

**GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN INDONESIAN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) TEXTBOOK TITLED “BAHASA  
INGGRIS UNTUK SMA/MA/SMK/MAK KELAS X”**

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<https://doi.org/10.37147/eltr.v5i2.121>

received 27 March 2021; accepted 29 July 2021

**Abstract**

Gender inequality issues are issues that are still often found in daily life. Evidently, the issues do not only happen in the action of real-life but previous researches have also discovered that gender inequality does exist in textbooks in the form of how genders are being represented unequally. With this gender representations issue emerging, this research aims to identify and analyze the gender representations in the ELT textbook titled “Bahasa Inggris Untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X”. It is important to know if the genders are being represented equally because the books which exclude one or more gender can affect its readers and or users. To reach the goal stated this research used a qualitative method with a content analysis approach. The analysis of the data which was taken both from the texts as well as from the illustrations shows that there are many characteristics that only represent a specific gender and not the others. From the occupational activities that are only explored often by men, to domestic items that are attached to women. It can be concluded that the BI textbook has not represented genders equally. Some genders are still excluded in several activities, attributes, and designations.

**Keywords:** gender representation, ELT textbook, content analysis

**Introduction**

Issues about gender inequality can often be found in daily life, from social, political, even to educational fields. In education to be specific, gender inequality issues can be found in textbooks. Researches which were done by Gharbavi & Mousavi (2012), Sathee (2018), Aydinoglu (2014), and Nitasari (2013) show that genders are still being represented unequally in textbooks. This unequal gender representation in textbooks could further affect their readers and or users to feel being excluded, less worthy, or even have lower expectations of their own selves (Lesikin, 2001 as cited by Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012). It is also in line with the statement of Mills (1995, as cited by Demir and Yavuz, 2017) that says textbook does not only help enrich students’ knowledge but also has a role to shape students’ ideas.

After knowing the importance of equal gender representations in textbooks, this study aims to evaluate how genders are being represented in the textbook titled

“Bahasa Inggris Untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X”. The BI textbook was chosen because it is a textbook used for grade 10 where knowledge learned in this adolescent age will stay as a long-term outcome (Blum, Mmari, and Moreau 2017 as cited by Landry, Vyas, Malhotra, and Nagaraj, 2020). This study also aims to know how equal genders are being represented by investigating the ratio of different gender representations in the textbook. To be able to evaluate and investigate the BI textbook, firstly gender, gender equality, gender inequality, and gender representations in textbooks should be defined.

### ***Gender***

Different from sex which is defined as someone’s physical appearance or biological differences, gender is defined as how someone acts socially (Coates, 2016). Similar to Coates, Meyerhoff (2006) stated that sex and gender are different, gender is a social-cultural category while sex is a biological distinction.

### ***Gender Equality and Inequality***

According to Abendroth (2014), gender equality can be achieved when both men and women have equal roles in their lives, whether in education and or the economy. On the contrary, gender inequality shows a situation where different people are given different chances because of their gender (Parziale, 2008). Quite different from Parziale, Ridgeway (2011) proposed that gender inequality is possibly caused by social norms that make some identities gendered which then compels men and women not to explore several behaviors and or activities (as cited by Seguino, Sumner, Der, Sen, & Ahmed, 2013).

### ***Gender Representations in Textbooks***

To study gender in textbooks, there are two approaches that were proposed by Brugeilles & Cromer (2009). They are the traditional and the new approaches. This study applied the new approach as it has the purpose to know the gender representations in textbooks.

### ***Characteristics in Gender Representations***

There are several characteristics of gender representation that were proposed by Brugeilles & Cromer (2009). They are 1) sex & age, the physical appearance of the characters; 2) designations, circumstances of a character being put; 3) activities, the action of the character; and 4) interactions, how characters interact with each other.

### ***Method***

This study applied the qualitative research method and used the content analysis approach as not only texts but also images are being seen as data (Krippendorff, 2004). The textbook then being evaluated through several steps. The first step is the book mass observation 1 which then resulted in chosen ELT Textbook. Then there was another book mass observation to identify the categories from the textbook chosen to later be analyzed and evaluated. Finally, the researcher narrated the result of the analysis and evaluation while mentioning the examples with the support of previous studies 14 and or theories. This narration is then called interpretation or (re)articulation (Krippendorff, 2004).

## Findings and Discussion

After doing the book mass observation 1 & 2, below presented the categories and also the findings.

### *Gender Representations in Text*

From the data, it is found that there are more men/boys characters compared to women/girls. Moreover, the men/boys characters have a wide range of designations and activities, compared to those of women/girls characters. As shown in Figure 1, Men/boys experienced 6 occupational statuses while none of the women/girls did. Women/girls mostly experienced other statuses such as being friends, students, etc. However, both experienced the family relationship with the same score. In the activity characteristic, men/boys characters experience occupational, leisure, and negative activities while women/girls did not. On the other hand, domestic, caring, and social activities are the activities exclusively experienced by women/girls characters only. Both have experienced successful activities but men/boys scored higher. As women/girls did not experience any occupational status, they were not attached to any occupational attributes either while men/boys had them. This automatically applied to the domestic item, here is food, which was only attached to women/girls and was not to men/boys. Even though men/boys had various attributes, only they were represented as negative activity doers.

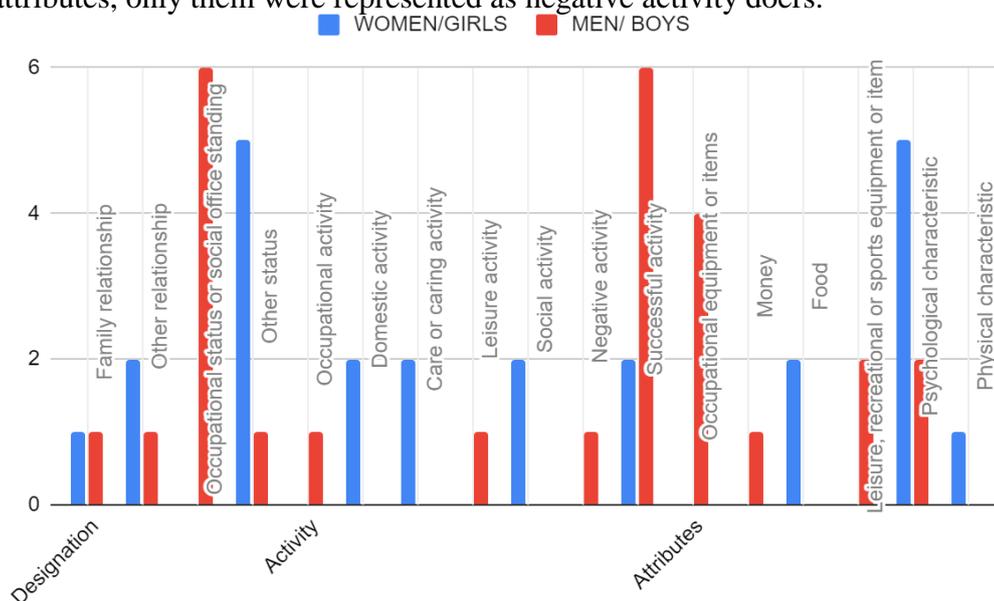


Figure 1. Frequency calculated from texts

### *Gender Representation in Illustration*

Similar to the data found in the texts, the data found in the illustrations also show that the men/boys characters outnumber the women/girl characters. The pattern that can be seen from the data is that men/boys and women/girls have experienced all activities mentioned except for occupational activity. In the

illustrations, once again, women/girls were never represented to have occupational activity. The activity that was explored only by women/girls is the caring activity. In the illustrations, women/girls have been represented as doing sports and having sports items, but men/boys still outnumber them. Even though women/girls still had not experienced any occupational activity, there was 1 of the women/girls who was attached to an occupational item. However, the textbook depicted both male and female heroes in the end part of the book.

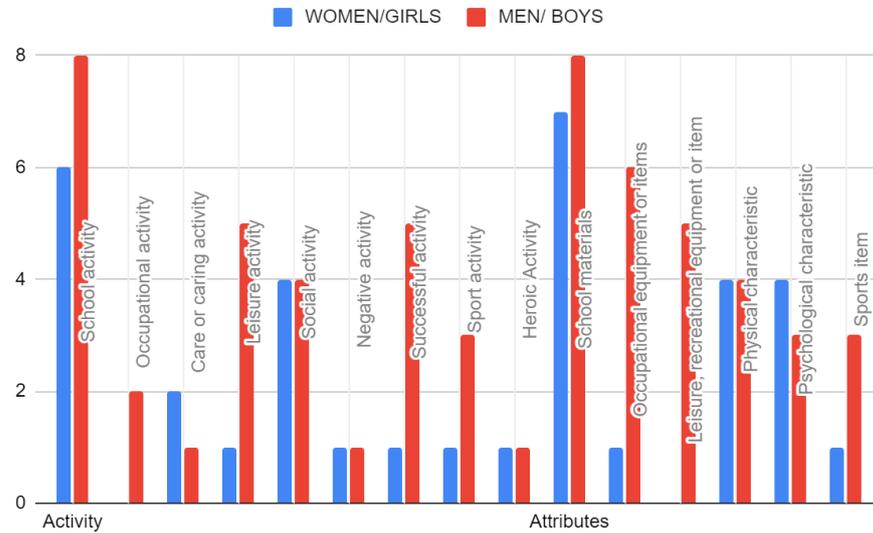


Figure 2. Frequency calculated from illustrations

In the texts, women/girls characters do not really have a variety of designations. As presented in Figure 1, women/girls did not experience any occupational status. Women/girls mostly experienced other statuses such as being friends, students, etc. Even though both have experienced the family relationship, the women/girls' designations are seemed to be monotone. One of the examples can be seen from the text taken from Chapter I, page 4 below.

Hello, Alia! Let me introduce myself. My name is Hannah.  
 I know your name from my friend, Caroline. She told me that you sent her an email telling her that you would like to have more **pen pals** from the US. I'd really like to be your E-pal. You **sound really cool!**

Figure 3. Example 1

The figure above is one of the texts that show a girl with the designation of being a friend. The minimum role model with various designations, occupational status especially, might shape the females to believe that there are some designations that they are not supposed to have or even cannot do. It is in accordance with the research done by Bruegilles & Cromer (2009) and also the statement of Lesikin (2001) that how gender is being represented unequally might

affect someone's way of thinking or feeling, one of them is feeling of being excluded (as cited by Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012).

On the other hand, the figure below which is taken from a text in Chapter II, page 23 shows how Alif, a man, is represented as having occupational status as his designation.

*After a long struggle and hard work, Alif is finally appointed as the director of a national company where he works. Many of his friends who work at the same company congratulate him.*

Figure 4. Example 2

In contrast to the previous example, the figure above shows a man having his job, even being promoted and congratulated by many of his friends, including his female friends. This might make females and males think that being a male means being able to have this kind of designation. It is in accordance with what Aydınoğlu (2014) argued that language can affect one's understanding of gender. Male got many role models in occupational status and successful activities in this textbook, but they lack role models in caring activities.

The attributes attached to the women/girls characters are also not as wide as those of men/boys. There are two attributes that can be found in women/girls characters, they are psychological character and food. A text from Chapter III, page 41 shown below is the example of a girl attached to food attribute.

Riri : I have made a plan with my mother about what to do on this long weekend. **We are going to** practice baking cookies.  
Santi : That sounds like a very good plan!

Figure 5. Example 3

The activities done by women/girls are only limited to Social, successful, domestic, and caring activities. On the contrary, men/boys characters get to explore many designations from being a friend to a president, to a businessman, etc. They also have various occupational activities and often have leisure activities as well. From these various designations and activities, the attributes attached are automatically also various: from occupational to money.

Similar to the data from texts, the data from illustrations also show many differences between genders. From many activities, the occupational activities and attributes seem to be gendered as male because women/girls characters barely experience them. Figure 8 (picture 2.7) taken from Chapter II below is one of many illustrations of men experiencing occupational activities and having occupational attributes. In this illustration, again, man is being represented as having an occupational status and is being promoted in their workplace. The name of the card sender also seems to be a woman: Zettira. The choice of name for the characters shows how genders are being represented differently in this textbook.



Figure 6. Example 4

Sports activities and attributes seem to be gendered the same as mentioned as only a few women/girls characters get to experience them. Below is an illustration which is taken from Chapter II (picture 2.21). Female characters are represented to experience sports activities and are attached to sports items only in this one illustration. In reverse, only women/girls characters had the chance to do caring activities while men/boys did not.



Source: Dokumen Kemdikbud  
Picture 2.21

Figure 7. Example 5

That women and men characters are still depicted differently shows that this textbook still needs to improve its gender representation in the contents. Some activities are being depicted to be explored by a certain gender, some designations are explored by all genders but one was still overrepresented or outnumbered the others. From this, it can be assumed that in this textbook, there are still many activities that are gendered. Sports and occupations are seemed to be gendered as male while caring and domestic activities are gendered as female. It is in accordance with the research done by Jolly, Griffith, DeCastro, Stewart, Ubel, & Jagsi (2014) that says "... women spent 8.5 more hours per week on domestic activities"

compared to men. Some attributes are also only explored by one gender: again occupational, sports, domestic items; show that the textbook does not represent that both genders enjoy equal social life, opportunities, and responsibilities (UNFPA, 2005).

### Conclusion

Even though in the first half of the book the number of characters with a different gender is very close, the more it is analyzed the many different gender representations can be found. The ratio of female and male characters in texts is 8 to 9, while in illustrations is 17 to 30. The data from texts and illustrations show that none of the female characters was depicted as having occupational activities. On the other hand, 6 male characters in the texts and 2 male characters in the illustrations were represented as having occupational status and activities. Occupational status, sports are eventually gendered as male, while domestic activities and domestic items are for females. Different designations, activities, attributes, and one gender being overrepresented show how the BI textbook's gender representation still needs to be developed for it to be more gender-inclusive. By making the textbook more inclusive to different genders, it can minimize the possibility that different genders might feel excluded, worthless, or even has lower expectations (Lesikin, 2001 as cited by Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012) of what they can do as their true self. One suggestion that can be done in future research is studying the ideology of the ELT textbook writers and what influence them to write the textbooks with certain contents in a certain way. It can be about their ideology on gender and how it influences them in writing gender-inclusive books.

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