



Gender Representation in Indonesian EFL Coursebook for 12th Grade

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ABSTRACT

Gender representation in educational materials is a crucial aspect of fostering inclusivity and promoting social equity in the classroom. Ensuring accurate and equitable gender representation is needed to foster inclusive learning environments. This article presents the findings of a study which analyzed the gender representation within the latest English coursebook for senior high school students which adapt Kurikulum Merdeka and published by Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. The data for this research extracted from reading passages and images in the English coursebook titled "Train of Thought". To uncover disparities in power dynamics between genders, elements such as visual depictions, character representations, social roles, domestic duties, and semantic roles were analyzed. The investigation revealed a bias favoring men in certain roles and activities, such as athleticism, social engagement, and sports participation. Despite this, some equality was found in pictorial representation, activities, and roles. These findings underscore the importance of critically examining educational materials for gender biases and stereotypes, informing curriculum development and coursebook selection processes to promote gender equity and inclusivity in education.

Keywords: *EFL coursebooks, gender, gender representation.*

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding gender goes beyond biological sex. Butler's (2018) foundational work argues that gender is a social construct, shaped by cultural norms and expectations. Pullen (2020) delves deeper, exploring the psychological processes of how children develop their gender identity. Gender intersects with other social categories too. Collins (2021) highlights the concept of intersectionality, where race, class, and gender interact, creating unique experiences of privilege and oppression. The importance of gender equality extends far beyond individual lives. Aula & Putra (2024) demonstrates its economic benefits, linking gender equality to increased productivity and economic growth. Heinz, et.al (2021) connect gender inequality to negative health outcomes, advocating for healthcare equity. Education is also impacted. UNESCO's report (2021) reveals that gender equality improves educational attainment for both girls and boys. Equality in political participation is crucial as well. Norris (2018) emphasizes the importance of women's political participation for achieving

democratic representation and policy change. Beyond politics, Kanyoro (2020) highlights the role of women in peacebuilding efforts, demonstrating how gender equality contributes to sustainable peace. Gender equality is also a fundamental human right. UNICEF (2017) emphasizes the connection between gender equality and the basic rights of all genders. Finally, Fernandez (2022) adds another layer of complexity by exploring the concept of masculinity and its potential to both reinforce and challenge gender inequalities. Understanding gender and achieving gender equality are crucial for creating a just and equitable world across various aspects of human experience.

According to Judith Butler (1990), gender is not an inherent quality but rather a performative act, shaped and reinforced through repeated social practices. Building on this perspective, Connell (2002) emphasizes the relational nature of gender, highlighting how power dynamics and social structures influence individuals' experiences and expressions of gender. In contrast, de Beauvoir (1949) posits that gender is a product of societal norms and expectations, perpetuated through socialization processes. Furthermore, Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1981) introduces the concept of gender schema theory, suggesting that individuals develop cognitive frameworks based on culturally defined gender roles, which shape their perceptions and behaviors. These various perspectives contribute to a nuanced understanding of gender as a multifaceted and socially constructed phenomenon, shaped by individual experiences, cultural contexts, and power dynamics.

According to intersectional feminist theory, biased gender refers to the unequal treatment and opportunities afforded to individuals based on their gender identity, often resulting in systemic inequalities and discrimination. Drawing on this perspective, Crenshaw (1989) highlights how gender bias intersects with other forms of oppression, such as race and class, to compound inequalities experienced by marginalized groups. Similarly, hooks (1984) argues that patriarchal systems perpetuate biased gender norms and expectations, reinforcing power imbalances and hierarchies. Additionally, Lorber (1994) contends that gender bias is socially constructed and maintained through processes of socialization, institutional practices, and cultural norms. From an evolutionary psychology perspective, Pinker (2002) suggests that biased gender may have roots in biological differences between sexes, though these differences are often exaggerated and reinforced by societal norms and expectations. These various perspectives contribute to a complex understanding of biased gender and its multifaceted causes, highlighting the importance of addressing systemic inequalities to achieve gender equity.

Indonesia, like many nations, struggles with achieving true gender equity despite efforts to promote equality. Research on the topic sheds light on several key hurdles. One area of concern, explored by Cameron et al. (2023), is the impact of ingrained gender norms on women's participation in the workforce. These norms can significantly influence career choices and ultimately lead to lower labor force participation rates for women. Another critical area is the legal framework. Larasati's (2021) research exposes discrepancies between existing Indonesian law and the principles of gender equality. These gaps highlight potential shortcomings in legal protections and enforcement mechanisms that could hinder progress towards a more equitable society. Societal perceptions are equally important. Setyono et al. (2019) delve into how cultural norms and attitudes, often perpetuated in educational materials, can create significant roadblocks on the path to equality. Textbooks and other resources that reinforce gender stereotypes can limit girls' aspirations and discourage them from pursuing certain careers or activities. By understanding these interconnected issues, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to achieve gender equity in Indonesia. Addressing ingrained norms, strengthening the legal framework, and ensuring educational

materials promote equality are all crucial steps towards a future where women and men have equal opportunities to thrive.

According to advocates of gender education, such as de Beauvoir (1949) and bell hooks (1984), understanding gender equity is essential for promoting social justice and equality. Gender education seeks to dismantle biased gender norms and stereotypes by providing individuals with the knowledge and skills to critically analyze and challenge societal expectations based on gender. Furthermore, scholars like Raewyn Connell (2002) argue that achieving gender equity requires addressing systemic inequalities and power imbalances that perpetuate biased gender norms. Through comprehensive gender education programs that emphasize diversity, inclusivity, and social justice, society can work towards creating a more equitable and just world for all genders. By empowering individuals to recognize and confront gender bias, gender education can foster inclusive and equitable environments in schools, workplaces, and communities.

Coursebooks hold a central place in education, but their role is undergoing critical re-evaluation. Apple (1981) examines coursebooks' potential limitations in a rapidly changing world, while Nisser (2021) discusses the rise of digital learning resources that challenge their dominance. However, coursebooks remain significant. Hadianito, et.al (2021) explore their role in developing students' literacy skills specific to different subjects, while Bharat & Bertram (2018) examine how history coursebooks shape understanding of the past. The importance of cultural sensitivity is addressed by Hilmiati, et.al (2019) who emphasize selecting coursebooks that promote student inclusion. Mahboob (2017) research highlights the power of coursebooks in shaping student identity through content and language choices. Mahendraprabu, et.al (2022) explores the rise of Open Educational Resources (OERs) as a potential alternative to traditional coursebooks, impacting educational costs and access. Finally, Arifiin (2020) offer contrasting perspectives. Arifin investigate how coursebook design can encourage critical thinking, and provides a historical perspective on coursebooks, examining their evolution and influence on educational practices. Collectively, this research highlights the multifaceted role of coursebooks in education, their enduring significance alongside emerging challenges, and the need to consider their design and use in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

Gender representation in coursebooks is a growing area of research, with studies highlighting its influence on students' perceptions. Sang (2023) analyze elementary math coursebooks, revealing potential biases in language, problem types, and character portrayals. Islam & Asadullah (2018) take a broader approach, reviewing existing literature on how coursebooks can either reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. Science education is not exempt from scrutiny, with Murray, et.al (2022) examining science coursebooks to see how they represent scientists and scientific achievements based on gender. Similarly, Gharbavi & Mousavi (2021) analyze Iranian EFL textbook, investigating potential biases in the selection of historical figures and events, and how men and women are portrayed. While not directly focused on coursebooks, Adam & Harper (2021) work on gender stereotypes in children's literature offers valuable insights. Their analysis of how children's literature portrays boys and girls can inform discussions about broader representation issues in educational materials. Taken together, this research underscores the importance of gender representation equality in coursebooks and calls for critical evaluation of educational materials to ensure they promote a balanced and inclusive learning environment.

In this study, we aim to critically analyze the representation of gender in "Train of Thought" by examining the language, content, and illustrations used throughout the coursebook. Drawing on theories of language and gender, as well as principles of critical

discourse analysis, we seek to investigate how gender is presented in 5 aspects of gender representation proposed by Amini and Birjandi (2012). Ultimately, our findings may inform curriculum development, coursebook selection, and teaching practices, with the goal of creating more gender-inclusive learning environments for high school students.

METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative approach called content analysis to examine the coursebook's content, supplemented with quantitative data to calculate percentages showing the frequency of specific aspects of gender representation. This study focused on a 12th Grade English coursebook titled *Train of Thought* published by the Indonesian Ministry of Culture, Research and Technology, analyzing all its units. Information was gathered through document analysis, using a checklist adapted from Shallaita et al. (2021) to systematically examine text, illustrations, vocabulary, and exercises. Gender representation was analyzed using five categories developed by Amini and Birjandi (2012): visibility (counting occurrences of both genders in text and pictures, including names and pronouns), firstness (tracking which gender was mentioned first in phrases or paragraphs), masculine generics (analyzing pronouns that might imply both genders), activity (examining illustrations for gendered activities), and occupation (analyzing gender representation in various occupations). Percentages for each category determined overall gender representation in the coursebook, allowing assessment of gender equality. To ensure validity, the study used an established checklist and recognized methodology, while reliability was maintained through intercoder reliability checks, where multiple researchers independently analyzed the coursebook and resolved any discrepancies.

FINDING

The researcher analyzed gender representation in a 12th Grade English coursebook using five categories developed by Amini and Birjandi (2012) namely 1) Visibility; 2) Firstness; 3) Masculine Generics; 4) Activity; and 5) Occupation. The following is the finding of the research.

Visibility

The researchers counted how often males and females appeared throughout the coursebook, considering both pictures and written content (names, pronouns, etc.). They included a potentially unisex name, Andi, but ultimately categorized it as female due to the context. This condenses the original text by removing unnecessary details and focusing on the key points namely 1) Counting male and female appearances (visual and textual) and 2) Inclusion of a potentially unisex name (Andi) ultimately categorized as male. The example of visibility in terms of pictures and text is presented in table 1.

Table 1. The example of visibility in terms of pictures and Text

Image 1. Example of male picture 	Male Name: Bujang Beji, Tumenggung Marubai, Damak, Andi, Ryan Nicodemus, Joshua Fields, Sam, Norbert, Cal Newport Pronoun: He, him, his
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at <https://www.elitejournal.org/index.php/ELITE>

	Male terms: fisherman
Image 2. Example of female picture 4. Activity C.4	Female
	Name: Indah, Dina Pronoun: She, her Female terms: -

The findings from counting male and female appearances in the coursebook are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The result of the counting

	Presentation in Picture		Presentation in text	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number	58	32	71	11
Percentage	65%	35%	87%	13%
Total	Male		Female	
	129/172		43	
	75%		25%	

An analysis of Table 2 reveals an imbalance in gender representation within Indonesian EFL Coursebook. The visuals depict males more frequently (65%) compared to females (35%). This is further supported by the presence of pictures showcasing activities typically associated with boys, such as fishing, snorkeling, and photo taking. More than represented in the visual, the written content showed worsen balance. Males were mentioned more often (87%) than females (13%).

Firstness

Amini and Birjandi (2012) define "firstness" as the order in which males and females are introduced when mentioned together in a text or exercise. The researchers tracked which

gender was mentioned first, either within a specific phrase or throughout the entire paragraph. There is only one phrase which included male and female at one sentence on page 47, which male's name come before female's name. The example of firstness appeared in the coursebook is available in image 3.

Image 3. Firstness



Feminine/masculine generic construction

Amini and Birjandi (2012) identified a category they call "feminine/masculine generic construction." This refers to the use of pronouns (like he, she, they) in the coursebook that are meant to represent both genders, even if the actual gender is not specified. There is 1 male pronoun appeared in the exercise section page 156 which refer to the certain profession. It confirms there is still instances of feminine/masculine generic constructions. In other words, the coursebook still exhibits bias using names and pictures/figure presentation

Image 4. Feminine/masculine generic construction

1. The government has launched a reading program to reduce the number of ... students.
2. There was a high increase of ... on health due to COVID-19 pandemic.
3. My parents always remind me to manage my money to ensure my future ... success.
4. Most workers take out a ... to buy a house.
5. The doctor spent 10 years completing his education, and he has worked hard to pay his student's
6. The campaign hopes to raise ... of financial literacy.
7. She has a long term ... in consequence of opening the café.
8. Buying buildings in an elite district could be considered as a/ an ...
9. The ... of the employees has become the top priority here.
10. The island lacks ... to compete with the other areas around.

Activity

To assess gender equality in the coursebook," Amini and Birjandi (2012) argue that analysing the activities depicted in both illustrations and written text is crucial. This allows

researchers to see if males and females participate in a balanced variety of activities. Following this approach, the study examined both the illustrations and the written descriptions of men and women in the coursebook. The table below presents the findings related to the types of activities females and males participate in.

Table 3. The activities

Page	Type of Activities	
	Male	Female
1	Reading	-
2	Fishing	-
3	Talking	-
4	Fishing	-
9	Fishing	
10	Pulling rocks	-
11	Jumping	-
17	Fishing, jumping,	-
18	Fishing	-
23	Talking	-
26	Fishing	-
32	Fishing	-
33	Boxing	-
34	Fishing	-
43	Looking at phone	Taking selfie
44	-	Taking selfie
47	Phone calling	Get stressed
48	-	Get stressed, social media browsing, social media addicting
51	-	Doing suicide
61	-	crying
65	Talking	talking
70	sitting	Holding baby
95	Taking picture	-
103	Surfing	-
104	Playing with a ball	Playing with sand
107	Talking	-
108	Playing with a ball, sunbathing	-
111	Surfing	-
117	travelling	-
119	Playing chess	Playing chess
123	-	Travelling
134	Travelling, working with laptop	
141	Greeting	
152	-	Smiling

153	Calculating	
163	Learning	
164	Video making	
167	-	Shopping
177		Making a pose
179		Greeting
191		Working on laptop
	Talking	talking
212	Walking, making a pose	-
Total	35	16
Activities		

Occupation

Amini and Birjandi (2012) emphasize the importance of analyzing how occupations are portrayed in coursebooks to understand gender representation. However, in the coursebook did not portray picture illustration or passages related to occupation other than students. The only occupation portrayed is fisherman which is represented by males.

Image 4. Occupation



DISCUSSION

Analyzing both textual references and visuals reveals a concerning trend: while males are mentioned significantly more (75%), females are strikingly underrepresented (25%). This disparity aligns with the concept of "invisibility" identified by Gharbavi & Mousavi (2021). The textbook might mention women in certain professions, but fails to depict them actually performing those roles. This creates a distorted reality, neglecting the fact that women actively participate in diverse career fields. Furthermore, by solely showing men in these professions, the textbook reinforces the stereotype that such careers are not for women, potentially discouraging female students from pursuing their full potential in these areas. This invisibility has the power to limit students' perceptions of what's achievable in the working world, highlighting the crucial need for balanced representation in EFL textbooks.

Beyond the stark imbalance in overall representation (75% male, 25% female), a deeper analysis reveals a bias in how characters are introduced. The coursebook consistently

prioritizes male characters, introducing them with names first in stories and even before introducing concepts. For example, the book mentions Cal Newport, author of "Digital Minimalism," before defining the term itself. There's a complete absence of female names or pronouns in such introductions. This pattern aligns with Adam & Harper (2021) findings on the potential impact of "who gets introduced first." Their research suggests that the lack of females depicted first solving problems can influence student perceptions. Similarly, Amini and Birjandi (2012) identify the concept of "invisibility," where females might be mentioned in certain professions but never actually shown performing those roles. The coursebook seems to exhibit both tendencies – females are rarely introduced first, and even when mentioned, they might not be visually depicted in those roles. This creates a double bind, reinforcing the notion that males are the default protagonists and problem solvers, while females remain secondary or invisible. This not only presents an inaccurate picture of the world, but also risks limiting students' aspirations, particularly for girls, who might be discouraged from pursuing careers traditionally associated with men.

While the textbook seems to achieve a semblance of balance in portraying activities like talking, traveling, using computers, and shopping for both genders, a closer look reveals a concerning bias. The book heavily emphasizes activities traditionally associated with males, such as fishing, playing ball, surfing, and photography. These activities are primarily depicted with male characters, even though they can be enjoyed by people of all genders. This creates an imbalance that reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. This imbalance extends further when considering activities requiring less physical exertion. The textbook portrays girls primarily engaged in activities like smiling, playing with sand, and taking selfies. This reinforces the stereotype of girls as being less active or adventurous. Furthermore, the portrayal of paired activities deepens the bias. For example, the book depicts a female character holding a baby while the male sits passively, or a male character conducting a business deal while the female sits by. These pairings not only reinforce traditional gender roles but also have potential implications for students' perceptions of what activities and careers are appropriate for each gender. By consistently associating men with action and leadership while relegating women to passive or domestic roles, the textbook risks limiting students' aspirations and hindering their ability to envision themselves in a broader range of careers and activities.

The coursebook reinforces gender stereotypes as revealed by Amini and Birjandi (2012) that how character portrayals can reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. This implies that coursebooks can influence students' perceptions of what activities are suitable for each gender. Islam & Asadullah (2018) found that language and imagery might influence girls' interest in science. This suggests coursebooks can perpetuate stereotypes about girls' abilities in certain subjects. Sang (2023), examines how portrayals of characters in occupations and activities can reinforce traditional gender roles. This reinforces the idea that coursebooks can limit students' opportunities by presenting stereotypical gender portrayals.

The coursebook's most concerning flaw lies in its unequal representation of male and female characters across professions. This creates a significant imbalance and selectivity, as highlighted by Sang (2023). Their research suggests that the portrayal of characters in specific professions can indirectly influence student perceptions of those occupations and who is suited for them. For instance, if problems in the textbook are consistently solved by male doctors or engineers, it reinforces stereotypes about these professions being inherently masculine. This aligns with Gharbavi & Mousavi (2021) observation that associating certain professions with specific genders promotes bias towards those genders within those fields.

The implications of this are far-reaching. By presenting a limited view of who can excel in various professions, the textbook risks discouraging students, particularly girls, from pursuing careers traditionally dominated by men. This not only limits their future opportunities but also perpetuates existing gender inequalities in the workforce. Furthermore, this finding supports Murray, et.al (2022) argument that coursebooks should actively portray characters in diverse professions, avoiding gender bias. By presenting a more inclusive and balanced representation of the working world, EFL textbooks can empower students of all genders to envision themselves in a broader range of careers and activities, fostering a more equitable future.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated gender representation in Indonesian EFL coursebook for grade 12th publish by Indonesia Ministry of Education, Culture and Technology. The research aimed to understand how genders are portrayed within the text and illustrations. The findings revealed an imbalance in how genders are presented. Males were more prominent in illustrations, while females appeared slightly more often in pronouns used throughout the text. However, males were typically mentioned first. The analysis identified various types of gender bias in the coursebook, including 1) Invisibility: Males were more visually represented than females; 2) Imbalance: Male characters were associated with a wider range of activities compared to females; 4) Selectivity: The coursebook portrayed males in more physically demanding activities. This study's findings hold significant weight for English language teachers in Indonesia. Recognizing gender bias within teaching materials empowers educators to actively promote gender equality in the classroom. This can be achieved by critically evaluating coursebooks and choosing supplementary materials that portray a balanced and inclusive range of activities and professions for both genders. Additionally, fostering respect for diversity through classroom discussions can encourage students to challenge stereotypes and recognize the potential of all genders across various fields. While the limited sample size restricts generalizing these findings to the entire Indonesian public education system, the study provides valuable insights into understanding gender bias in coursebooks. Further research comparing gender representation across a wider range of higher-level EFL coursebooks is highly recommended. By acknowledging and addressing these issues, educators can transform EFL textbooks into tools that promote gender equality and empower students of all genders to reach their full potential.

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