

GENDER IN EFL CLASSROOM: TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR INDONESIAN STUDENTS¹

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the topic of gender in EFL classroom, particularly in Indonesian context. Owing to the framework proposed by Sunderland (1992), the paper focuses on the discussion of gender in classroom materials, i.e. English textbooks. Selected reading passages were analyzed within the framework of Transitivity system of functional grammar (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004; Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014). The Processes in the texts (e.g. travel, walk, and climb) reveal that males were perpetually constructed as 'adventurous', 'risk taker', 'active', 'independent', and 'capable'. Meanwhile, the Processes also indicate that the females were shaped as more 'passive', 'expressive', 'nurturing', and 'unassertive' than their male counterparts (Blackstone, 2003; Evans & Davies, 2000). The findings suggest that the gender roles were presented in an asymmetrical manner. The paper provides recommendation in terms of how both teachers and students can develop gender awareness in the classroom practices through the use of the textbooks.

Keywords: gender in education; gender in EFL classroom; English textbook; transitivity system

Gender has been an emerging issue in education since it is involved in how teacher and students establish social commitments to teaching and learning practice. Sunderland (1992) notes that gender maneuvers not only on the level of materials, but it also manifests in various levels, which interact within the contexts of political, sociolinguistic, and educational, as seen in Figure 1.

Many issues related to gender in education have been explored, including the portrayal of gender in learning materials. The content of learning

materials is considered important to be seriously taken into account since it is believed to influence the process of teaching and learning that takes place. Regarding this, special attention has been given to one kind of learning materials which has been widely used in schools: textbooks (see Evans & Davies, 2000; Toçi & Aliu, 2013; Yasin et al., 2012). Moreover, textbook is considered the most potential instrument that can help students build desirable attitudes (Sumalatha, 2004, cited in Toçi & Aliu, 2013).

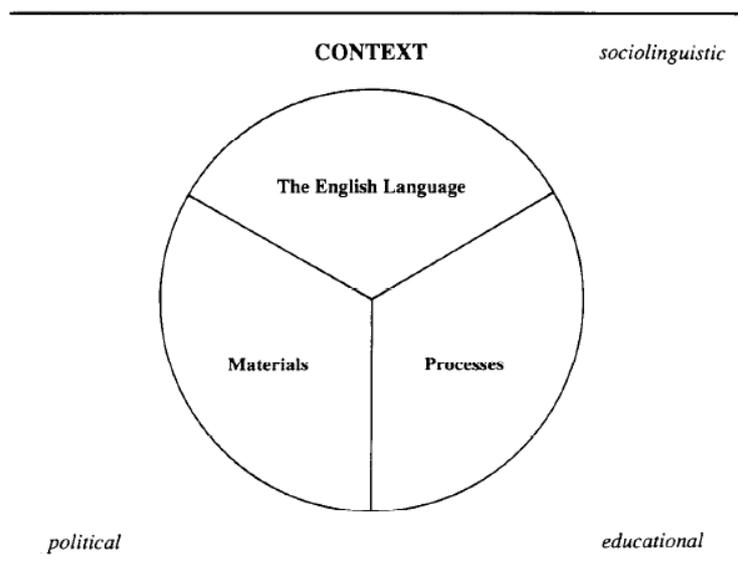


Figure 1. Gender maneuvers in various context

Over the past decades, the intention for conducting the research in the field of gendered-content materials in textbooks has raised a number of interests (Kereszty, 2009). It is derived from the awareness of providing students with appropriate service, including learning materials, to avoid misconception of gender i.e. gender biasness and sexism (Evans & Davies, 2000; Yasin et al., 2012). Sexism in textbooks, as Xiaoping (2005) suggests, can be avoided by presenting the figure of men and women in a fair range of human interests, traits, and capabilities without omitting the action and achievement of women. This statement is supported by Clegg (2008) and Gove and Watt (2000) who consider it important for the students to be exposed with the learning materials as they will subconsciously form their own images of males and females as members of society as a part of identity formation. Regarding this, Eckert (2003) adds that students at their adolescent period are going through a life-stage at which a tremendous amount of identity work is being done, and the conception of gender is salient towards the formation of self-identity.

Since EFL materials presumably can have unconscious influence towards students, an investigation of how gender is installed in the language of textbooks is needed. Thus, to explore what might be the empirical workings of gender portrayal, construction, and/or representation, an analysis by means of Systemic Functional Linguistics was conducted. In short, this paper presents the results of a study of gender representation in reading passages EFL textbooks.

Gender Roles, Gender Symmetry and Gender Asymmetry

Gender is defined as socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male (Reeves & Baden, 2000). It is not an ontological state of being that one simply 'is', but rather a process of one's 'becoming' produced in and through social interaction (Deutsch, 2007; Salih, 2002). Gender is subconsciously and constantly produced and reproduced out of human interactions, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life (Lorber, 2003). Human interaction develops and gives cues about what sort of behavior is believed to be appropriate for men and women, giving men and women certain roles according to their biological, social, and cultural states—gender roles (Blackstone, 2003). Gender roles shape different kinds of life experiences of men and women, and these experiences produce different kinds of feeling, consciousness, relationships, skills—ways of being that can be labeled as feminine or masculine (Blackstone, 2003; Lorber, 2003).

Gender roles, according to Blackstone (2003) and Lorber (2003), are closely intertwined with cultural and the different levels of power that males

and females hold in society from which a set of ideas about appropriate gender behaviors that govern the lives of males and females are constructed accordingly. Blackstone (2003) and Lorber (2003) state that from the moment of birth, one's gender role is determined on the basis of one's sex category and is dependent upon social and cultural experiences; and once the role of gender is evident, it will continue to develop as long as social interaction takes place.

Concerning the development of gender roles, it is argued that mainstream cultures from which gender roles are stemmed is the central value placed on domination (Eisler in Francis, 2004). This can be understood by examining the notions of *gender symmetry* and *gender asymmetry*.

The discussion of *gender symmetry* and *gender asymmetry* often appear in the research of domestic violence, along with other keywords such as *intimate terrorism*, *intimate partner violence (IPV)* and *violent resistance*. Thus, the attempt to define gender symmetry and gender asymmetry mostly finds its way to sociology and law context.

Gender symmetry can be viewed as a theory that highlights a condition where women commit violence (IPV) at the same rate as men, which occur in a region, at a particular period of time (Straus and Gelles cited in Johnson, 2006). National Family Violence Survey conducted in 1975 in The United States of America recorded a staggering statistic where about 11.6% of men and 12% of women had to go through various forms of IPV within a year.

Conversely, a condition where women received violent treatment much more than men in a domestic setting refers to gender asymmetry. Men's commission of intimate partner violence against women, in many cases, originates from the perceptions of masculinity and patriarchy (Francis, 2004). This paper does not make use of gender asymmetry in the context of domestic violence. Yet, it employs the concept of domination of women by men in other contexts relevant to their gender roles.

Domination of one group over others implies power asymmetry as its goal, and is dependent on it. The exercise of power asymmetry colors the interactions between those who are associated with its domination and those who are on the receiving end (Francis, 2004). How power is practiced in society affects the way men and women behave and interact with each other as well. It leads to how gender roles are constructed, dictating what merits given to both female and male. In other words, gender can be narrated as a consequence from powerful discourse that becomes social customs (Blackstone, 2003; Francis, 2004). These two can be addressed as culture where they consist of set of beliefs that position and subjugate the society, giving each of the members prescribed roles and attainments which should meet in order to obtain the

idea of propriety, including the distinct rule of becoming male and female—gender roles.

In terms of its creation, gender roles are sometimes created based on stereotypes about gender (Blackstone, 2003). Gender stereotypes are oversimplified understandings of males and females and the differences between them. Individuals sometimes base their perceptions about appropriate gender roles upon gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes tend to include exaggerated or erroneous assertions about the nature of males and females. For example, a common gender stereotype about males is that they are not emotional. Females, on the other hand, are commonly stereotyped as being irrational or overly emotional (Blackstone, 2003; Schmenk, 2004). This stereotypical view based on the exercise of power in society often explains the oppression of women. However, it is continuously lessening over time as the awareness of gender equality emerges within society. In educational level, for instance, increasing attention has been given to the importance of achieving gender equality which it serves as a provision of equal conditions, treatment and opportunity for both men and women to realize their full potential, human rights, and dignity, as well as opportunities to contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political development. This has been a point of departure of how gendered-content materials in textbooks become one of the emerging issues to be taken into account, since textbooks are considered as one of the ways for students to acquire and comprehend their gender conception (Toçi & Aliu, 2013; Yasin et al, 2012). In order to achieve this goal, one of the ways is to conduct an analysis towards the language use in the textbooks since language is a medium

through which ideas and ideology of the speakers influenced by various social contexts can be traced (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Thus, through language, how gender is installed in one specific discourse—classroom discourse—, as this study is concerned with, can be identified.

Gender Issues in EFL Textbooks

Previous research on the topic of gender representation in EFL textbooks had noted issues such as the number of males and females’ occurrences in teaching materials, male *firstness*, noun and pronoun system, and discourse of gender roles (Sunderland, 1994; Dominguez, 2003; Stockdale, 2006; Mineshima, 2008).

The occurrences of males in most EFL textbooks indicate women’s invisibility in literature and media, which should be the primary concerns for educators and publishers. The fact that women do not receive as much as attention as men in books often lead to heavy gender bias, which mostly materialize in the order of mentioning the pair of sex. For instance, the naming of *he/she*, where *he* always comes first, or *Mr.* and *Mrs.* In their research, Hartmand and Judd (cited in Mineshima, 2008) state that such automatization might encourage the positioning of women to be the second class in the society.

Regarding gender issues that appear on textbooks and the uses of textbooks in a classroom, Sunderland (2000) proposes an analytical framework that took account of both the text itself and what is said about it. This framework is in the form of classification system, which can accommodate the different *discoursal treatments* accorded to different *text type*.

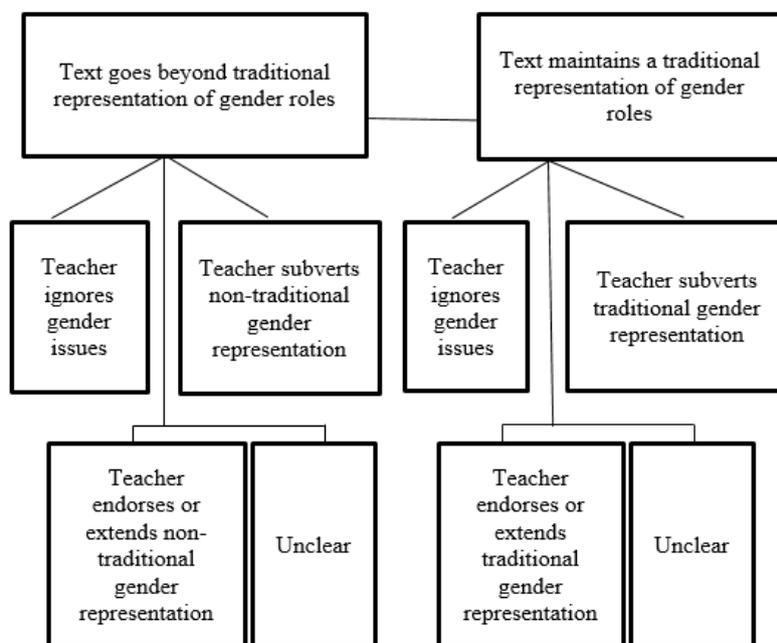


Figure 2. An analytical framework for teacher treatment of gendered textbook texts (Sunderland, 2000)

The model provides an outlook of how the textbooks used in this study positioned issues of gender, whether they maintain the representation of gender roles or go beyond that representation. The implication of this is mostly visible in classroom use of the text.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Based on what has been explained in previous section, gender is practically living in a discourse and can be identified through the use of language. Therefore, to comprehend the relation between gender and language, it is important to gear towards language in the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (latter referred to SFL). SFL is a social theory of language originally developed by a linguist Michael Halliday and expanded in the last two decades through the work of many scholars around the world (Achugar & Colombi, 2008). The theory situates language development in its socio-historical context, linking patterns of language use to culturally relevant situations. Moreover, the theory suggests that language is the main channel through which the patterns of living are transmitted as a medium for an individual to act as a member of a society to adopt its culture, mode of thought and action, and beliefs and values (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; 2014). That being, gender—treated as societal phenomena—also lingers in the roof of language transmissions from practiced discourse, channeling and being channeled from one individual to part of society.

SFL recognizes language as a social semiotic system and the most complete system of signs. According to Halliday (1994, cited in Emilia, 2005) the term “social” suggests two things simultaneously. One is “social” used in the sense of the social system, which is synonymous with the culture. While the other “social” is used to indicate that SFL is concerned particularly with the relationships between language and social structure, considering the social structure as one aspect of the social system (Emilia, 2005, p. 47). Not only does SFL perceive language as a social system, it also considers language a resource for making meaning rather than a system of rules (Christie, 1990, cited in Emilia, 2005; Halliday, 1994 cited in Emilia, 2005; Halliday & Martin, 1993, cited in Emilia, 2005). Language then works and engineers structures to construct meaning, as they represent the world and its reality (Gerrot & Wignell, 1994). That is a point of departure of how language then becomes the representation of the world through ‘the sounding mind’—borrowing the speaker’s lens while seeing the world, leaving the trace to unpack the underlying ideology as well as beliefs, values, and attitudes shared within the language used (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This clearly explicates how language is then eligible to represent how the minds subject gender—the gendered and gendering—as

also to why and how it matters to them. Sauntson (2008) particularly adds that in investigating “real-life language practices”, which includes gender and sexuality, a linguistic analysis may be required to explore what might be the empirical workings of gender portrayal, construction, and/or representation.

Last but not least, SFL concerns text (rather than sentences) as the basic unit through which meaning is negotiated, as it allows involvement into a whole text as a meaningful passage rather than isolated sentence or utterance (Eggins, 2004). Therefore, it is possible to discover the portrayal of gender roles in textbooks—particularly manifested in narratives by treating the text as a whole which is contextually bound to thematically social context.

Transitivity System in SFL to Explore Gender Roles in Textbook Language

Transitivity in SFL generally refers to how meaning is represented in the clause. Linguistically, Transitivity is concerned with propositional meanings and functions of syntactic elements. According to SFL, Transitivity system realizes one of the three metafunctions of language developed by Halliday (experiential, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions), that is to the experiential metafunction. The Transitivity system is the overall grammatical resource for construing goings on (Martin, Matthiessen & Painter, 1997, p. 100, cited in Emilia, 2005; Fontaine, 2013; Emilia, 2014). In short, Transitivity refers to grammatical system by which the experiential meaning of the clause is achieved. Furthermore, Transitivity is the resource for interpreting and expressing events, happenings, goings-on, mental states, sayings, behaviors, and relations of different kinds.

Unlike Transitivity in traditional grammar, Transitivity in functional grammar does not deal in distinguishing verbs according to whether they have an object or not, but refers to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its object. The Transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types (Halliday, 1994a, p. 106 cited in Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; 2014). Transitivity discriminates six different types of processes in English: Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioral and Existential. In addition, each clause, Halliday (1994a, p. 107 cited in Gerrot & Wignell, 1994) further suggests, consists, in principle of three components: The Process itself; the Participants; and Circumstances.

Processes are central to Transitivity, it refers to what is going on with the Participant—the actor—in a particular situation—Circumstance. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), from six different types of processes, Material, Verbal, and Relational processes are considered as the main process in Transitivity. Material and Mental process

distinguishes between outer experience, the processes of the external world, and inner experience, the processes of consciousness. In addition to Material and Mental processes, the third component has to be applied to relate one fragment of experience to another. Thus, the grammar recognizes the process of the third type, which is Relational process (p. 170).

Additionally, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, 2014, p. 171) further identify that there are other types of processes located at the three boundaries. On the borderline between Material and Mental are the Behavioral processes; those that represent the action form of processes of consciousness and psychological states. On the borderline of Mental and Relational is the category of Verbal processes: symbolic relationship constructed in human consciousness and enacted in the form of language, like saying and meaning. Moreover, on the borderline between the Relational and the Material are the processes concerned with existence, the Existential, by which phenomena of all kinds are simply recognized to 'be'— to exist.

METHODS

The research employed qualitative descriptive analysis to embark on investigating the portrayal of gender roles in selected English textbooks for Junior High School students. To obtain the data, the research involved two printed English textbooks from two different publishers; Interactive English (Iragiliati et al., 2014) and Bright (Zaida, 2014).

The analysis of the research focused on 22 selected reading passages regarding the gender roles of the characters. Once the textual data were obtained, they were approached by the Transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014) based on the following steps:

- a. The texts were analysed at clause level.

- b. The components of Participants (e.g. Actor, sayer, senser, or goal, phenomenon, verbiage), Processes (e.g. Process of material, verbal, mental, existential), and Circumstances (e.g. Circumstances of location and time, matter, manner, accompaniment) were identified as the pre-requisite to further analyse the clauses. The following are the examples of Material process assigned to both male and female characters:

Rudi is playing ball with his dog.
 Actor Process: Goal Circumstance:
 (M) Material Accompaniment

Lita and Anna are playing swing.
 Actors (F) Process: Material Goal
 (Interactive English, "Holiday in the Beach" p. 60)

- c. The observed components were then labelled by specific roles, based on the represented participants (Actor: Sayer, Senser, existentg, Behavior, Carrier; Processes: Material, Verbal, Mental, behavioural, Existential, Relational; and Circumstances: Location, Time, Manner, Matter, Accompaniment, Angle), following the professed theories of Transitivity System.
- d. Once the linguistic analysis was accomplished, an interpretation within the framework of gender roles was conducted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the analysis of textual data employing Transitivity system of SFL, it has been revealed that both male and female characters are depicted to be involved as Participants in six types of processes; Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioral, Verbal, and Existential (see Table 1).

Tabel 1. The distribution of processes in analysed texts

M/F	Types of Processes							Total
	Material	Mental	Attributive	Identifying	Behavioral	Verbal	Existential	
M	103	32	30	4	9	11	2	191
F	73	24	35	5	7	15	1	160
	176	56	65	9	16	26	3	351

Table 1 presents the distribution of processes which shows the asymmetrical number of occurrences between male and female Participants in the texts analysed. In almost every process, there is a tendency of male Participants outnumbered females, especially in Material processes. Material processes do not only appear as the most prominent process occurring in the analysis, but also become the Processes that portray the distinction between

male's and female's involvement. The same thing also occurs in Mental, Behavioral, and Existential processes. Males are still considered more visible than females, albeit the insignificant number of occurrences. However, in Relational and Verbal process, females slightly outnumbered males in terms of their involvement as Participants. Based on the result, males are considered more powerful

agents than females as they dominate the presence of Participants based on the total of occurrences.

In terms of Circumstances, the domination of male over female characters is also depicted. The data reveal that male characters are more likely extended by more types and numbers of circumstantial features especially in Circumstance of Location or Place (see Table 2). It is evident that

the characters in the textbooks are treated based on the practice of dominatory culture that commonly positions men as ‘workers’, thus, Circumstances of Location and Time of their activities are considered important, while women, who are stereotyped as mothers and wives, are likely to use circumstances about how things are done or how they happen (manner).

Table 2. Types of Circumstances associated with male and female characters

Types of Circumstances	Subtypes	Frequency		Total
		Male	Female	
Extent	Distance			
	Duration			
Location	Place	34	17	51
	Time	18	24	42
Manner	Means	3	1	4
	Quality	1	1	2
	Comparison	1	1	2
Cause	Reason			
	Purpose	4	1	5
	Behalf			
Contingency	Condition			
	Concession			
	Default			
Accompaniment	Comitative	7	2	9
	Additive			
Role	Guise			
	Product			
Matter		4	2	6
Angle				
Total		72	49	121

Table 2 shows there are three main aspects signifying the portrayal of gender roles; (1) the number of the appearances of male and female characters in relation to the processes involved, (2) circumstantial elements associated with male and female characters, and (3) lexical choices employed in describing male and female characters. The first evidence discussed is the number of appearances of male and female characters. From this point of view, male characters dominate the role of Participants. They are prominently portrayed as the characters who hold important roles in the stories. Meanwhile, females are more likely portrayed as Goals, the ones who are affected by the action of the Actors, someone who senses (Senser), as active speakers and listeners (Sayer and Receiver), and as someone who is valued with her characteristics (Carrier).

The domination of male over female characters in terms of their appearance and roles explicates the patterns of power relations between males and females that shape norms for masculinity and femininity. Through frequent appearances, male characters are depicted as masculine and perform masculinity indicated by the possession of power. This power is exercised through their active involvement in various actions and activities, either as the ‘doer’ or the ones who are affected by the

‘doer’, represented by the types of Participants according to the Processes employed.

The domination of male characters also becomes the point of departure of the second point that signifies the portrayal of gender roles. It is related to the types of Circumstances associated with male and female characters. In terms of the number of occurrences, male characters’ actions are more likely extended with various types of Circumstance. In Circumstance of Place, for instance, male characters are portrayed to be involved in the actions taking place in public sphere, while females are more likely involved in the actions taking place in private sphere (see the example below).

At a quarter past five	I (Lionel)	go	to the gym.
<i>Circ. Of Time</i>	<i>Actor (M)</i>	<i>Process: Material</i>	<i>Circ. of Place</i>
The older daughters, Elsie and Cassie,	are reading	a book	together in the backyard.
<i>Behaver (F)</i>	<i>Process: Behavioral</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Circ: Manner; Place</i>

Male characters' actions are prominent to be extended with the evidence of another characters' accompaniment, the purpose of their action, the tools which are used to help their action, and the extension which explains the quality of their action. It implies that male characters are portrayed as more powerful agents in all their aspects of life.

The last evidence that signifies the portrayal of gender roles within the contents of the textbooks is the lexical choice in relation to male and female characters. In terms of processes, the distinction is likely to occur in Material clauses in which both male and female characters are mostly portrayed as Participants. The processes used to describe actions that the male characters are doing, tend to be different from those used to describe females' actions. Male characters are more likely to be assigned in the actions that are considered demanding higher amount of energy, e.g. go, travel, walk, and climb. On the other hand, female characters tend to be involved in the processes of doing assumed to demand less energy such as eat, stand, wait, and wear. In this way, the textbooks suggest strengthening the message that males are performing masculine traits i.e. adventurous, risk taker, active, independent, and capable and this is relevant to previous research (see Evans & Davies, 2000; Peterson & Lach, 1990, cited in Sari, 2011), while females are more of 'passive', 'expressive', 'facilitate', and 'follow' (see Sari, 2011; Xiaoping, 2005).

Furthermore, the difference in the lexical choice can be seen from the description of physical appearances and personal traits of male and female characters. The discrepancy is mostly occurs in Relational clauses especially in the Attributive mode which attempts to ascribe a quality to an entity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This reveals that in terms of physical appearance and personal traits, the roles of male and female characters are still influenced by stereotyped roles of men and women in society; women are valued by their physical appearance and men with their abilities in certain areas of interests, i.e. music and art (Breakwell, 1988, cited in Schmenk, 2004; Jordan & Weedon, 1995, in Schmenk, 2004; Eckert, 2003; Evans & Davies, 2000).

Based on the evidence above, it can be claimed that the textbooks have portrayed gender roles in an asymmetrical manner, which favors males' roles rather than females roles. Stereotypical traits of masculine and feminine as well as stereotyped roles of men and women are also observed in the construction. The overall analysis indicates that male characters are depicted to exhibit masculine traits i.e. 'adventurous', 'risk-taker', and prone to symbolizing 'rational' and 'powerful' individual. Meanwhile, juxtaposed with that, female characters are more likely depicted as 'nurturing', 'thoughtful',

'anxious', and 'expressive' which are categorized as feminine traits.

The portrayal of asymmetrical gender roles in the textbooks shows that the textbooks carry ideology of power and domination in the discourse of gender, maintained by the society reflected in the books. It illustrates the norms and values which are tolerable as well as acceptable in real life situation. Such reflection can be observed in the way the textbooks present distinct characters of males and females. The fact that male characters appear more often and hold important roles of Participants than females typifies the dominance of men over women in society. Meanwhile, the distinct characters of males which are mostly associated with the imagery of 'powerful agents', exemplify the exercise of power asymmetry that is still operates in society.

However, the textbooks present a fair range of human interests, traits, and capabilities through their female characters. Such attempt can be identified from the way the textbooks avoid the oppression of females, for example, female characters are still depicted as having an ability to perform powerful acts, i.e. saving her child, develop themselves in terms of education, and actively contribute and participate to an event, despite the limitation of their movement. Even though the presentation and the domain of female characters is less frequent than that of male characters, action which indicates the occurrence of females being oppressed by their male counterparts cannot be seen.

Furthermore, the textbooks can be regarded to meet the needs of the students—as the users of the textbooks to expand their knowledge regarding heterosociability attempted to accomplish their construction of gender identity (Eckert, 2003; Gove & Watt, 2000). The textbooks have successfully portrayed gender roles in a fair range of human interests, in accordance with the accepted culture of the users of the textbooks. Asymmetrical gender roles that appear in the textbooks do not reflect sexist practices, as what has been commonly observed by the previous studies (i.e. Xiaoping, 2005; Yasin et al., 2012). Instead, the textbooks depict the roles of women in many aspects of life represented through their linguistic codes.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the linguistic analyses of the data presented above, it can be concluded that male characters dominate the roles of Participants. They are more frequently represented than female characters in the apparent Processes along the narrative. In terms of the types of Processes, both male and female characters are prominently depicted to be involved in Material processes.

However, in terms of the quantity of occurrences between male and female characters, male characters are more prominent to be associated

with Material processes exemplifying superiority in physical activities. Furthermore, Circumstance-wise, the actions of male characters are more likely to be extended with various types of Circumstances. The most frequent type of Circumstances that appears in the analysis associated with the appearance of male characters is Circumstance of Place indicating public spheres. It reveals the tendency of male characters to be involved in actions or activities taking place in public spheres.

While female characters tend to be involved in the actions or activities taking place around their private spheres. Thus, it can be implied that, in terms of quality, male characters are prone to symbolizing 'rational', 'powerful', and 'individual', as opposed to female who are depicted as the owners of 'thoughtful', 'anxious', and 'expressive' traits.

Through the analysis above, the selected textbooks offer two standpoints: serving as texts which maintain traditional gender roles, yet at the same time also providing gender roles that go beyond the stereotyped males and females roles. Thus, the closest implication for teachers in seeing such potential in a textbook is to see how they are going to make use of the gender issues in the classroom. As EFL materials can have unconscious influence towards students, linguistic roles may suggest cognitive and communicative empowerment for language learners. Moreover, what happens to a text in class is unpredictable; thus, further research on how a text is utilized in the classroom is necessary to explore teacher-students' interaction, and students and students' interaction regarding gender in EFL classroom.

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