care of their babies, helping their children studying, managing the house, and making sure that every family member needs are achieved. These female roles as followers are realized through their action which indicates they seek help from males to solve their problem and take decisions for them. Lastly, their occupational roles are realized from the illustration of females to be males' subordinates in their workplace, in which their job descriptions require them to organize things and lobbying clients. Females are also represented in limited working sectors. Mostly they are set in educational places as teachers in which their jobs are nurturing their students in learning new things.

There are some suggestions to improve the textbooks or supporting leaning materials related to gender typical roles that I can offer. It would be better if there are some representations of males doing domestic chores like washing the dishes, preparing dinner, or cleaning up the house. Some representations of males nurturing children such as helping them doing their homework or taking care of their babies are also needed. By providing these representations, students will have internal norms that males share similar responsibilities with females in domestic duties and nurturing children.

In term of typical roles, representation of women having various kinds of jobs, including the high-position jobs in which the take controls, and jobs that require strengths are needed. These representations will make students, especially females, confident that they have same opportunities as males to be anything in the future. They will have understanding that their gender does not limit them to get their dream jobs and develop their talents as long as they are competent and capable.

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