

Gender Representation in English Textbook: *A Visual Grammar Analysis*

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Abstract

This study was qualitative descriptive, which investigated what kind of gender features emerged for the male and female represented in image of textbook for elementary school. The data of this study were collected from an English textbook entitled “Stairway a fun and easy English textbook (for Grade IV of Elementary Schools”, published by Tiga Serangkai. The data in the present study were in the form of images and texts taken from a textbook. The data were analysed by following the theory of visual grammar by (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) to analyse the visual text. The study found that there are unequitable gender representations typically because both genders are represented through stereotypical portrayals. Males are represented to dominate language strategies and occupy more public areas, while females are represented to be passive and occupy more private areas. The portrayal of asymmetrical gender representation in the textbook shows that the reflection of the textbook is realized by ideology and inspired by the interest of the society.

Keywords: Gender, visual grammar, visual grammar

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INTRODUCTION

Language is functional and used in both spoken and written text to reach different goals and social purposes (Droga & Humphrey, 2005). It is a tool that reflects the language users’ attitude, beliefs, and their point of views (Kramsch, 1998). Therefore, for the language learners, textbooks are important. Textbooks provide text and images to help learners comprehend the content (Emilia, 2011). However, the competence of reading texts may contribute to how they perceive ideas regarding social practices especially gender discourse. This is because the texts may have influence on students’ personalities as they develop their identities at that time around (Damayanti, 2014). The selections of texts and images by the textbook developers or authors are likely influenced by how they construe social roles applied in the culture and environment.

The representation of male and female in textbooks has been the concerns of many scholars throughout the year. Chiponda & Wasserman (2015) present the representation of gender especially women in the Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Modern periods. The result shows that women only made up to 30% of the portraits. Meanwhile in 90’s period, Osler in 1994 (see more in Chiponda & Wasserman (2015) presents that the women appearance was fewer than that of men. Based on those reports, the roles of women were restrained visually and textually. It is due to the influence of male who dominated the society. Under-representation of women in visual images in textbook also continued in 2005 (Clark, Ayton Frechette and Keller, 2005). The portrayal of gender in learning material has been an emerging issue as well, the stereotype patterns about females and males were consistently portrayed that the number of female characters were always considerably less than the males (Damayanti, 2014).

Based on some studies conducted in 1970-1980’s, the female characters in textbook were depicted as for being “dependent, passive, submissive, helpless, incompetent and unambitious”. They are also limited in what they did including their occupation. On the contrary, the male characters are

represented for being competent, achievement oriented, more independent, more engaged in outdoor activities, capable of solving problems, powerful, and assigned for a greater range of occupations (Damayanti, 2014).

The intention for conducting research in the field of gender representation is to promote the awareness of misconception of gender, which includes the gender biases (Emilia et al., 2017). The contents in the massive production of textbooks might be possible to encourage some types of ideologies, to shape opinions and perspectives of the learners as the readers of the textbook (Ahour & Zaferani, 2016). The misconception of gender could be prevented by constructing the figure of male and female in a fair range of traits, and capabilities without omitting the action and achievement of women (Xiaoping in Emilia et al., 2017). Therefore, the aim is to ensure the equality between men and women (Chiponda & Wasserman, 2015).

The analysis of the portrayal and representation can be examined through the text by the analysis of visual pictures. Pictures as visual aids in textbook are able to give realistic portrayals of all cultures, including facts, up to date information and nonverbal language (Xiao, 2010)

Therefore, this study focuses of what kind of gender features emerged for the male and female represented in the images contained in English textbook for elementary students. The analysis was undertaken within the framework of visual grammar as outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and transitivity system of systemic functional linguistics by (Halliday, 1994) other supporting theories which are relevant.

Textbook as Learning Material

Textbook is one of the resources that teachers can use to achieve aims and objectives which have been set according to the learners' needs, it is expected to be the most important teaching-learning material (Cunningsworth, 1995). For learners, textbook as one of main resources represent an authoritative source of information (Bateman & Mattos, 2006). Sumantha in Wu & Liu (2015) agrees that textbook is considered as the influential instrument that can shape students' belief, attitudes, and values (Sumantha in Wu & Liu, 2015). For the reason that textbook is a representation of political, cultural, economic and political battles and comprises, it is a symbolic representations of the world and society where we live (Chiponda & Wasserman, 2015). Therefore, the inputs in the textbooks are the authors' perspective of how they see the world and how the society influence them (Ahour & Zaferani, 2016; Damayanti, 2014). That makes textbooks are the most powerful instrument in shaping children's belief, attitude and values (Liu, 2013). Furthermore, the massive production of textbooks is possible to create more exposure to encourage certain types of ideologies, to shape opinions and perspectives of the learners as the readers (Ahour & Zaferani, 2016). This may contribute to how learners perceive perspectives especially in gender representation. Consequently, the fact that how textbooks are contributed to shape students' perspective by representing information, and ideologies, besides their massive production, the significant effort is taken into account to make the textbook practical but also functional. Evaluating textbook to optimize the learning activities as well as for its sexism and racism context is strongly recommended (Sari, 2011). The misconception of gender could be prevented by constructing the figure of male and female in a fair range of traits, and capabilities without omitting the action and achievement of women (Xiaoping in Emilia et al., 2017).

Gender Issues in Textbooks

The analysis of gender portrayal in the visual images in textbooks is potential to explain the positions of women and men in society outside their environment. The characters in the students' books

have the potential to influence students' perceptions of socially accepted roles and values of how males and females are supposed to behave (Emilia et al., 2017).

Based on some studies conducted in 1970-1980's, the female characters in textbook were depicted for being attractive, unaggressive, emotional, dependent, powerless, passive, submissive, helpless, incompetent and unambitious (Damayanti, 2014; Dyrskog, 2017; Wood, 2009). Hartman and Judd in Wu & Liu (2015) reviewed a research of textbooks of the past 12 years in America and found that women only appeared for 37%. In some countries in Asia, the representation of each gender is similar. Singapore produced textbooks with gender imbalances in terms of speech quantity and in role of representation in the speech given to characters (Damayanti, 2014). The roles of women were restrained visually and textually. Moreover, the males are depicted to be a provider. The females have more tendency to ask for information and the males make it available. Freeman & McElhinny in Sano, Lida, & Hardy (2001) found that women use tag questions more often than men.

Females and males are also limited in what they did including their occupation. Preceding studies expose how more males work than males and females are limited in choices of occupation. Absary and Babit in Wu & Liu (2015) found that women's occupations appeared to be mainly as nurse, housewives or servant while men occurred to have more variety of occupations such as policemen, soldier, dentist, farmer doctor and teacher. In Singapore, the roles of females are limited and mainly centered on nurturing professions for instance teaching, food preparation, serving and nursing (Damayanti, 2014). This kind of under-representation of women in visual images in textbook also continued in 2005 (Clark, Ayton Frechette and Keller, 2005).

Therefore, the present study is an analysis of gender representation in textbook using visual grammar as the framework to answer what representations are available for male and female characters in the textbook and what are implied in the representation in each textbook.

Visual Grammar as Analytical Tool

The Grammar of Visual Design is believed to describe the way how elements are depicted, such as people, places and things to combine in visual statements (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). There are three metafunctions of linguistics that can be extended to visual communication.

Representational meaning

Representational meaning is a metafunction that focuses on the represented participants in the image that demonstrates between the represented participants in the image and involved interactive participants (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). There are two kinds of participants involved in Representational meaning which are the Actor and Goal. The Actor is the participant from which the vector comes, while the Goal is where the participant at which the vector pointed at (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

The Representational meaning then is divided into two major processes, Narrative and Conceptual processes.

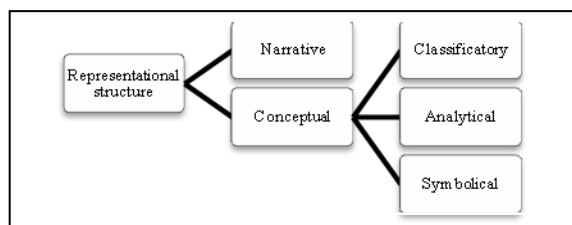


Figure 1 "Main type of visual representation structure" (Adopted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.59)

The Narrative process is a process of doing something which is connected by the vector (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Vectors are visual realization of what in language is realized by action verbs. Vectors show the action of each participant in the process through imaginary lines such as direction of eyeline and gesture. The first process is the Action process. The Action process occurs when there are vectors and action formed by the represented participant by body parts or tools (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The participants in this process are labelled with the names of Actor and Goal.

Secondly, there is a process where the vector is formed by the eyeline or by the direction of the glance without creating the transaction and this process is called Reactional process. The participants in this process are labelled with the names of Reacter and Phenomenon.

Thirdly, the speech process and mental process. The vector is formed through the thought balloons and dialogue balloons and connected to speakers or thinkers to their speech or thought (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Narrative process also contains circumstance. Circumstances are the participants which could be left out without affecting the narrative pattern, however their deletion would cause a loss of information. There are three types of circumstances in images, which are Locative circumstance, Circumstance of means and Circumstance of accompaniment.

Locative Circumstances or Setting relates other participants who is situated in the background to a specific participant who is situated in the foreground (Ahour & Zaferani, 2016). The tools in action process are represented as the Circumstances of Means. There is no clear vector between the tool and its user. The last is the Circumstance of Accompaniment. An accompaniment is a participant in a narrative structure that has no vectorial relation with other participants and cannot be interpreted as identity.

Representational meaning

The Conceptual representation represents the visual structures which the participants are illustrated to be more generalized, more or less stable and timeless. Similar to Narrative process, the Conceptual process is divided into different kinds as well.

First process is the Classificational process and the analytical process. This process relates participants in terms of a part-whole structure, the whole is called the Carrier and the parts are called Possessive Attribute (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). First is the Classificational process. This process relates to the relationship one of another as one classification. One set of participants will play the role of Subordinates respect to at least one participant called the Superordinate.

Second is the analytical process. This process relates participants in terms of a part-whole structure, the whole is called the Carrier and the parts are called Possessive Attribute (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Third, the Symbolic process. This process establishes the means or identities of the participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). There are two kinds of symbolic process: symbolic attributive and symbolic suggestive. The symbolic attributive focuses on two types of participant which are the carrier and symbolic attribute. The second process is Symbolic Suggestive, where the Carrier the only participant, in which the symbolic meaning is realized by the Carrier itself.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) expect the visual grammar to be a descriptive framework that can be used as a tool for visual analysis. The analysis of males and female's portrayal and representation can be examined through the text by the analysis of visual modes.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate how females and males are represented in images contained in textbook. Specifically, the present study is proposed to analyze what kind of gender features emerged for the male and female represented in the images contained in English textbook for

elementary students. This present study applies a descriptive research to answer the research question focusing on describing and interpreting a phenomenon or phenomena, what and how the issue is like and how things are related to each other (Malik & Hamied, 2016).

The data in the present study are in the form of images taken from a textbook entitled *A Fun and Easy English Book for Elementary School*. The collected data are images with female or/and male contained in the images. In data analysis, the selected images were described by the discursive mapping through scheme by Albers (2009). This scheme is made to reveal messages conveyed in visual texts by carefully analysing the elements within. In this step, each image is described by the activity, behavior and appearance scheme along with principal of relevance. Afterwards, the image is analyzed using Representational Process from the Visual Grammar theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The analysis focuses on types of interaction narrative process, classificational process and circumstantial process. Finally, the obtained result is analysed using the gender discourses theory from Bank (2007) to interpret gender representation from the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of what gender features that emerge for male and female representations in English textbook. The data were analyzed by following the theory of visual grammar by (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) to analyze the visual text. The analysis reveals that males dominate the interaction, initiate conversations, control the action and occupy more public spaces. Meanwhile, females are represented through gazing action and showing more classifications.

In Narrative process, the images are differentiated by the kinds of vector and the types of participants involved in the images. According to Narrative process, it is revealed that both males and females are depicted to be involved as Participants in three types of interactions; which are the Bidirectional, Transactional and Reactional.

Table 1. Types of Interactions

Male/Female	Types of Interactions			Total	%
	Bidirectional	Transactional	Reactional		
Female to Male	-	4	-	4	10,8%
Male to Female	6	6	1	13	35,1%
Male to Male	3	4	2	9	23,3%
Female to Female	2	3	-	8	21,6%
Female to Male	-	3	-	3	8,1%
	11	20	3	37	

The data display that interactions of Males to Females in the textbook are the most visible interactions by 35,1% of appearance. Meanwhile, the least interactions occurring in the textbook is Females to Males interactions with 8,1% of appearance. The textbook shows that females are portrayed more to be passively following the conversation or inactively being the phenomenon in the interaction.

Thus, Males are represented as the one who should initiate and control females in the social interaction regardless of the age or position. Moreover, Males tend to approach confident attitude with welcoming arms and offer positive reactions. In contrary, the representation of the females in Males to Females interaction is quite distinctive. Females tend to create restrictions toward the males, it is proved by the gesture is mostly depicted to be tensed and timid. Moreover, mostly Females tend to put the body bend down a little, show vague smile, and keep the hands closed to the body. This kind of responses are different when females are in Females to Females interactions, the Females show more positive responses such as removing the bubble gap to create more intimate interaction, putting the

hands free to imply openness, initiating new topic to maintain the interaction. In conclusion, females can initiate interaction with the other females in a comfort and intimate relationship. Figure 2 and 3 are the example of bidirectional action from male to female.



Figure 2. "Eating at canteen" (Dewi et al., 2019)

It can be seen that there are two participants in the figure 2. Based on the narrative process constructed in the image, the bidirectional action is created by the male towards the female. This action is supported by the vector between the speech bubbles connecting two participants. The vector departs from the bubble, "can you give me the salt, please" to "yes, sure" and ends at "Thanks". The projection from the vector indicates the male participant is leading the conversation. The female as the Goal of the action seems to follow the conversation pace by answering the question without initiating a new topic. In this image, male is interpreted as the one who should initiate and control the females in the social interaction even though they are equal at the school environment.



Figure 3. "Drawing at veranda" (Dewi et al., 2019)

The participant on the left is the center of the gaze because of the process construed in the picture, this means that the female is the Actor while the male participant is the Goal in a Transactional Action. The transactional action indicates that the vector is made from the female's eyeline towards the male's. This transactional action is also supported by the vector between the speech bubbles connecting the two participants. The vector starts from the bubble on the upper left "I'm sorry for breaking your crayon" and goes to the bubble on the upper right "That's OK". The projection from the vector indicates that female participant is leading the conversation.

leading female participant is supported by circumstance of means which includes gestures and crayon. The gestures of the female participant are different from the male participant. The female is bending down a little with a vague smile. Bending down and a vague smile imply a less confident attitude compared to the male participant which is depicted in straight position. Furthermore, the facial expression of the male participant which pout with his lips curved down and eyebrow arched downward instead of smile implies negative reaction towards the action happened about the crayon. In conclusion, female can initiate and lead the conversation despite the uncertainty.

Males and females are assigned in different types of participants. The analysis reveals that males dominate the portrayal as Actor while Female dominate the portrayal as a Goal. More specifically, the distribution is elaborated in the following section. Table 3 shows the number of appearances of males and females participants in relation to the processes involved. In detail, the most frequent occurring participant is Actor with 37 occurrences (50,6%), consisting of Males as Actor with 22 occurrences (26,5%) and Female with 15 occurrences (18,1%). According to the number of occurrences, males are slightly more than females in terms of the involvement as the Actor in the process. Males are depicted to be more influential in the verbal activities such as leading and interrupting conversation mostly at school (8,6%) and outside school (11,9%). The second most frequent occurring participants are Goal with 38 occurrences (45,7%), consisting of Females with 23 occurrences (27,7%) and Males with 15 occurrences (18,1%).

Table 2. Types of Interactions

Male/Female	Types of Participants				Total	%
	Actor	Goal	Reacter	Phenomenon		
Male	22	15	4	1	42	50,6%
Female	15	23	2	1	41	49,3%
	37	38	6	2	83	

Accordingly, the most frequent occurring participants are Males as the Actor. This number implies that males are the most visible and the most active participants in the textbook. In addition, males often depicted to be more powerful and controlling than females. In contrary with the females who are represented to be unaggressive, powerless, passive and submissive. This is proved by the prominent number in Goal by females, it shows that females follow the conversation pace by only answering questions without initiating new topic. Females initiate the conversation only when they are classified to be more superior or when only there are females around. Figure 4 is the example of Female as Actor.

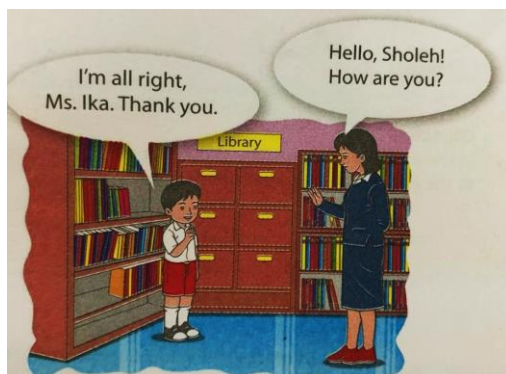


Figure 4. “At library” (Dewi et al., 2019)

There are two participants depicted in image 4. They are connected by the verbal speech that is projected by the speech bubbles creating vector between them. The vector starts from the bubble on the upper right “*Hello, Sholeh! How are you?*” and goes to the bubble on the upper right “*I’m all right, Ms. Ika. Thank you.*”. This means that the female participant is the Actor while the male participant is the Goal in a Transactional action.

The gender representation can also be evaluated through the circumstance that each gender depicted in the textbook. It shows how and where they actively spend both productive and leisure time. The distribution of the participants of each gender can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of the circumstance

Circumstance:	Frequency		Total	
	Male	Female		
Locative				
At school	14	16	30	38,4%
At home	4	8	12	15,3%
Outside school	25	10	35	44,8%
	43	34	78	

The Table 3 shows the distributions of males and females in different location or in visual grammar it is defined as locative circumstance. There are three locations that the participants are depicted in: the school, home and public or outside school. Comprehensively, it can be seen from the table that the biggest ratio comes from the distribution of appearances of each gender outside school. There are 25 appearances (32,1%) of males and only 10 appearances (12,8%) of females. Meanwhile at home, males appear less than female with 1:2 ratio, males are seen 4 times (5,1%) and females are seen 8 times (10,2%) at home. The depiction of Female at home and Male in public space are provided figure 5 and 6.

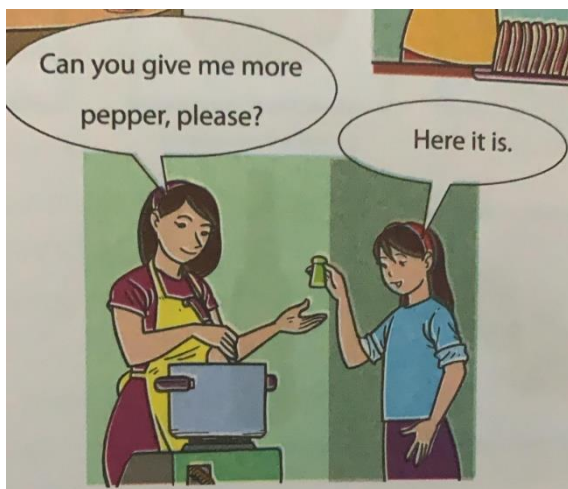


Figure 5. “Cooking at home” (Dewi et al., 2019)

There are two female participants in figure 5. According to its narrative process, there are two vectors in the picture, the first action is a non-transactional action made by female participant on the left to the pot. This makes her an Actor and the pot to be a Goal. It means she is performing an action to the Goal which is cooking. The second action is transactional action made by the speech bubbles that connecting the two participants. The vector starts from the bubble on the upper left “*Can you give me*

more pepper, please!” and goes to the bubble on the upper right “*here it is*”. The started point of the speech bubbles means that the female participant on the left is the Actor while the female participant on the right is the Goal.

Both of participants are suggested to be in a kitchen at home. This is supported by the locative circumstance and the possessive attributes depicted in the image. The tool of cooking which is the cooking pot is depicted on the foreground. The cooking pot is made more salient than any other elements. It is defined by the focus and being glanced by eyeline. This pot as attribute does not define the identity of the participant, but it is explaining the activity they are doing. It is supported by the possessive attribute that the female participant is carrying. She wears an apron, it is commonly used in a kitchen to prevent the clothes form getting dirty.

The image shows that females are represented to spend their leisure time with cooking. They seem to enjoy the activity indicated by the smile on their facial expressions. Moreover, this activity does not demand the presence of male, since there is no male visible in the image. It means, the image producer delegates the domestic role such as cooking to female.



Figure 6. “Hiking with a friend” (Dewi et al., 2019)

There are two male participants in the image. Both of the participants are involved in Transactional action indicated by the projected bubbles. The first vector derives from the participant on the left to the right. It starts with “*I’m sorry*” and ends with “*I forgive you*”. The started point of the speech bubbles means that the male participant on the left is the Actor while the male participant on the right is the Goal. Moreover, the two participants are depicted as equal in classification indicated by how they are depicted in the same size and placed on the foreground. It implies that the participants deliberately illustrated in the same age group.

The locative circumstance is suggested to be in the outdoor area, indicated by the green landscape with trees and bushes. The image shows that they are having outdoor activity in leisure time indicates that they are active participants. Their activities do not necessitate the presence of females, since there is no female visible in the image. This image shows that males are able to spend their leisure time even when there are only male.

Thus, the distributions of the participants in different locative circumstance show that each gender is assigned differently. Male tend to spend the leisure time outside in public spaces such as

playing football, hiking, playing kite, jogging around the neighborhood and strolling around. While the female participants tend to spend their leisure time cooking at home, shopping at the supermarket or jogging around the neighborhood. Thus, the distribution shows the male is represented to be more engaged in outdoor activity with a range of actions. While the female is represented to be more engaged in indoor activity assigning domestic role such as cooking, cleaning, and preparing food. Textbook represent traditional society who restrict females to be more at home, likely to be in the kitchen than males. The representation of gender can also be generated by the Conceptual Representation that include the classification and symbolical.

CONCLUSION

The asymmetrical gender representations are found in the present study because both genders are represented through stereotypical portrayals. Females are shown to be less aggressive, less sociable, tend to create more boundaries, tend to stay in the comfort zone, do the most domestic roles, and associated with nurturing occupation. Meanwhile, getting influenced by the patriarchal values, males are depicted to be more powerful, independent, sociable, dominant, controlling, and easygoing. The fact that the male participants appear more often and play the essential role demonstrates the dominance of male in society compared to female.

In addition, the textbook serves as resource that preserve traditional stereotype, yet at the same time providing gender images that go beyond the stereotyped images. The textbook gives the representative of culture, society, even ideologies. The asymmetrical gender representation in the textbook shows that the reflection of the textbook is realized by ideology and inspired by the interest of the society. Therefore, it is recommended to present a fair range of interest, traits and capabilities for both male and female participants.

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