Gender Representation in EFL Textbooks in Indonesia

Fatmawati*,
Leonardus Par,
Yosefina Rosdiana Su,
Ely Heldydiana Selamat,
Indawati Nur Mahir
Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng
Jl. Ahmad Yani No. 10 Ruteng-NTT
fatmawati11913@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Analysing gender issues in the teaching materials in the textbook is crucial as students' way of perceiving gender in their daily lives might be shaped by what they have learned at school. This research concerns analysing how gender representation in two EFL textbooks utilized in Indonesian secondary schools, Pathway to English for SMA/MA grade, later called textbook 1 in this study and Forward an English Course for Vocational School Students Grade VII, which was later called textbook 2. Both were published by Erlangga. The theory of personal characters proposed by (Brugeilles and Sylvie, 2009) was used as the basis theory in this study. Employing mixed-method research approaches, the researchers analysed how visuals in both textbooks portrayed gender representation by focusing on the frequency of pictures of male and female characters, occupations and activities. The study reveals that the two books show an imbalance of gender representation in all three aspects. Gender bias, especially for female occupations and activities, is apparent in the two textbooks. This study suggests that EFL teachers evaluate their textbooks to advocate for gender equality in the classroom.

Keywords: efl textbooks, gender bias, gender representation, stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

The high use of textbooks in teaching English is an undeniable fact. Various conveniences obtained by teachers, such as saving time, energy, and practicality, make teachers prefer to use textbooks rather than designing their teaching materials. For novice instructors, textbooks can also serve as a type of teacher training, as they contain ideas for planning and teaching lessons and instructional forms that teachers can employ(Richards and Richards, 2015). Much of today's language teaching would be impossible without the widespread usage of commercial textbooks. Almost all learning activities follow what is in the book, such as learning steps, exercises, and other learning activities. In addition, to make it easier for teachers, textbooks also help students to learn independently. With textbooks, they find out what they will learn and what learning goals they have to achieve. These various facilities are the main factor in the high dependence of English teachers on textbooks.

However, commercial textbooks continue to have issues with their content. Several issues include gender disparity (Dewiki, 2008; Damayanti, 2014; Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao, 2015; Samadikhah and Shahrokhi, 2015; Aguilar, 2021). This reality necessitates that the teacher reflects on the instructional materials contained in the textbook. Using and adapting textbooks effectively is a vital aspect of a teacher's professional expertise (Richards and Richards, 2015).

Textbooks are considered a significant component of most language programs(Richards and Richards, 2015). Textbooks are the primary input for students besides teachers. It is critical to assess the books' content's fit for the student's needs. The assessment is strongly recommended, given the extent to which teachers rely on current textbooks, both those developed by the government and those published by private publishers. Textbook evaluation is a necessary instructional activity because it demonstrates whether the material in a textbook has been designed by considering the suitability between certain subjects and the needs of certain students or not (Samadikhah and Shahrokhi, 2015).

When a textbook is evaluated, the type of evaluation it receives will reflect the concerns of the person evaluating it (Richards and Richards, 2015). For example, when a teacher evaluates a book, its usability is considered. The teacher is primarily concerned with whether or not the book is easy to use in the classroom, whether it can be utilized in various ways, and whether or not it can be quickly altered. Another teacher may examine a book considerably more critically in terms of its theoretical orientation and approach, such as the theory of conversation is used in a conversation book, or the authenticity of the activities that the book employs, are all important considerations to consider. So, two teachers analyzing a similar book may approach it from completely dissimilar angles.

One of the essential issues to study is how teachers' and students' textbooks represent gender. The gender issue is crucial, considering that gender discrimination still occurs, especially against women. Apart from the patriarchy our society has adopted, this is reinforced and propagated in education, which is supposed to promote gender equality (Dewiki, 2008). In line with this, Jorquera, (2010) as cited in Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao, 2015, asserts school course books contribute significantly to the process of homogenization; they reproduce social images and settings that simplify social reality and provide a differentiated framework that organizes and defines what is constituted as veracity. Analyzing gender featured in the textbook is essential, considering the gender issues described in the book will affect students' perspectives on gender practices in society. The content contained in the textbook shapes and strengthens students' perspectives on gender through the social representations it contains(Brugeilles and Sylvie, 2009). A significant amount of information is conveyed to students via visuals which enter the public awareness without prior reflection, making iconic language, a highly effective medium for reproducing stereotypes (Acaso and Nuere, 2005 as cited in Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao, 2015). The theory of Brugeilles and Sylvie, 2009 is deployed to analyze the personal characteristics of the characters as the basis of social sex based on the pictures and text. The characters' indicators in textbooks are sex, age, designations, actions, attributes, relationships, the place and posture of individual characters in the pictures, and occupations. In this study, the researchers only took three aspects to be analyzed as they relate directly to how gender is perceived in our daily life. The three aspects are sex, actions/ activities, and occupation.

Previous studies have shown that textbooks still display gender-biased content from various aspects, including frequency in conversation, representation of images in books, initiating conversations, types of daily activities, and sports (Dewiki, 2008; Samadikhah and Shahrokhi, 2015; Aljuaythin, 2018). The prior research was conducted to analyze gender representation in pictures and illustrations of primary textbooks in the Mexican context (Aguilar, 2021). The study shows that males are represented more frequently in illustration, but both genders are represented more equally in pictures. However, three books being analyzed show gender stereotypes in terms of occupation. Another research conducted by Alsarve (2018) examines the course books used in Swedish sports coaching and education programs to see if they show hegemonic masculinity. The findings indicate a male-dominance hegemonic pervades the course books and is repeated through strategic approaches. This hegemony is maintained by the use of strategic approaches. In the textbooks, gender is portrayed and expressed to make it difficult for gender equality to be achieved.

The present study aims at challenging the findings of the previous study in the Indonesian context, specifically in senior high school EFL textbooks. In this regard, researchers investigate two English textbooks used in different fields of study: EFL textbooks for secondary school, which is general English, and the second one is English textbooks for vocational high school. Both textbooks are used widely in Indonesian schools. Accordingly, in this study, there are three research questions to be answered. First, is there an equal representation of male and female characters in textbooks?. Second, how are male and female occupations featured in textbooks?. Third, how are the activities of male and female characters featured in textbooks?

METHOD

The prevalence of men and women portrayal, gender occupational roles and activities shown in pictures in two ELT textbooks were investigated using a mixed-method approach. To this goal, two EFL textbooks were chosen to investigate male and female portrayals in Indonesian secondary school textbooks. The books are *Pathway to English for SMA/MA grade VII,* which is later called *textbook 1* in this study and *Forward an English Course for Vocational School Students Grade VII,* which is later called *textbook 2.* In order to obtain data, the researchers used checklist which is based on the theory of personal characteristics of characters proposed by Brugeilles and Sylvie (2009). Simple observation checklist which covers three aspects including sex, occupation and activities was done in analysing the data.

The steps in analysing the data can be seen in graphic 1.
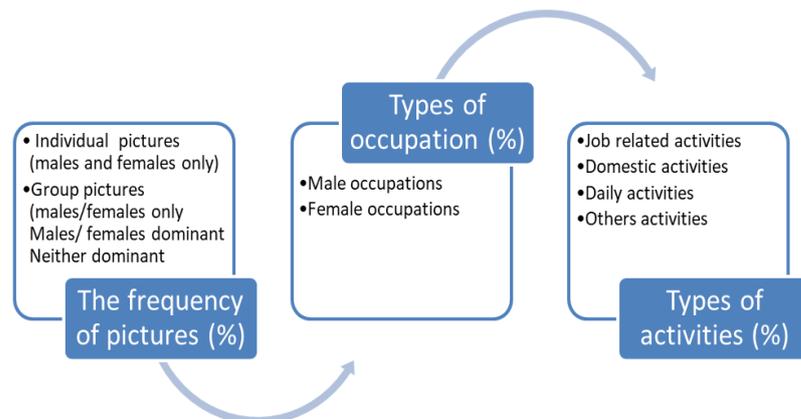
Graphic 1:
Data Analysis Procedure

Diagram 1 shows the procedures in analysing the data. Firstly, the researchers counted the frequency of individual and group pictures of male and female characters from each chapter. Individual pictures are classified into males and females only, whereas group pictures consist of males/females only, males/ females dominant and neither dominant. Neither dominant means the group pictures have a balanced number of males and female characters. Then, the totals for all chapters of each book were counted to get the percentage of each category to obtain the dominant pictures. The next step is identifying the occupation of males and female characters portrayed in the pictures. The totals and percentages for each gender were also counted to know how male and female social roles were depicted. The last aspect is activities performed by the characters depicted in the pictures. The activities were classified into job-related activities, domestic activities, daily activities and others. The analysis of the activities performed by the characters is significant to portray how males and female activities are depicted in textbooks. The total of pictures for each activity was also counted for male and female characters.
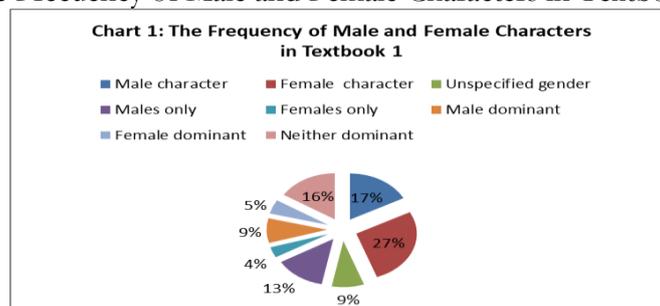
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of gender representation in the textbooks was based on the classification by Brugeilles and Sylvie (2009).
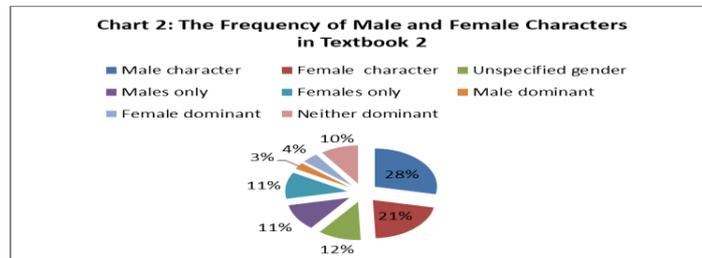
The Frequency of Male and Female Characters
The frequency of male and female portrayal in Textbook 1 is depicted in Graphic 2.

Graphic 2:
The Frecuency of Male and Female Characters in Textbook 1

From Graphic 2, it is clear that in textbook 1, the female character is more dominant than the male character. The percentage of pictures that portrayed females reaches 27% and only 17% pictures of males. However, in group characters, the ratio of images between male-only and female-only is 3:1 (13% for male-only and 4% for female only). Furthermore, male-dominant are more favourable than female-dominant with the ratio of 2:1 (9% for male-dominant and 5% for female-dominant).

Graphic 3:
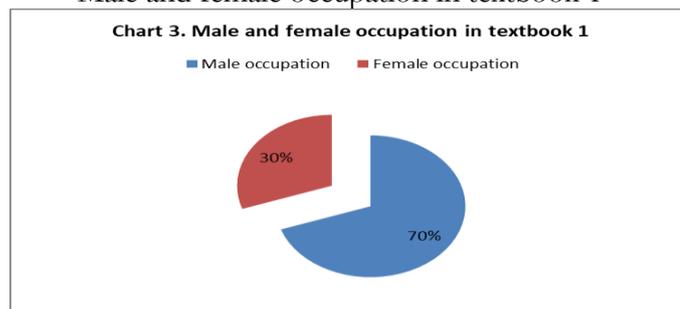The Frecuency of Male and Female Characters in Textbook 2

Textbook 2, on the other hand, shows a different pattern of portraying gender in pictures. This difference can be seen in chart 2 that male characters are more represented. However, the difference is only slight, with 28% of the pictures of the male characters whereas female characters reach 21%. This textbook shows a balanced number of pictures of male-only and female-only characters where both genders are portrayed 11% for group characters. Conversely, in group pictures that contain both genders, female dominance is more displayed (4%) even though there is only a slight difference with male-dominant (3%).

Male and Female Occupation
The pictures feature male and female occupations portrayed in textbook 1 can be seen in graphic 4 below.

Graphic 4:
Male and female occupation in textbook 1

Interestingly, in terms of occupations in textbook 1, male characters are far more noticeable than female characters with the ratio of 2:1. This result is significantly different from the number of female characters identified in the textbook, where females are more dominant, especially in the individual pictures. This large number of differences is caused by the pictures of female characters dominated by non-job-related pictures, such as sweeping the floor, getting shocked by something unpredictable, and getting

health problems such as toothache, headache, cold, cough, and stress at work. Table 1 shows the male and female occupations found in textbook 1.

Table 1:
Male and female occupations in textbook 1

Male Occupation	Female Occupation
Newsreader 4	Newsreader 1
Politician 1	Batik painter 1
Steward 4	Engineer 1
Batik painter 1	Receptionist 1
Officer 1	Traditional dancer 2
Mechanic 1	Athlete showjumper 1
Firefighter 1	Officer 2
Football player 1	Farmer 1
Military and police 3	
Ambassador and President 3	
Street acrobat 3	
Labour 1	

From Table 1, it is clear that males' occupations are more active and prestigious than females. Males are portrayed as police, firefighter, military, steward, ambassadors, and presidents, while females are receptionists, traditional dancers, officers, and farmers. However, some occupations are both portrayed by males and females, such as batik painter, officer, newsreader and mechanic/engineer.

In textbook 2, the number of occupations between male and female characters is not too far compared to textbook 1.

Graphic 5:
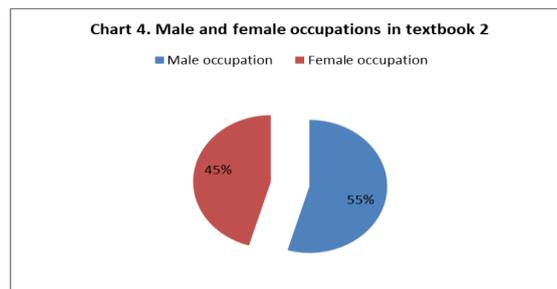Male and female occupation in textbook 2

Chart 4 reveals a slightly different number of occupations between males and females where males (55%) are slightly more dominant than females (45%). The slight difference in terms of career is consistent with the frequency of characters occurring. This result is different from textbook 1,

where the dominant characters are female, whereas they have very low numbers in terms of occupation.

Table 2:
Male and female occupations in textbook 2

Male Occupation	Female Occupation
Police 2	Officer 7
Mechanic 1	Doctor 1
Waiter 1	Kitchen worker 1
Restaurant owner 1	Model 1
Kitchen supervisor 1	Artist 1
Librarian 1	Teacher 1
Singer 4	stewardess 1
Painter 1	Saloon 1
Building worker1	Waitress 1
Kitchen worker 1	
ASEAN summit delegations 1	
Officer 2	
Teacher 1	
Total **18**	**15**

From Table 2 above, male and female characters have an imbalanced range of occupation choices. Males are portrayed 18 times, and females are 15 times. However, some prestigious occupations are described for females, such as doctors, models, artists, and flight attendants. In addition, both genders are featured to have similar professions as officers, kitchen workers, artists, waiters, and teachers. Nevertheless, jobs related to leadership such as police, restaurant owner, kitchen supervisor, and delegation are stereotypically portrayed by males only.

Male and Female Characters Activities

Regarding activities, male and female characters are portrayed differently in the two books. In textbook 1, males have job-related activities with 14 pictures, whereas female characters are only shown four times regarding job-related activities. On the contrary, only females are portrayed in domestic activities such as washing the dishes, cooking and cleaning the house. In addition, female characters are also described as having health problems, such as cough, getting cold, headache, toothache and males are only portrayed once on this issue. Moreover, females are also depicted as having a psychological problem, such as being sad, whereas male characters are not represented. Tables 3 and 4 show the activities portrayed by males and females in individual and group pictures in textbook 1.

Table 3:
Types of Activities in Individual Pictures in Textbook 1

Types of Activities	Male	Female
Health-related activity	1	4
Work activity	14	4
Shopping	0	1
Leisure activity	2	1
Sociability	2	0
Domestic activity	0	4
Cultural related activity	2	0
Everyday activity	2	0
Stress/ shock/sad	0	2

Table 4:
Male and Female Actions/ Activities In Group Pictures in Textbook 1

Types of Activities	Male dominant	Female dominant	Neither dominant
Education activities	1		
Work activity	5		7
Leisure activity	1	2	4
Sociability		1	1
Farming		1	
Refugees			1

Table 4 indicates that females are not portrayed to have job-related activities and education activities when they are together. They are represented to have leisure activities, social activities and farming.

Textbook 2 also portrays unequal numbers of pictures for male and female characters regarding job-related activity. Males are depicted to dominate job-related activity with 14 photos, whereas females are depicted only ten times. In addition, female characters dominate leisure activities and education. Some activities are portrayed to be done only by females, including domestic activities such as cooking, being sad, getting shocked, and having parties. Tables 4 and 5 show activities done by males and females in individual and group pictures.

Table 5:
Male and Female Actions/ Activities in Pictures in Textbook 2

Types of Activities	Male	Female
Education activities	3	4
Work activity	14	10
Leisure activity	1	3
Domestic activity	0	2
Everyday activity	1	
Stress/ shock/sad		1
Party		1

Table 6:
Male and Female Actions/ Activities in Group Pictures in Textbook 2

Types of activities	Male dominant	Female dominant	Neither dominant
Education activities	1	1	3
Work activity	1	2	4
Sociability			1

Furthermore, in the present study, males are portrayed to be involved in activities that show cooperation with other males, such as fixing the machine, playing soccer in a football competition, sailing decorative boats for boat festival, fire brigades putting out the fires on a building, police officers doing their job on the street and river racers in the traditional celebration. On the contrary, females are depicted to do things together with other females during leisure time, such as singing with friends while playing the guitar. Moreover, females are shown as sociable in psychological issues such as calming down a sad friend.

The two books have different trends in gender portrayed based on the frequency of pictures. Based on the frequency of individual and group characters, both textbooks feature imbalanced gender representation in which female characters are more dominant in textbook 1, especially in individual pictures. Whereas textbook 2 shows that male characters are more favourable in individual pictures. Nevertheless, textbook 1 favours males more than females in group pictures. Textbook 2 shows an equal frequency of group pictures that contain male and female-only. But in a mixed group, which includes both male and female characters, female-dominant are more frequently portrayed than male-dominant.

Textbook 1, which is used at senior high school, portrayed female characters as an individual more dominant than male characters. These findings oppose the prior study conducted by Aguilar (2021) and Aljuaythin (2018), who reveals that male characters are more depicted. However, in terms of group pictures, male characters are more dominant. Compared to males, the number of photos showing females in the group only reaches

half of the male's pictures. This difference indicates that males are portrayed as more sociable than females. This result disputes the study conducted by Damayanti (2014), which reveals that female characters are more sociable where they do things together. A balanced frequency of males and female group pictures is indicated in textbook 2. Both genders are portrayed to be sociable.

Both textbooks show gender bias in terms of job where male characters are more depicted to have jobs. Additionally, the stereotypes on the types of job for both genders are obvious. However, textbook 2 portrays more various ranges of elite job chances for female characters better than what is found in textbook 1. These facts can be assumed that the broad range of occupational choices shown in vocational schools is related to the purpose of vocational education on vocation and occupations (Billett, 2011)The female characters have prestigious jobs such as being a doctor, an officer, a model, an artist, a model, and a stewardess.

Moreover, jobs previously related to women are also portrayed by males, such as kitchen workers and waiters. However, some jobs relating to science, technology, leadership, and the jobs that require physical activity and strength are only depicted for males. The jobs are librarian, mechanic, restaurant owner, kitchen supervisor, country delegation, police, and building worker. These findings align with the study conducted by Aguilar (2021) that male jobs are related to power and relationship.

Additionally, the imbalance type of activities performed by males and females is obvious in the textbooks. Males were depicted to do sport and job-related activities. On the other hand, females have a limited number of pictures portrayed to do sport and work. Females were stereotypically portrayed to do domestic activities such as cooking, caring for children and washing the dishes. A girl is shown to wash the dishes, while an adult female is shown to have multitasking activities where she is cooking while taking care of her child and talking on the phone. In this respect, men are typically regarded as determined, intelligent, and self-sufficient, whereas women are considered to be empathetic, nurturing, and kinder to children (Hussain et al., 2015). Szameitat et al. (2015) insist that women excel at multitasking compared to males. Male were never be in favour to do these domestic and multitasking activities. Furthermore, gender bias in terms of activities is obvious in textbook 1 where females are depicted to do party, and being sad where none of male characters are depicted in this activity. Men are mostly assigned positive and active roles and activities, whereas women are assigned passive and negative roles and activities (Amerian and Esmaili, 2014). These findings strengthen the stereotype about women as psychologically weak and easily getting down, whereas males are more active and authoritative. Koenig (2018) asserts that women should be communal in nature and avoid dominance. Men, on the other hand, should be assertive, self-sufficient, physically masculine, and interested in science and technology. Furthermore, men should avoid being weak, emotional,

introverted, and physically feminine.

Apart from that, masculine characters participate in practically all athletic activities like football, cycling and river racing. In this line, Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao (2015) claim that certain activities are only portrayed for a certain gender. These research findings reveal different phenomena from that at the beginning of the 1950s; female athletes were involved in an increasing number of sports that were previously reserved for men (Pfister, 2010). Despite this fact, textbooks still retain gender stereotypes in their content as Mirza (2004) states that gender inequality in society is fostered through gender stereotypes in textbooks. These research findings correlate with Klein (2019) that females are less visible than males in terms of numbers, and they are more frequently depicted in stereotyped circumstances than males.

Gender inequality has been systematized in teaching materials including EFL textbooks. It is estimated that approximately one-fifth of all information transmitted to students is delivered through pictures that reach the general consciousness without previous reflection, making iconic language a very effective medium for replicating stereotypes (Acaso and Nuere, 2005 as cited in Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao, 2015) . Gender inequality is very clearly demonstrated in every element of the textbooks, including the quantity of images, the types of job and activities performed by both genders. Occupations and types of activities are still deemed more appropriate for specific genders. Stereotypes regarding women's primary domestic responsibilities and tasks as mothers, daughters, and housewives continue to be perpetuated (Amerian and Esmaili, 2014).

To promote gender equality in the classroom, ELT teachers must be aware of gender representation in EFL materials. Textbook plays a critical role in advancing education and social development (Mirza, 2004). (Leach, 2003) asserts that gender stereotypes in textbook must be minimised, and women should be presented in more professional and active roles.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the two textbooks are used in different fields, senior high school and vocational school, this research found that both have different trends in portraying gender in terms of the frequency of male and female pictures, occupations and activities. Firstly, in terms of the frequency of female and male pictures, textbook 1 shows that females are more portrayed in individual images. However, in group pictures, males are more favourable. Men are portrayed to be more sociable than females. Textbook 2 depicted males more than females in individual images. Nevertheless, there is a balanced number of pictures for similar gender group pictures and a slight difference in mixed-gender pictures where the male-dominant picture is slightly higher than the female-dominant.

Secondly, regarding the occupation, males are more represented, and they have various types of prestigious and active careers. Both textbooks indicate that males' professions are more active than females. They become police, firefighter, and military. Females are receptionist, traditional dancers and officers.

Lastly, the kinds of activities done by male and female characters represent an imbalance of gender. Males dominate job-related activities, whereas females involve in domestic activities like cooking, washing the dishes and cleaning the house. Male characters have never been portrayed to apply in these types of activities. In addition, females are depicted to do other activities such as parties and having leisure time.

REFERENCES

Aguilar, J. S. (2021). Gender representation in EFL textbooks in basic education in Mexico. *Mextesol Journal*, *45*(1), 1–9.

Aljuaythin, W. (2018). Gender Representation in EFL Textbooks in Saudi Arabia: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, *7*(5), 151. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.7n.5p.151

Alsarve, D. (2018). Addressing gender equality: enactments of gender and hegemony in the educational textbooks used in Swedish sports coaching and educational programmes. *Sport, Education and Society*, *23*(9), 840–852. https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1280012

Amerian, M., and Esmaili, F. (2014). Language and gender: A critical discourse analysis on gender representation in a series of international ELT textbooks. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, *4*(2). https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2014.963

Billett, S. (2011). Purposes of Vocational Education. *Vocational Education*, 135–175. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1954-5_6

Brugeilles, C., and Sylvie, C. (2009). Analysing gender representations in school textbooks. In *Université Paris Descartes*. Université Paris Descartes.

Damayanti, I. L. (2014). Gender construction in visual images in textbooks for primary school students. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *3*(2), 100–116. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v3i2.272

Dewiki, S. (2008). Perspektif Gender dalam Bahan Ajar Cetak pada Pendidikan Jarak Jauh. *Jurnal Pendidikan Terbuka Dan Jarak Jauh*, *9*, 41–50.

Hussain, M., Naz, A., Khan, W., Daraz, U., and Khan, Q. (2015). Gender Stereotyping in Family: An Institutionalized and Normative Mechanism in Pakhtun Society of Pakistan. *SAGE Open*, *5*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015595258

Klein, A. (2019). Cleaning mums and brave policemen: gender representation and gender-inclusive language in EFL teaching materials in Lithuania. *Taikomoji Kalbotyra*, *12*, 75–96. https://doi.org/10.15388/tk.2019.17233

Koenig, A. M. (2018). *Comparing Prescriptive and Descriptive Gender Stereotypes About Children , Adults , and the Elderly. 9*(June). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01086

Leach, F. (2003). 1. Practising Gender Analysis in Education. In *Oxfam*. Oxfam. https://doi.org/10.3362/9780855988333.001

Mirza, M. (2004). *Gender Analysis of School Curriculum Text Books*. UNESCO.

Pfister, G. (2010). Women in sport-gender relations and future perspectives. *Sport in Society*, *13*(2), 234–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430903522954

Richards, J., and Richards, J. C. (2015). *The Role of Textbooks in a Language Program The Role of Textbooks in a Language Program. June*, 1–6.

Samadikhah, M., and Shahrokhi, M. (2015). A critical discourse analysis of ELT materials in gender representation: A comparison of summit and Top Notch. *English Language Teaching*, *8*(1), 121–133. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n1p121

Szameitat, A. J., Hamaida, Y., Tulley, R. S., Saylik, R., and Otermans, P. C. J. (2015). "Women are better than men"-Public beliefs on gender differences and other aspects in multitasking. *PLoS ONE*, *10*(10), 2–6. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0140371

Táboas-Pais, M. I., and Rey-Cao, A. (2015). Racial representation in physical education textbooks for secondary schools: Image content and perceptions held by students. *SAGE Open*, *5*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015574972