

GENDER ROLES PORTRAYALS IN *WHEN ENGLISH RINGS A BELL* TEXTBOOK FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL VIII

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed how gender roles are portrayed in an EFL textbook entitled "When English Rings a Bell" for second grade junior high school. Qualitative content analysis is used for this study as the research method. The following categories of (1) visibility, (2) equity, (3) gender roles stereotyped or non-stereotyped, are used to answer the research question of; How are the gender roles portrayals in *When English Rings a Bell Textbook* for Junior High School VIII? The findings of this study shows that this textbook; (1) portrays balance visual illustration more than only male or female visible as well as only male or female dominated visual illustrations, (2) portrays unequal occupational roles and activities of men holds more various and powerful positions as well as creative and heroic activities, (3) portrays non-stereotyped gender roles.

Keywords: Gender roles, Gender Representation, Gender Inequality, Gender Analysis, EFL Textbook, English Textbook

1) INTRODUCTION

The term "gender" refers to the duties and obligations that are assigned to men and women in families, societies, and civilizations, as well as the traits, skills, and roles that are expected of each gender. These expectations and roles are learnt; they are not biologically fixed and they can alter (Mengestie & Worku, 2020; FAWA, 2018). Given that gender is a manifestation of socio-cultural products, it is obvious that environmental factors will greatly influence how one perceives gender (Khrisnapatria & Saefullah, 2019).

The educational systems can positively influence how gender is constructed in society by adapting curricula that portrays men and women equally and does not use gender stereotypes, as well as by encouraging both men and women to enter various sectors of occupational roles equally. Furthermore, The Ministry Education, Culture, Research and Technology is responsible to provide knowledge to students in textbooks that portrays equal gender representation.

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Textbooks are the most visible aspects of a curriculum and are often considered the main script that shaped the teaching and learning processes (UNESCO, 2017). Orfan (2021) stated that school textbooks are one of the areas where gender inequality can be easily institutionalized, which has long-lasting effects on students' perception of gender equality. In English for Foreign Language (hereafter EFL) textbooks, they not only transform the knowledge of English language but also creates a process of identity information and self-positioning in that second language (Fahriany et al, 2018). Thus, EFL textbooks play a crucial role in shaping students' understanding and belief about gender (Orfan, 2021; Fahriany et al, 2018).

Several studies have been conducted in breaking down how gender roles are portrayed in EFL Textbooks. Many of these studies have found an unequal gender representation where women are often being victimized (Orfan, 2021; Purwitasari and Floriasti, 2021; Azisah, 2020; Khrisnapatria and Saefullah, 2019). Purwitasari and Floriasti (2021) have found in EFL Textbooks consist following sexism attitude of gender marginalization, gender subordination, gender stereotype, cultural sexism, and labor segregation by sex which all in favor of males. Similarly, Khrisnapatria and Saefullah (2019) found gender marginalization, subordination and stereotypes in EFL textbooks cater to women. Females are only in favor when it comes to domestic roles and housebound activities (Purwitasari and Floriasti, 2019). Correspondingly, the tendency to portray women in domestic work while men are hardly seen portrayed doing them are also found in Siti Azisah (2020)'s study where female characters are often shown in the kitchen. Siti Azisah (2020) also found in EFL textbook, the roles of leaders are often given to men while no woman ever portrayed as one.

To break down more on how gender roles are portrayed in EFL textbook, this study is carried out with a question posed; How are the gender roles portrayals in *When English Rings a Bell* Textbook for Junior High School VIII?

2) METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach by using content analysis to an EFL textbook used at the second grade of Junior High School entitled "When English Rings a Bell". The textbook chosen by the author with the consideration for the usage of this textbook in a local junior high school as the case of this study as well as the availability and accessibility of this textbook to the teacher, students and the author itself. The availability of this textbook in

both printed textbooks and digital electronic books are considered accessible.

In analyzing the textbooks, three categories derived from Siti Azisah's study in 2020 is used, those are:

- 1) Visibility in terms of male(s) only or female(s) only, balance (male and female together), male dominated or female dominated.
- 2) Equity in terms of equal or unequal representation.
- 3) Gender role stereotyped or non-stereotyped.

The Textbook Analyzed

Wachidah, Siti, et al. 2017. When English Rings a Bell for SMP/MTs Grade VIII. 2017 Revised Edition. Jakarta: The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. The book consists of 234 pages. The ISBNs are 978-602-282-976-8 and 978-602-282-978-2.

3) FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Gender roles portrayals in When English Rings a Bell Textbook for Junior High School VIII are seen in the following categories:

Visibility

In terms of visibility, the textbook portrays balance visual illustration the most compared to visual illustration where it is male or female only visible as well as male or female dominated. Balance visual illustrations are portrayed 20 times. The male only visible visual illustration is portrayed 8 times compared with 4 female only visible visual illustration.

Figure 1. Balance Visual Illustration



Figure 1 shows a compilation of some balance visual illustration portrayed in the textbook. This textbook shows a different result compared to the previous related findings (Orfan 2021;

Purwitasari & Floriasti, 2021; Azisah, 2020; Mengestie & Worku, 2020) whereas they found that EFL textbook portrays male dominated visual illustration the most while this textbook portrays balance visual illustrations the most compared to visual illustration where it is male or female only visible as well as male or female dominated.

Equity

This textbook portrays unequal gender roles of occupation and activities. Male characters are given more various and powerful occupational roles as well as creative and heroic activities than female characters.

Figure 2. Male Occupational Roles



Figure 3. Female Occupational Roles



The figures above show unequal equity of male and female occupational roles. Male characters are portrayed as police, zookeeper, and teacher, while female characters are only portrayed as zookeeper and teacher. Police in society is considered as a high paying job and holds a more powerful position than both teacher and zookeeper. This finding is inline with the previous related studies (Orfan, 2021; Purwitasari & Floriasti, 2021; Mangestie & Worku, 2020) whereas they also found that in EFL textbook male characters are given more various and powerful occupational roles.

Figure 4. Female And Male Teachers



Figure 4 shows both male and female characters are portrayed as teachers. Same role is given to them but with different nuances. The female teacher is portrayed as a teacher who can not deliver her explanation well as the students seem unable to understand her as she speaks very fast while the male teacher is portrayed to deliver an understandable explanation as the students easily understand what he means.

Figure 5. Male And Female Zookeepers



Figure 5 also shows the same role given to both male and female characters. The difference of the same role portrayed by male and female character is seen on Figure 5 whereas the male character is portrayed as the cover of the chapter and also become the main character in the story entitled "My Uncle is a Zookeeper" while female zookeeper is portrayed less as she is only a minor or supporting character.

Figure 6. Male Activities



Figure 7. Female Activities



Figure 4 and Figure 5 shows unequal equity of male and female activities portrayed in this textbook. Male characters are portrayed doing more creative and heroic activities than female characters as seen in Figure 4 such as playing guitar, drawing and crafting wood and also helping a victim of a traffic accident. Female character is portrayed doing a creative activity in the form of drawing only as seen on Figure 5 whereas male character is also portrayed drawing (Figure 4). This finding is suitable with Purwitasari & Floriasti (2021)'s studies where it also found that in EFL textbooks male characters are more portrayed doing more creative activities than female characters.

Figure 5 shows a series of female activities consisting of drawing, cleaning the classroom and checking out her appearance on a mirror. Only one of them is considered creative activity (drawing) while two of them; cleaning is considered as domestic work and checking out appearance on a mirror might be related to make up which is considered as feminine activity. In EFL textbooks, many portrayals of female characters doing domestic work are often found (Purwitasari & Floriasti, 2021, Khrisnapatria & Saefullah, 2019). Female character is also portrayed checking out her appearance on a mirror while no male character ever portrayed doing so, this is suitable with Khrisnapatria & Saifullah (2019)'s study in addition to their statement, "When a woman is only seen for its physical appearance like by bringing comb to

school, then she could be considered as the ‘second’ sex.”

Gender Roles Stereotyped or Non-Stereotyped

This textbook portrays several non-stereotyped gender roles. As opposed to popular belief in the previous related studies that stated EFL textbooks tend to portray women assigned with domestic work than men (Purwitasari & Floriasti, 2021; Azisah, 2020; Khrisnapatria & Saefullah, 2019), this textbook contains the opposite.

Figure 8. Students Cleaning Classroom



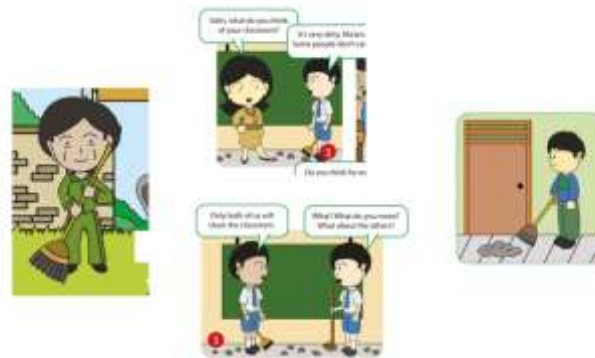
Students are equally seen cleaning the classroom together as seen on Figure 8. The ones who are portrayed sweeping the floors where it is usually seen as a feminine traditional gender roles are portrayed by male students.

Figure 9. Male Characters in Tte Kitchen



The saying “women belong to the kitchen” is a stereotyped gender role that subordinates women in existence. Figure 9 shows a father cooking, a son helping her mom prepare the table and willing to help his mom cook. In previous related studies, EFL textbooks are often contains portrayals of women in the kitchen whereas they are cooking, preparing the table for family to eat, serving men, and etc (Purwitasari & Floriasti, 2021, Azisah, 2020; Khrisnapatria & Saefullah, 2019). This textbook portrays the opposite of previous related studies whereas its often male characters portrayed in the kitchen as seen on Figure 9.

Figure 10. Male Characters Sweeping



Sweeping the floor is also a kind of domestic work where it is often stereotypically assigned to women. In Figure 10, it shows a series of visual illustrations of men sweeping the floors. This finding is also against with the previous related findings which often portrays women portrayed doing more domestic work than men, some even has no portrayals of men with domestic work (Purwitasari & Floriasti, 2021; Azisah, 2020; Khrisnapatria & Saefullah, 2019).

4) CONCLUSION

Gender roles portrayals in *When English Rings a Bell* Textbook for Junior High School VIII is concluded in three points. First, this textbook portrays more balance visual illustration than only female or male visible as well as only male or female dominated. Second, this textbook portrays unequal equity of occupational roles and activities where male characters are portrayed in various and powerful occupational roles as well as creative and heroic activities than female characters. Second, this textbook contains non stereotypical gender roles where no portrayals of traditional stereotypical gender roles are seen, for instance women assigned with domestic work other than men.

The findings of this study imply the need for Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to revisit EFL textbooks to ensure that women and men are given fair and equitable representation in gender roles. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology needs to undertake intervention strategies focused at improving EFL textbooks' authors' awareness and competence about gender issues in the writing of the textbooks. In order to mitigate the issue, gender and curricular experts must be included in the planning and authoring

of the textbooks. Last but not least, this study implies the need for further researchers to conduct gender analysis on EFL textbooks at different grade and school levels.

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