



Representation of Gender Found in “English for Nusantara” EFL Textbook

Abdul Fikri, Irwandi

UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi

Bukittinggi, Sumatera Barat

UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi

Bukittinggi, Sumatera Barat

Corresponding email: abdulfikri883@gmail.com

Received July 12, 2024; Revised September 22, 2024; Published September 29, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.31629/juliet.v5i2.6989>

Abstract

This research aimed to identify gender representation found in English for Nusantara EFL textbook. This research was qualitative research. The data of this research were collected from English for Nusantara EFL textbook specifically for ninth grade. The researchers adopted a framework from Amini & Birjandi (2012) in analysing the data. The researchers focused on some aspects of gender representation such as visibility, firstness, feminine/ masculine generic construction, activity, and occupation. The finding of this research revealed that there is a gender bias between male and female in the textbook. This imbalance suggests a perpetuation of gender biases that can influence learners' perceptions and expectations regarding gender roles. Educators and curriculum developers must recognize the importance of equitable gender representation to foster an inclusive learning environment. Addressing these biases is essential for promoting gender equality and empowering all students, regardless of gender, to envision a wider range of roles and opportunities.

Keywords: Bias, English, Gender, Representation, Textbook

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2024 The Authors. *Juliet* published by Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH).

I INTRODUCTION

The discussion of gender roles is crucial for understanding how society creates expectations or standards for how men and women should behave. Society assigns specific roles to each gender based on these expectations (Angelina & Arianto, 2022). For example, traditional gender roles often suggest that men should be strong, assertive, and the primary breadwinners, while women are expected to be nurturing, passive, and focused on caregiving and household duties. These roles can limit individual expression and opportunities, as people may feel pressured to conform to these expectations even if they do not align with their personal interests or abilities.

Understanding gender roles helps to identify and challenge stereotypes and biases, promoting greater equality and allowing individuals to pursue their goals without being constrained by societal expectations. By examining how these roles are constructed and perpetuated, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society where people are free to express themselves and fulfill their potential regardless of their gender.

Textbooks are among the resources utilized in the process of teaching and learning (Novianti & Ambarwati, 2023). They provide structured content that aligns with educational curricula, ensuring that students receive comprehensive and standardized information on various subjects. Textbooks are meticulously crafted by experts to cover essential topics, concepts, and skills, often incorporating a mix of text, images, diagrams, and exercises to enhance understanding and retention.

In addition to delivering factual information, textbooks also serve as a guide for teachers, offering a framework for lesson planning and instructional strategies. They support a consistent learning experience across different classrooms and educational institutions, helping to bridge gaps in knowledge and provide a common foundation for all students.

Moreover, textbooks can reflect and reinforce societal values and norms, which is why it is crucial to scrutinize their content for biases or outdated perspectives. Ensuring that textbooks present diverse and inclusive viewpoints is essential for fostering critical thinking and promoting equality in education. By equipping students with reliable information and diverse perspectives, textbooks play a vital role in shaping informed, capable, and socially aware individuals.

The textbooks occupy a central role in education and is essential to the curriculum (Dharma & Aristo, 2018). Textbooks are also essential for students to effectively prepare for and gain valuable experiences (Rohmatillah & Pratama, 2017). Textbooks provide a comprehensive overview of the subject matter, covering key theories, principles, and methodologies that students need to understand. They include examples, case studies, and practical exercises that allow students to apply what they have learned, reinforcing their understanding and enhancing their problem-solving skills. This hands-on approach is crucial for deep learning, as it encourages students to think critically and engage actively with the material.

Due to its significant impact on students' behavior and attitudes, a textbook must present fair and equitable portrayals and information about both males and females (Agni et al., 2020). Fair and equitable portrayals in textbooks ensure that both males and females are represented in a variety of roles and professions, showcasing diverse abilities and accomplishments. This representation is important for fostering an inclusive learning environment where all students feel valued and capable. For instance, including examples of female scientists and male nurses challenges traditional gender roles and inspires students to pursue careers based on their interests and talents, rather than societal expectations.

After several rounds of curriculum reforms, Indonesia is now implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Rohimajaya & Hamer, 2022). According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) Number 56 of 2022, which provides guidelines for curriculum implementation aimed at recovering curriculum learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, schools are required to gradually adopt the Merdeka Curriculum (Ndari et al., 2023).

The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum necessitates the use of appropriate tools, with textbooks being one of the most critical. Textbooks serve as foundational resources that provide structured content, instructional guidance, and learning activities aligned with the curriculum's objectives. They ensure that both teachers and students have access to consistent and comprehensive material, which is essential for delivering and understanding the curriculum effectively. Furthermore, textbooks can help standardize educational quality across different regions and schools, offering a common framework that supports the curriculum's goals. By integrating relevant and engaging content, textbooks also aid in stimulating student interest and enhancing their learning experience. Therefore, for the Merdeka Curriculum to achieve its intended outcomes, the development and provision of high-quality textbooks are indispensable. These textbooks should be carefully designed to reflect the curriculum's emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, and independence, thereby fostering a more holistic educational environment.

English for Nusantara is one of some EFL textbooks that published by Indonesian government during the implementation of Merdeka curriculum. This textbook was published in 2022 aimed to support the learning process of junior high school students in Indonesia. Furthermore, the textbook consists of 3 levels from grade seven to grade nine.

The researchers focused on English for Nusantara EFL textbook specifically on grade nine in analyzing gender representation. This textbook has 367 pages with 5 chapters. The textbook combined some pictures and text in delivering material to the readers. The textbook provides different kinds of texts, such as narrative, recount, descriptive, report, and procedure texts. Report texts are introduced in Class IX and are similar to the descriptive texts you studied in Classes VII and VIII. The report texts in this textbook emphasize factual information about animals native to Indonesia.

There were several researches about gender representation on EFL textbooks. Firstly, a research conducted by Rachmijati & Cahyati, (2018). Findings from the book indicate that visual representation accounted for 4.11% of characters, with 28.77% mentioned characters, 57.54% involved in social activities, and 9.58% engaged in domestic activities. Regarding visuals, 88.89% depicted social activities and 11.11% depicted domestic activities. Additionally, the frequency of occurrence was 51.89% for males and 48.11% for females. The book appears to prioritize social skills development in alignment with Curriculum 2013, possibly explaining the limited portrayal of domestic roles and settings. Overall, the book's gender representation leans towards male dominance.

Secondly, a research on gender representation also conducted by Muzdalifah et al., (2022). This qualitative descriptive study examined the gender features depicted in images of an elementary school English textbook titled "Stairway: A Fun and Easy English Textbook (for Grade IV of Elementary Schools)", published by Tiga Serangkai. The study gathered data from images and texts within the textbook, revealing unequal gender representations characterized by stereotypical portrayals. Males were predominantly depicted using assertive language strategies and occupying public spaces, while females were portrayed as passive and occupying more private spaces. These asymmetrical gender representations in the textbook reflect underlying ideologies and societal interests shaping its content.

Furthermore, Yulistiana et al., (2022) also conducted a research on gender representation. The aim of this study was to examine how gender roles were depicted in EFL textbooks, focusing on family responsibilities and employment. The research aimed to determine the gendered nature of dialogues in these textbooks and assess their qualities as perceived by junior high schools. To address these objectives, content analysis was employed, involving the examination of six aspects on each page of the EFL textbook: images of women or men, mentions of women or men, roles, games, models, and names of men or boys. The findings indicated that in the EFL textbook "When English Rings a Bell," there was an overall greater representation of female roles compared to male roles. This was evident in the portrayal of

gendered names, occupational roles, and domestic responsibilities, where females predominated. Models depicted in the textbook also predominantly featured female characters. Following the analysis, it was concluded that the exercises in each chapter of the EFL textbook exhibited varying levels of gender bias. Men were notably dominant in categories related to work and activities, while women were predominantly visible in the visibility category. Despite efforts by textbook authors to promote gender equality, the study revealed persistent gender biases in the textbooks, with men maintaining a dominant presence overall.

Related to gender representation analysis, Amini & Birjandi, (2012) proposed a framework. They divided gender representation into; visibility, firstness, feminine/masculine generic construction, activity, and occupation. In this research, the researchers used this framework in analyzing the data.

Based on previous researches, most of them investigated on EFL textbook of 2013 curriculum. The research of analysis of gender representation on EFL textbook of Merdeka curriculum is still limited. It is crucial to conduct a research on English for Nusantara EFL Textbook because it was designed for the students during the implementation of Merdeka curriculum. As a result, the researchers proposed a research question: 1) What are the gender representations found on English for Nusantara EFL textbook?

II METHOD

This research was a qualitative research. The researchers used a framework adopted from Amini & Birjandi, (2012) in analyzing the data. The researchers first collected the data of the gender representation from English for Nusantara EFL textbook for ninth grade. The researchers then display the data into some tables. As the final step, the researchers analysed them based on the category of gender representation.

III RESULT

The researchers calculated the data of gender representation adopted a framework from Amini & Birjandi, (2012). The researchers then classified them into several categories. The detail of the result can be seen in the table 1.

Table 1. Number of Gender Representation found in EFL Textbook

Category of Gender Representation	Number of Gender Representation	
	Male	Female
Visibility	473	382
Firstness	29	8
Feminine / masculine generic construction	97	66
Activity	28	30
Occupation	48	42
Total	675	528

Table 1 presents data on gender representation in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbook, highlighting the disparity between male and female representations across various categories. The categories include visibility, firstness, feminine/masculine generic constructions, activity, and occupation.

In terms of visibility, males appear 473 times compared to 382 times for females, indicating a higher representation of males in general content. Firstness, which refers to the tendency of mentioning one gender before the other, shows a significant imbalance with males

being mentioned first 29 times compared to only 8 times for females. This suggests a bias in favor of males in terms of precedence. The category of feminine/masculine generic construction, which involves the use of language that can be perceived as inherently male or female, shows 97 instances for males and 66 for females. This indicates a moderate gender imbalance, with masculine generics being more prevalent. Activity representation is relatively balanced, with 28 instances for males and 30 for females, suggesting a more equitable portrayal in terms of actions and behaviors depicted. Similarly, in the occupation category, males are represented 48 times and females 42 times, indicating a closer representation of gender equality in terms of occupational roles.

Overall, the total instances of gender representation sum to 675 for males and 528 for females, highlighting a general skew towards male representation in the textbook. This analysis reveals that while there are areas of near parity, such as activity and occupation, significant disparities remain in visibility, firstness, and generic constructions, pointing to an underlying gender bias within the EFL textbook.

IV DISCUSSION

4.1 Visibility

This aspect involves the total count of female and male characters depicted. Visibility encompasses various female and male names, the use of personal pronouns like she, his, and her, as well as terms like Sir and Ma'am (Junita et al., 2022). The researchers focused on the gender representation specifically calculating pictorial and textual visibility of the textbook. They aimed to uncover any biases or disparities in the way genders were portrayed and presented. This involved a detailed scrutiny of the images and illustrations to assess how often and in what context different genders were depicted.



Figure 1. Male and Female Pictorial Visibility

Figure 1 illustrates the pictorial visibility of males and females, revealing a notable disparity between the two genders. In this figure, two males are depicted compared to only one female. This indicates a gender imbalance, with males being twice as visible as females in the imagery presented.

The visual representation highlights a potential issue of gender bias, as the prominence of males over females may influence perceptions and reinforce stereotypical gender roles. The limited visibility of females suggests that they are underrepresented, which can impact the way both genders are perceived by viewers of the textbook. Overall, the data in Figure 1

underscores the need for more balanced gender representation in educational materials to promote gender equality and provide diverse role models for learners.

Additionally, the researchers also evaluated the textual content to determine the frequency and nature of references to various genders such as she, he, him, her and his. By quantifying these aspects, the researchers sought to provide a comprehensive overview of how gender is represented in educational materials, highlighting any imbalances or stereotypes that might influence students' perceptions and understanding of gender roles.

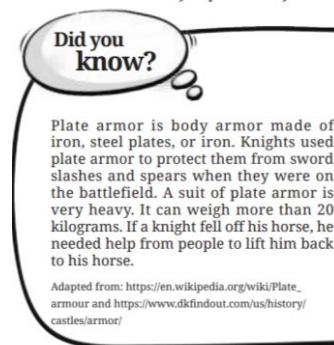


Figure 2. Male Textual Visibility

Based on figure 2, there are textual visibility in form of his and him. The frequent use of "his" and "him" indicates a strong male presence in the textual material. This prevalence suggests that males are often the subjects or focal points in narratives and discussions within the text. Such a pattern can contribute to a perception that males are more prominent or important in the contexts presented, reinforcing traditional gender roles and biases.

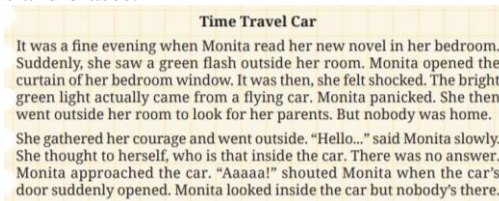


Figure 3. Female Textual Visibility

Figure 3 illustrates the female textual visibility. The text describes a story about time travel car. The female gender representation is represented by the present of the pronoun "she". It is clearly seen that both paragraphs contain the pronoun "she".

4.2 Firstness

Firstness refers to how many occurrences of males or females are presented first, respectively, in the texts. It is prominent to identify which of the two genders receives the most firstness from pinpointing the dominance (Junita et al., 2022). In this research, the researchers calculated which gender mentioned first in the text or paragraph. The researchers specifically examined whether male or female pronouns or names appeared first, aiming to uncover patterns and biases in language usage.



- a. Listen to Audio 1.1. Andre and Monita are talking about Bekantan's physical features. Then, fill in the gaps. See the **Word Box**.

Figure 4. Male Firstness

Figure 4 shows that there are two people in the text. They are Andre and Monita. It clearly shows that Andre is mentioned on the first time. It is then followed by mentioning

Monita. As a result in this gender representation, male is more prioritized than female. The order in which characters are presented can influence readers' perceptions, potentially reinforcing traditional gender roles and biases. By placing the male character first, the text implicitly signals greater importance or prominence, which reflects broader societal tendencies to prioritize male visibility and authority. This observation underscores the subtle ways in which gender representation can perpetuate inequalities through seemingly minor textual choices.

4.3 Feminine / Masculine Generic Construction

Textbooks contain numerous images and texts, often showcasing various characters or personalities. The use of both female and male pronouns within the content helps shape gender-specific perceptions. Therefore, it's important to count the usage of binary pronouns that can flexibly refer to both sexes (Junita et al., 2022). The researchers concentrated on analyzing the use of masculine and feminine generic constructions within textbooks. They meticulously calculated the frequency of male and female pronouns to determine how often each gender was referenced in a generalized or inclusive manner. By examining these patterns, the study aimed to uncover potential biases in the portrayal of genders, revealing whether one gender was more frequently used as the default or generic reference. This analysis provided insights into the implicit messages conveyed through language in educational materials, highlighting the importance of balanced and equitable gender representation to avoid reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes.

Timun Mas said that she wanted to continue her studies at a university instead of becoming a worker.

Figure 5. Feminine Generic Construction

Figure 5 illustrates that there is a feminine generic construction. Timun mas is described as female in the text. The feminine generic construction refers to instances where gendered language is used to describe a character or role in a way that reinforces traditional gender roles or stereotypes. In this case, the text's choice to describe Timun Mas as female indicates a deliberate use of gender-specific language, potentially to convey particular attributes or characteristics typically associated with femininity. Figure 5's illustration of feminine generic construction through the character of Timun Mas highlights the nuanced ways gender can be portrayed in texts. It underscores the importance of mindful and diverse gender representation to foster equality and break down traditional stereotypes.

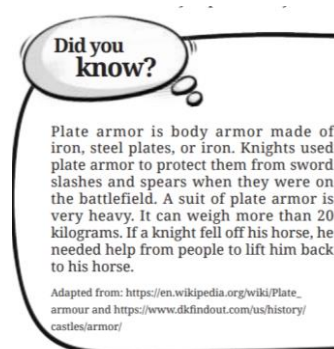


Figure 6. Masculine Generic Construction

Figure 6 indicates a masculine generic construction in the text. The text describes about the plate armor that usually wore by a knight. The knight in this text refers to a male. As a result, the knight represents masculinity.

4.4 Activity

Textbooks include illustrations and various texts. The activities shown in these illustrations and texts, involving both females and males, can indicate the balance of gender representation within the textbooks (Junita et al., 2022). The researchers focused on the activities that represent male or female representation in form of pictures. The researchers analyzed the images to identify which activities were associated with each gender, aiming to understand the visual narratives and stereotypes being presented. By quantifying the presence and types of activities performed by males and females, the researchers sought to uncover potential biases and disparities in gender representation. This analysis was crucial for revealing how visual elements in educational materials can influence students' perceptions of gender roles and contribute to the reinforcement or challenge of traditional gender norms.



Figure 7. Male and Female Activity

Figure 7 focuses on the activities of male and female students, specifically depicting both genders engaging in the act of eating meatballs. This equal participation in the same activity suggests a balanced representation of males and females in this particular context.

The depiction of male and female students eating meatballs indicates that the textbook includes scenarios where both genders are equally involved in everyday activities. This representation can help break down traditional gender stereotypes by showing that both males and females participate in similar actions, promoting the idea of gender equality.

4.5 Occupation

School textbooks use images, stories, and other texts to depict a range of occupations and professions, aiming to engage learners. The way these textbooks associate certain jobs with male or female characters reveals gender representation within the content. Therefore, it is necessary to tally the mentioned professions to identify any potential gender bias (Junita et al., 2022). The researchers focused on some pictures in the textbook that represent male or female occupations. The researchers examined these images to identify the types of jobs associated with each gender, aiming to discern patterns and biases in occupational representation.



Figure 8. Male Occupation

Figure 9 illustrates the male occupation as security and professor. This representation offers a glimpse into how male characters are portrayed in terms of their professional identities within the text. The choice of occupations—security and professor—reflects both traditionally male-dominated fields and positions of authority and responsibility. The role of a security guard is often associated with

strength, protection, and vigilance, while the role of a professor is linked to expertise, knowledge, and academic authority. These portrayals can reinforce traditional gender norms that associate men with roles requiring physical strength or intellectual leadership.

The depiction of males in such occupations can influence readers' perceptions by suggesting that these types of roles are particularly suited for or dominated by men. This may inadvertently contribute to gender stereotyping, where certain professions are seen as more appropriate for one gender over the other. However, it is also possible that the inclusion of these specific occupations aims to showcase positive attributes associated with these roles, such as dedication, intelligence, and reliability. If the text also presents a diverse range of male occupations beyond these examples, it can help provide a more balanced view, demonstrating that men can excel in a variety of fields, including those not traditionally associated with masculinity.

Figure 8's illustration of male occupations as security and professor highlights the text's portrayal of men in authoritative and traditionally male-dominated roles. While these depictions can reinforce certain stereotypes, a broader representation of male occupations within the text can help mitigate this effect and promote a more inclusive view of gender roles in the professional sphere.



Figure 9. Female Occupation

In term of female occupation, figure 9 shows female occupation as teacher. This representation offers insight into how female characters are portrayed in terms of their professional identities within the text. The occupation of a teacher is traditionally associated with nurturing, education, and the dissemination of knowledge. This portrayal aligns with common stereotypes that link women to caregiving and supportive roles. While teaching is a highly respected and essential profession, its depiction as a primary female occupation can reinforce traditional gender norms that suggest women are more suited to roles involving caregiving and education.

The portrayal of women as teachers can have both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, it highlights the significant contributions women make in the field of education, showcasing their expertise, dedication, and impact on society. Female students can see themselves represented in this important and influential role, which can be empowering.

However, if teaching is one of the few or the only occupation depicted for women in the text, it can contribute to a limited view of women's professional capabilities and aspirations. It is important for educational materials to present a diverse range of female occupations to reflect the wide variety of roles women can and do occupy in society. This can help challenge stereotypes and encourage female students to explore a broader spectrum of career possibilities.

Figure 9's illustration of the female occupation as a teacher highlights the text's portrayal of women in a traditionally nurturing and educational role. While this depiction underscores the valuable contributions of women in education, a more diverse representation of

female occupations is necessary to promote a balanced and inclusive view of women's professional potential.

V CONCLUSION

The result of this research revealed that there is a dominant role of male in term of gender representation in the English for Nusantara EFL textbook. This imbalance suggests a perpetuation of gender biases that can influence learners' perceptions and expectations regarding gender roles. Educators and curriculum developers must recognize the importance of equitable gender representation to foster an inclusive learning environment. Addressing these biases is essential for promoting gender equality and empowering all students, regardless of gender, to envision a wider range of roles and opportunities. Future textbook revisions should aim to balance gender representation, ensuring that both male and female figures are depicted equally in various activities and contexts to provide a more holistic and fair portrayal of societal roles.

REFERENCES

- Agni, Z. A., Setyaningsih, E., & Sarosa, T. (2020). Examining Gender Representation in an Indonesian EFL Textbook. *Register Journal*, 13(1), 183–207. <https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v13i1.183-207>
- Amini, M., & Birjandi, P. (2012). Gender Bias in the Iranian High school EFL Textbooks. *English Language Teaching*, 5(2), 134–147. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n2p134>
- Angelina, V., & Arianto, T. (2022). Representation of Family Gender Roles in “Big Little Lies” Novel By Liane Moriarty. *Jurnal Basis*, 9(2), 279–290. <https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v9i2.5557>
- Dharma, Y. P., & Aristo, T. J. V. (2018). An Analysis of English Textbook Relevance to the 2013 English Curriculum. *Journal of English Educational Study*, 1(1), 24–33.
- Junita, J., T. Pasaribu, J. B. T. P., & Vidiastya, A. N. (2022). An Analysis of Gender Representation in I Love Jakarta, an Elementary Textbook. *Journal of English Language and Culture*, 13(1), 10–23. <https://doi.org/10.30813/jelc.v13i1.3652>
- Muzdalifah, A., Noorman, S., & Gunawan, W. (2022). Gender Representation in English Textbook: A Visual Grammar Analysis. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, 21(3), 85–95. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpp.v21i3.43093>
- Ndari, W., Suyatno, Sukirman, & Mahmudah, F. N. (2023). Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and Its Challenges. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 4(3), 111–116. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2023.4.3.648>
- Novianti, P., & Ambarwati, E. K. (2023). A Textbook Analysis of “My Next Words” for the Fifth Grade Elementary School. *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching)*, 10(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jo-elt.v10i1.6972>
- Rachmijati, C., & Cahyati, S. S. (2018). Gender Representation in Textbook Bahasa Inggris Grade X. *Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia*, 6(2), 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.22460/eltin.v6i2.p59-69>
- Rohimajaya, N. A., & Hamer, W. (2022). Merdeka Curriculum for High School English Learning in the Digital Era. *KLAUSA: Kajian Linguistik, Pembelajaran Bahasa, Dan Sastra*, 6(2), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.33479/klausa.v6i2.625>
- Rohmatillah, & Pratama, D. A. (2017). An Analysis of Textbook Entitled “ Pathway to English ” Published By Erlangga at the First Semester of the 11 th Grade of Senior High School. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 10(2), 326–343.
- Yulistiana, W., Rusmawaty, D., Suhatmady, B., & Mulawarman, U. (2022). The Representation of Gender in the Required EFL Textbook of an Indonesian Junior High. *E3L: Journal of English Teaching, Linguistic, and Literature*, 5(1), 1–8.