GENDER ROLES REPRESENTATION IN INDONESIAN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS: A VISUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS

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Gender Roles Representation in Indonesian School Textbooks: a Visual Content Analysis

Abstract

Gender is a combination of nature and culture, biological traits as well as learned behaviors (Ryan, 2010). Gender roles are among other cultural identities that play an important role in learning. In education, women are often marginalized. In rural and under-developed areas where resources are scarce when a choice has to be made parents often discourage girls from continuing their education. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the visual images used as illustrations in the English electronic textbooks for grades ten, eleven, and twelve in Indonesia. Qualitative visual content analysis was employed as the methodology of the research. The analysis focused on whether these e-textbooks represented gender roles of the students impartially. Eight English e-textbooks were examined. The study showed that there were gender bias and gender stereotypes in the visual images used as illustrations of the English e-textbooks for high school in Indonesia. Women were underrepresented in the overall English e-textbooks examined, men were depicted as having wider range of roles as shown by their occupations and tasks they performed, and the visual images used as illustrations contained gender stereotypes related to emotions and feelings.

INTRODUCTION

This study was a visual analysis of eight English e-textbooks for high school in Indonesia. It examined whether the visual images used as illustrations in these e-textbooks represented the cultural diversity of Indonesian students. It focused on gender roles and representations depicted by the visuals in the e-textbooks.

Indonesia is a large country covering an area of 5,193,250 square kilometers, out of which 2,027,087 square kilometers are land and the remainder is water. The Indonesian population is estimated to be 220,953,634 people. It is fourth in the world for its population density. According to the data from the Central Bureau of Statistics the number of school children is 25,389,000 (*Biro Pusat Statistik* or The Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010). These school children represent the diversity of the Indonesian population. The most notable diversity in Indonesia includes ethnicity, religion, gender, and social economic status. The study focused on one of the aspects namely gender.

GENDER ROLES

Gender is a combination of nature and culture, biological traits as well as learned behaviors (Ryan, 2010). The Indonesian government applies a heteronormative standard where there are only two genders, male and female; however, homosexuality and transgender exists in public life and are not criminalized. Transgendered people are accepted as part of the society although they often become victims of discrimination. They generally can only work in certain fields such as, fashion, beauty salons, entertainment, and some work as street singers or prostitutes. Apart from a male-dominated society in general, some communities adopt matrilineal systems in which women are in charge of the household and men take their wife's surnames such as in Minangkabau and West Timor (World Trade Press, 2010).

According to the 2010 Indonesian government census, the populations of women and men in Indonesia are 118, 010,413 and 119,630, 913 respectively. Indonesia is basically a patriarchal society, where women are expected to play traditional subordinate roles as daughters, wives, and mothers; however, Indonesian women have come a long way in their majority Islamic and male-dominated society. They have become more economically independent over the last few years. Women gained the right to vote at the same time as Indonesia's independence in 1945. Women can legally engage in any social and economic activities. They can inherit equally with men in

spite of customary Islamic inheritance laws, which are unfavorable to women (World Trade Press, 2010).

Gender roles are among other cultural identities that play an important role in learning. Sheets (2005) identifies how they develop:

Gender roles develop through a socialization process in the family and community. These roles are screened through specific cultural norm. Other family characteristics such as race, culture, socioeconomic level, class, and religion can also significantly shape children's gender learning (p. 43).

Although gender inequality still exists, the situation is changing. Indonesian law mandates that political parties should include at least 20% women as their candidates for the House of Representatives and the local senate (World Trade Press, 2010).

In education, women are often marginalized. In rural areas and under-developed areas where resources are scarce when a choice has to be made parents often discourage girls from continuing their education. Therefore, boys outnumber girls in enrollment in elementary schools and only 12.8% of girls finish high school. The literacy rate of women from all age groups is as low as 42% (*Biro Pusat Statistik*, 2010).

INDONESIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

After a long history of highly centralized government system, Indonesia released Regional Autonomy Laws in 1999 that provided greater political and fiscal autonomy for local government. As a result, regions should be less dependent to central government and increase local participation and develop their own resources. Following the enactment of this law, the ministry of education also released guidelines for implementing decentralization at the school level. In the guidelines of school-based management and school-based curriculum, schools are expected to develop their curriculum, provide training for their teachers, and work with school stake holders and businesses to generate more resources. For schools in the cities and well-developed regions, the regional autonomy laws have provided opportunities to create quality education; however, in less developed areas, the laws have reduced a substantial amount of resources and therefore have hindered the schools from providing basic education. The long history of centralized bureaucracy has created a culture of dependence among local bureaucracies that further impedes the implementation of school-based management. Another hindrance of school-based management implementation is the national test controlled and conducted by central government. It led to schools using the teaching materials and the curriculum recommended by the central government.

All schools, public and private, have the same curriculum with few elective courses decided by the local authority. There are three levels of education before college. These include elementary school for six years, junior high school for three years, and high school for another three years. These three levels are in separate buildings and under different management and bureaucracy. At the end of each level students are to take national standardized tests for core subjects such as, mathematics, English, Indonesian Language, civic education, and religious education. To continue their study in the higher level, for example moving from elementary to junior high school, students have to take an admissions test.

Due to the diverse population of Indonesia, in terms of ethnic, religion, gender and socioeconomic status, its centralized and standardized policy of education should be implemented with great caution. The previous policies had marginalized certain groups of people and created privileged groups (Indarto, 2008; Haryatmoko, 2010). To observe the unfair dynamics between the marginalized and the privileged groups, critical theory in education was employed in this

study. Critical education refers to a philosophy of education as well as a process of critique towards the practices of education with the emphasis on the power relations of different parties involved in it (Giroux, 2001). Critical theory focuses on analyzing the contemporary power interests between groups and individuals within society, identifying who gains and who loses in specific situations. The central focus of critical research is the dynamics of how privileged groups support the status quo to maintain their privileges (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

The government ratified the Decentralization Law in 1999 (Tyson, 2010); however, the government, in this case the department of education, still adopts a centralized policy system. One example of the centralized policy is the publication of learning materials. The government controls and publishes learning materials for schools. Centralization has the potential of creating imbalanced power relations between the central and local governments. There is a possibility that the publication of learning materials does not include certain local interests and therefore marginalized these groups and prioritized other groups.

E-textbook publication is one of the centralized publication policies. This policy has also been criticized as costly and marginalizing areas where the Internet facilities do not exist (Maryulis, 2008). Although the government stated that these e-textbooks had been reviewed and certified as qualified by the National Bureau of Education Standardization (Nuh, 2010) there has not been any research regarding whether these books are culturally representative for the diverse population of students.

Previous content analysis studies on English textbooks published in Asia show that they do not adequately represent learners' culture (Yi, 1997; Yen, 2000). One of the cultural aspects that were often inadequately represented is gender. Content of English language curriculum contributes to the formation of gender identity and it often emphasizes gender stereotypes which encourage girls into an ideology of obedience (Moss, 2010). In fact, early surveys on textbooks published in England and North America showed that women were also underrepresented, trivialized, and stereotyped (Gray, 2002).

E-textbooks in Indonesia

The publication of e-textbooks in Indonesia was based on the assumption that technology enhances learning. There was no evidence that the adoption of e-textbooks was based on scientific research. The e-textbook policy instituted by the Indonesian Ministry of Education was meant to provide inexpensive textbooks for schools therefore increasing access to resources. It was introduced for the first time by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 46/2007. The Ministry of Education bought the copyrights from textbook writers and made the textbooks accessible for free on the Internet. The e-textbook publications continue under the new minister of education with the Decree of Minister of Education No. 41/2008. By January 2012, 927 titles had been uploaded to the Internet server of the Ministry of Education. The e-textbooks are accessible and downloadable from http://bse.kemdiknas.go.id/.

Electronic School Textbooks is a government program to provide inexpensive textbooks. The Ministry of Education bought the copyrights of the books from the authors so it was free (Nuh, 2010). According to the government these e-textbooks have been reviewed and certified as qualified by the National Bureau of Education Standardization (Nuh, 2010).

E-textbooks in Indonesia have been criticized heavily on their use, cost, and accessibility. E-textbooks were only suitable for students with good information technology knowledge and geographic areas with Internet infrastructure (Maryulis, 2008). They are also difficult to access due to the large size of the files (Maryulis, 2008). Some of the files size of the books are as large

as 23,000 Kb (kilobytes) and take more than one hour to download. In the end, many teachers preferred to use textbooks available in bookstores because of practical concerns.

English E-textbooks

The Ministry of Education has published 927 E-textbooks for all school levels up to January 2012. There are 291 E-textbooks for elementary school, 154 for junior high school, 276 for senior high school, and 204 for vocational school. English e-textbooks are not available for all levels. In the 1994 curriculum English was introduced as an elective subject starting from as early as 4th grade when a teacher is available. However, there are no English e-textbooks for elementary school. English e-textbooks are also not available for vocational school despite the fact that many vocational school graduates work abroad such as in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan.

There are three different titles for all levels of junior high school; therefore, there are eight e-textbooks. There are ten e-textbooks available for senior high school. Two titles were available for 10th grade and four titles are available for each 11th and 12th grades.

The main advantages of e-textbooks are ease of use, low cost, and fast content delivery. However, it also has limitations due to such issues as slow Internet connections and access to computers. The implementation of the e-textbook policy needs to be evaluated to make sure that it is beneficial for all intended users. Critical education theory is suitable to evaluate whether the policy provides better access to learning resources for all students or if it offers benefits only to certain groups and therefore marginalizes other groups.

Learning Materials in Critical Education

Learning materials play an important role in teaching and learning activities in the classrooms. Textbooks are often the only if not the main sources of learning in Indonesia. Indonesia with a population of more than 200 million is a diverse country in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, and socio-economic status (SES). Publishing any learning materials for schools should take diversity into account in order that the materials cater to the learning needs of students with different ethnic, language, religion, and socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to promote learning, materials should be culturally relevant and inclusive, accommodating the many cultural differences of the students. Culturally relevant teaching materials should include students' culture in order to maintain it and to avoid misinterpretations other cultures (Ladson-Billing, 2009). Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum on their own right (Ladson-Billing, 2009a, p. 20).

Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2010) recommended criteria for evaluating and selecting culturally relevant learning materials for school and classroom libraries. These criteria include authentic depiction of the cultural experience from the perspective of that group; accuracy of cultural details in text and illustrations; positive images of minority characters; balance between historic and contemporary views of groups; and adequate representation of any group. Similarly, Campbell (2010) put forward fifteen minimum qualitative criteria to align or choose textbooks to make sure that they are culturally relevant to the students. The first criterion is that the learning materials are unbiased and non-stereotypical. Secondly they should have a comprehensive, complete, and inclusive view of society and its history. They should also have diverse viewpoints. They should not only represent the culture of the majority group. Good learning materials should build on and extend students' experiences. And finally, they should help students analyze and comprehend how real-life situations.

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to provide descriptions of visual images incorporated in English e-textbooks and critically observed how they represented the cultural diversity of the students. The study also provided interpretations as to how these visual images marginalized and prioritized certain group of students. The main research question that guides the inquiry was: To what extent do cultural diversities being represented in the visual images of English e-textbooks for 10th, 11th, and 12th graders in Indonesia?

Visual images were used as the sources of data to observe the representation of cultural diversity in the English e-textbooks because of their richness in providing cultural information. They do not merely accompany the text, since they often provide much more important cultural information than the texts. They often provided the unconscious beliefs of the writers. What images included were as important as what images which were absent because from the e-textbooks because they revealed the writers' reasons behind the choice (Taylor, 2002). Banks (2007) stated that there were two main reasons for using visual images in research. First, visual images are easy to find and to access. The second reason for incorporating them is that "they might be able to reveal some insight that was not accessible by any other means" (p.4).

Qualitative content analysis methodology provided a theoretical basis for how this study was conducted. Qualitative approaches to content analysis have their roots in literary theory, the social sciences, and critical scholarship. They are characterized by close reading, rearticulating new narratives, and the researcher assigning new meanings or interpretations (Krippendorff, 2004). It differs from quantitative content analysis, which refers to a statistical technique for obtaining descriptive data on content variables. The main difference between them is that qualitative content analysis is interpretive in nature and allows multiple data entry points, while quantitative content analysis is statistical with one data entry point (Altheide, 1996).

The objective of qualitative content analysis is to verify hypothesized relationships and to discover new or emergent patterns (Altheide, 1996). Whereas the purpose of quantitative content analysis is only to verify a hypothesis by providing precise, objective, and reliable observations about the frequency of content characteristics occurrences (George, 2009). A reflective process of data collection and analysis also characterizes qualitative content analysis. The researcher was central to all of these processes and the protocols were used only as guidelines. These processes were recursive and reflective allowing new categories and variables to emerge throughout the research. Therefore, the focus of data gathering involved collecting numerical and narrative data. A data collection form consisting of variables of gender was used as the second research instrument in this study. The category was divided into male and female. The binary category of male and female was used to correspond to the official category adopted by the Indonesian government although transgender individuals are found in popular media such as televisions and newspapers. Descriptions were given when the visual images signify one or more among the four variables chosen. An undetermined category was assigned when the visual image did not belong to any category or there was not enough information to classify the visual image. One data collection form was used to record each visual image. A summary of the frequency of occurrences was given for each e-textbook. A summary of the description of each variable for each book was also made when all images were described.

To maintain consistency and to obtain validity multiple coding and interrater checks were employed. Two interraters with different gender were employed to collect and analyze one out of the eight e-textbooks. The data from the interraters were compared with the rest of the data to obtain consistency and interrater reliability.

To observe whether gender issues had been addressed proportionately in the English e-textbook an analysis on the roles of male and female images were conducted. What roles were they depicting? Were they trivial or important? To achieve validity and consistency of data interpretations multiple coding and an interrater check were conducted. First, a general a priori or content specific coding was conducted (Schwandt, 2007). In the a priori coding, the categories used to classify the data were carefully developed from the research problems and the literature that supported the topic being studied. The second step was analytical coding (Merriam, 2009). In the analytical coding the visual images were not only classified and described, but the coding also came from interpretation and the reflection on meaning of the visual images from the e-textbooks. Another round of both the general and analytical coding was conducted to validate and maintain the consistency of the data coding.

VISUAL IMAGES REPRESENTING GENDER

The research question concerned with whether the English e-textbooks designated for high school in Indonesia represented gender equally in their illustrations. The representativeness of gender was examined by comparing the roles and number of male and female characters in the visual images used as illustrations in the e-textbooks. Three categories namely, female, male, and undetermined were used to classify the visual images examined. Three types of visual images namely; images of people, animals, and objects were examined to determine gender representations. The data showed that the visual images of both animals and objects did not contain information of gender. Therefore, the representation of gender was observed mainly through the images of people found in the English e-textbooks.

Human Images Representing Gender

Binary distinction of female and male were used although in reality transgendered people are found in Indonesian society. This binary distinction was adopted in this study to conform to the official gender division used by the Indonesian government. Undetermined category was assigned when there was no sufficient graphical information to determine the gender of the visual images.

Gender roles comparison between females and males was examined to determine the fairness of the representations. Gender role was defined as a set of social and behavioral norms that were generally considered appropriate for either a man or a woman in the society (Ryan, 2010; Sheets, 2005). The English e-textbooks for high school in Indonesia represented both females and males as having different roles and social status. However, they also depicted the existing presumptions about males and females. These presumptions were often in the form of gender role stereotypes.

The images that depicted female stereotypes in traditional gender roles were the pictures of women cooking and serving food. There were four frames of pictures of women cooking in e-textbook one for grade ten and one other same picture in e-textbook three for grade eleven. E-textbooks one, three, and four also depicted similar pictures, where women were serving food in family gatherings. These images reinforced the gender role stereotypes that women were nurturing and the caregiver of the family.

Other images that showed male and female role stereotypes were the pictures that showed emotions. Sadness and compassion were mainly shown by females in the English e-textbooks examined. There were five images of teenage girls with sad faces or crying in e-textbooks one, three, four, six, and seven. The girls in e-textbooks three and four were depicted as crying and were accompanied by boys. The boys were depicted as holding their emotions in control while

the girls were crying. The sad girls in e-textbooks one, six, and seven were accompanied by adult females who were shown as comforting them and thus reinforcing the stereotypes that women were compassionate and sympathetic.

The male role stereotypes were depicted by men as being assertive and having power or control. These were shown in e-textbook four where a father was shown as getting angry to a daughter. The father was shown as holding a roll of newspaper that might give an impression that he was about to hit his daughter. This picture was a posed photograph, which might be done on purpose. This particular picture was used twice in the e-textbook. Another stereotype of males being assertive was shown with a picture of a male employer getting angry to his employee.

Three of the images in the English e-textbooks showed nontraditional gender roles. In e-textbook one for grade ten a man was shown holding a small child. This might be against the traditional stereotypes for males. Another nontraditional role image was found in e-textbook eight where a man was shown watering flowers. This picture was used twice in this e-textbook. Nontraditional gender role image of females such as fixing a house or a car, or working with heavy machinery was not found in the e-textbook series.

Most occupations in the e-textbooks were represented by males and females. In terms of number, some professions such as, reporters, television announcers, singers, and movie stars were almost equally represented. Some other professions such as teacher and police officer were also represented by both males and females. However, male police officers outnumbered female police officers in the overall e-textbooks studied. Female teachers were shown teaching smaller children such as kindergarten as shown in e-textbooks three, four, five, and eight. Male teachers were shown teaching high schools in the e-textbooks.

Some professions were only represented by men. All doctors, politicians, and soldiers in the e-textbooks were men. They were depicted in e-textbooks two, five, and seven.

In terms of number, the images of men were more dominant than the images of women as shown in table 1. All the English e-textbooks examined had depicted more male characters in their illustrations. E-textbooks one for grade ten; three for grade eleven; and eight for grade twelve had slightly higher number of male images. E-textbook one had 54.4 percent male and 45.5 percent female images. E-textbook three depicted 58.6 percent of men and 41.3 percent of women images. Similarly, e-textbook eight had 49.6 percent images of men and 46.2 percent images of women. The other e-textbooks had bigger differences in number between male and female images shown as their illustrations. Table 8 showed that males images were more dominant shown by significantly higher number of images in the illustrations of the e-textbooks. There were 1113 male images or 62.4 percent compared to 663 women images of 37.2 percent from the overall number of 1782 human images.

Table 1. *Human Images that Represent Gender.*

	E-texbook								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
F	138	28	67	128	28	86	133	55	663
	45.5%	13.3%	41.3%	37%	32.2%	39.6%	39.3%	46.2%	37.2%
M	165	181	95	218	59	131	205	59	1113
	54.4%	86.2%	58.6%	63%	67.8%	60.4%	60.6%	49.6%	62.4%
Un	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	6
		0.5%						4.2%	0.3%
	1782								

F: Female; M: Male; Un: Undetermined

Gender Role Stereotype and Bias

Gender is not a mere biological trait but it is also learned behavior (Ryan, 2010). Gender roles are learned in the family and through education. Gender stereotypes existed in the society where males and females were often overly expected to behave in certain manner based on the societal beliefs and norms. These expectations often limited the opportunities of women and girls to perform certain tasks or assume certain jobs. In education stereotyping could limit students' future decisions regarding various aspects of their lives, including choice of profession and career development. Stereotypes keep both sexes in traditional professions and were incoherent with the various kinds of existing opportunities (Mills & Mills, 1996).

The research question was concerned about how the English e-textbooks for high school in Indonesia represented gender through the use of visual images in their illustrations. First, in terms of numbers, women were underrepresented in the overall English e-textbooks examined. There were 663 images of women and girls compared to 1113 images of men and boys. Secondly, men were depicted as having wider range of roles as shown by their occupations and tasks they performed. Certain professions such as doctors and soldiers were only depicted by men. Other occupations such as teachers, police officers, reporters, and singers were illustrated by both men and women. The visual images used as illustrations in the English e-textbooks series also contained gender stereotypes related to emotions and feelings. Women were depicted as caring, sympathetic, and passionate, while men were depicted as having power and kept their emotions in control.

CONCLUSION

The visual images of males and females in the e-textbooks series did not represent the reality that exists in the society. In reality the number of women is more than the number of men according to 2000 population census (BPS, 2010). Women play important roles in the society. Women own about sixty percent of micro, small, and medium scale business enterprises. Women also hold more than 11 percent of the seats in the parliament and represent about 11 percent of government ministers. More than sixteen percent of judges and about fifteen percent of Supreme Court Judges are women (World Trade Press, 2010). Women are increasingly playing more important roles in the society. This fact should be better represented in all textbooks used in schools.

E-textbook writers and publishers should create balanced representations of males and females so that the English e-textbooks would be motivating and engaging for both male and female students. Balanced and accurate depictions of both genders in instructional materials would make students aware of the inequalities that had existed for women in Indonesian culture and encourage students to take corrective actions (Mills & Mills, 1996). The balanced representations should not only be in equal numbers of both genders but also they should be depicted as having the same roles. Gender role stereotypes that limited men and women to perform certain limited tasks should be avoided. Showing egalitarian roles might lead students to have broader views on the choices of professions.

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