

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS NEW FRONTIERS 2 FOR GRADE EIGHT AT SMP

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Abstract

Gender is a significant social construct that influences various aspects of life, including education and media representation. This study investigates gender representation in the New Frontiers 2 English textbook for Grade 8 students at SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method. Using Logsdon's (1985) framework, which identifies six aspects of gender representation, the study analyzes the prevalence and portrayal of male and female characters in terms of pictures, mentions, roles, games, role models, and naming patterns. The findings reveal imbalances in representation, with males dominating leadership and technical roles, while females are more often linked to descriptive or emotional contexts. This highlights the need for equitable gender portrayals in textbooks to foster inclusive and unbiased learning environments. The study emphasizes the importance of critically evaluating educational materials to ensure they promote gender equality, aligning with Indonesia's commitment to creating equitable learning opportunities.

Keywords: Gender Representation, English Textbook, New frontiers

Abstrak

Gender adalah konstruksi sosial yang berpengaruh terhadap berbagai aspek kehidupan, termasuk pendidikan dan representasi dalam media. Penelitian ini menyelidiki representasi gender dalam buku teks bahasa Inggris New Frontiers 2 untuk siswa kelas 8 di SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Dengan menerapkan kerangka Logsdon (1985) yang mengidentifikasi enam aspek representasi gender, penelitian ini menganalisis prevalensi dan penggambaran karakter laki-laki dan perempuan dalam hal gambar, penyebutan, peran, permainan, panutan, dan pola penamaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya ketidakseimbangan dalam representasi gender, di mana laki-laki lebih dominan dalam peran kepemimpinan dan teknis, sementara perempuan lebih sering dikaitkan dengan konteks deskriptif atau emosional. Temuan ini menekankan perlunya representasi gender yang lebih adil dalam buku teks untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif dan bebas bias. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti pentingnya evaluasi kritis terhadap materi pendidikan guna memastikan bahwa materi tersebut mendukung kesetaraan gender, sejalan dengan komitmen Indonesia dalam menciptakan peluang belajar yang setara bagi semua.

Kata Kunci: Representasi Gender, Buku teks Bahasa Inggris, New frontiers

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are crucial educational tools, especially in classroom settings where they serve as primary resources for students. Selecting the right textbooks is essential for achieving educational goals. In English Language Teaching (ELT), textbooks are widely used due to their

accessibility and structured content. They not only provide linguistic knowledge but also influence students' attitudes and character development. Education aims to shape both cognitive skills and character (Ministry of Education, 2017). (Pardin, 2023) Ki Hadjar Dewantara emphasized the importance of character building alongside

intelligence and physical development (Dewantara, 1962). Since this study focuses on gender, it is necessary to analyze how textbooks portray gender alongside academic content.

Gender representation in English textbooks has drawn significant attention from educational researchers. In Indonesia, where cultural values strongly influence gender roles, textbook content can shape students' perceptions of gender and societal interactions. As products of specific social and cultural contexts, textbooks reflect societal norms and values (Fairclough, 2013). Language use in textbooks can reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles (Sunderland, 2010). Therefore, choosing textbooks with balanced gender representation is essential to fostering more inclusive gender perspectives.

The impact of gender representation in textbooks is profound, shaping students' ideologies and worldviews (Mukundan, Nimechisalem, & Hajimebanmadi, 2011). Gender biases in textbooks can affect students' perceptions and interactions (Dominguez, 2003; Riazi, 2003). Visual elements, such as images, play a significant role in conveying implicit gender messages (Fairclough, 1989; Dabbagh, 2016). Several studies have analyzed gender representation through visual content (Ahour & Zafrani, 2016; Marefat & Marzban, 2014; Torres, 2015), revealing gender biases and occasional signs of equality. In Indonesia, research on visual gender representation remains limited, with some studies focusing on gender portrayals in ELT materials (Yonata & Mujianto, 2017; Ariyanto, 2018; Setyono, 2018).

Supporting gender equality in education is vital in Indonesia. Programs like Sekolah Ramah Anak (Child-Friendly Schools) aim to create safe, inclusive learning environments. However, these efforts must be supported by gender-sensitive learning materials, especially textbooks. Since textbooks shape how children see themselves and others, it is

crucial to analyze their gender representations to ensure inclusivity.

The concept of gender became prominent in global discussions through the United Nations Women Conferences, first appearing in Mexico (1975) and Nairobi (1985). It gained further recognition at the 1995 Beijing Conference, which emphasized gender mainstreaming. As a UN member, Indonesia endorsed gender mainstreaming through Presidential Instruction No. 9 (2000), mandating its integration into all sectors, including education. The Ministry of Education developed policies and guidelines for gender-responsive teaching materials (Sudarto, 2016), including a pocketbook on gender mainstreaming in education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).

Teaching materials such as textbooks, handouts, worksheets, and modules are essential in education. Since students spend significant time engaging with these resources, they influence not only academic learning but also social norms, including gender roles. Research indicates that textbooks can subtly reinforce gender stereotypes. If textbooks predominantly portray men as leaders and women in domestic roles, students may internalize these stereotypes, limiting their aspirations. To counter this, textbooks should present diverse roles for both genders, showing that anyone can pursue any career or ambition.

English textbooks in Indonesia play a dual role: teaching the language and introducing students to different cultural perspectives. In a diverse society like Indonesia, where traditional gender norms persist, textbooks should challenge rather than reinforce stereotypes. If textbooks exclusively depict men as doctors and engineers while women are portrayed as teachers and homemakers, they send a strong message about gendered career expectations. This may discourage girls from pursuing STEM fields, where women are underrepresented (Lee & Collins, 2022). Conversely, textbooks that depict

women in various professions inspire students to believe in equal opportunities.

Similarly, showing men in caregiving roles can encourage boys to embrace responsibilities beyond traditional masculine expectations. When boys see positive examples of men contributing to household and childcare tasks, they may feel more comfortable doing the same. This promotes a balanced perspective, fostering mutual respect and shared responsibilities in families and society.

Teachers play a crucial role in addressing gender biases in education. Many Indonesian educators rely heavily on textbooks, especially in resource-limited schools. By becoming aware of gender biases in textbooks, teachers can foster discussions on gender equality and create inclusive classroom environments. Teacher training programs should equip educators with the skills to recognize and address gender stereotypes in teaching materials. Encouraging students to critically analyze gender portrayals in textbooks enhances their awareness and critical thinking skills.

Analyzing gender representation in English textbooks aligns with Indonesia's commitment to gender equality. Research on these materials provides valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators, guiding decisions on textbook selection. Studies show that inclusive educational materials enhance students' understanding of gender roles, contributing to a more equitable society (Athanasidou, 2023). By presenting diverse representations, textbooks can empower students to challenge stereotypes and pursue careers based on their interests and abilities.

Accurate and balanced portrayals of men and women in educational materials are crucial for fostering gender equality. When students see diverse gender roles represented, they are more likely to develop aspirations beyond societal expectations. This benefits not only individuals but also contributes to a progressive, inclusive society. Representation in textbooks can

inspire confidence and ambition, encouraging students to break stereotypes and work toward a more equal future.

Through the analysis of gender representation in ELT textbooks, researchers highlight the influence of educational materials in shaping young minds. It is essential that every student, regardless of gender, sees themselves represented in what they learn. This fosters self-confidence, ambition, and a belief in equal opportunities, allowing future generations to challenge societal norms and contribute positively to a more inclusive world.

This study examines *New Frontiers 2*, an English textbook used by Grade 8 students at SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa. Unlike government-published English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, *New Frontiers 2* is published by a private company. This study aims to explore whether gender biases that have been identified in government-published textbooks are also present in *New Frontiers 2*. This is important because educational materials shape how students view social roles, cultural norms, and gender expectations.

The findings from this study are expected to provide insights into how gender roles are represented in *New Frontiers 2* and whether these representations align with efforts to create fair and equal learning opportunities. The results will help educators and policymakers better evaluate the materials they use in classrooms to ensure fairness, equality, and inclusivity for all students. Indonesia has committed to gender equality through programs such as Child-Friendly Schools. These programs aim to create safe learning spaces and ensure that students are treated equally, regardless of their gender (UNESCO, 2017). However, to support these initiatives, it is crucial that textbooks and learning materials are free from gender bias and reflect balanced, fair representations of both genders.

By focusing on New Frontiers 2, this study contributes to a better understanding of how private educational materials differ from government-published textbooks regarding gender portrayal. Such differences may affect students' understanding of gender roles and their expectations about their own future opportunities. This analysis seeks to examine the patterns and messages embedded in the textbook's text and images to determine if they reinforce traditional stereotypes or promote a more inclusive perspective.

If gender biases are found in New Frontiers 2, this research could provide useful recommendations for creating educational materials that better represent gender equality. For instance, textbook authors and publishers can ensure that both men and women are shown in a variety of roles—leadership, technical fields, caregiving, arts, and other areas—to provide students with a broad and diverse view of possibilities for both genders. This would allow students to explore their own identities and aspirations freely without being influenced by limiting social expectations.

In conclusion, as a researcher and an educator at SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa, analyzing gender representation in New Frontiers 2 is particularly important because this textbook is used by Grade 8 students at my school. Since textbooks play a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of gender roles, it is essential to examine whether New Frontiers 2 promotes gender equality or reinforces gender bias. Given its widespread use in the classroom, the content of this textbook has a direct influence on how students understand social expectations and gender dynamics. By conducting this study, the researcher aims to contribute to discussions on inclusive education and emphasize the responsibility of educators and textbook publishers in fostering fair and balanced gender representations in learning materials

The conflicting data arises from differences in scope and context between my research and several previous studies on gender representation in textbooks. While Sadia (2019), Yonata and Mujiyanto (2017), Rachmijati and Cahyati (2018), and Tyarakanita et al. (2021) focus on a broad range of textbooks, often government-endorsed or from diverse educational contexts, my research is more localized, focusing exclusively on New Frontiers 2, a privately published textbook used at SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa. Additionally, while previous studies highlight the persistence of gender stereotypes, such as the portrayal of men in active, professional roles and women in passive, domestic ones, my research delves into a more specific analysis of how these patterns manifest in one particular educational setting. Furthermore, while most studies use content analysis to examine these patterns, my approach also integrates Logsdon's theory to identify dominant gender aspects within a single textbook, offering a more focused exploration compared to the broader national scope of earlier studies.

METHOD

The research design was defined as the specific techniques that were involved in the research process, including data collection, analysis, and report writing. It was understood that research designs were important procedures that assisted the researcher in conducting their research. This included determining how data was gathered, how it was analyzed, and how the resulting information was used to achieve the study objectives. Qualitative research was used to support this analysis, with descriptive qualitative as the chosen method. This method was employed to accurately and factually describe the characteristics of a particular segment of the population.

According to Trianto (2010, as cited in Tampubolon & Panggabean, 2020), research was conducted to clearly describe situations of events by explaining a number

of variables related to the subject of the research. In line with this, descriptive qualitative research was defined as a method that explained the phenomena or events being studied in a systematic, accurate, and factual manner while also presenting the facts, qualities, and relationships among the components of the research. In this study, the researcher selected descriptive qualitative as the research method, as it was appropriate and aided in analyzing gender representation in materials, tasks, grammar, and the content of the English textbook titled *New Frontiers 2 for Grade 8 at SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa*, using Logsdon's theory, and in assessing the most dominant aspects of gender according to Logsdon.

The data for this research were collected from *New Frontiers 2*, an English textbook used by Grade 8 students at SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa. This textbook served as the primary material for analyzing gender representation. The data included textual content and visual illustrations, focusing on aspects such as the frequency of male and female depictions, roles, activities, and characterizations.

The source of data for this research was *New Frontiers 2*, an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook used by Grade VIII students at SMP Swasta Methodist Tanjung Morawa. Published by Mentari, a private publishing company, this textbook consisted of 10 chapters and 141 pages. The analysis focused on both textual and visual content to explore gender representation, utilizing Logsdon's six aspects of gender representation as the framework.

This study employs an observation instrument designed to analyze gender representation in the *New Frontiers 2* English textbook for Grade 8, focusing on six key aspects of Logsdon's theory (as cited in Salamah, 2020). The observation instrument aims to identify and compare patterns of gender representation in illustrations, text, and activities within the

textbook. Using this instrument allows for systematic data collection and provides insights into how the textbook portrays roles, names, images, and role models associated with gender, which is crucial for evaluating whether there is bias or equality in the presentation of learning materials for students (Creswell, 2014).

The data collection technique described aligns closely with Logsdon's six aspects of gender representation, providing a structured framework for the analysis of the *New Frontiers 2* textbook. Each step of the data collection process contributes to a systematic exploration of these aspects. By meticulously reviewing the content of the textbook, the researcher ensures all textual and visual elements relevant to gender representation are identified. This step is foundational for analyzing the number of male and female pictures and mentions, as well as other gender-related themes. This step focuses on gathering textual and visual data that align with Logsdon's six aspects:

1. Number of Female or Male Pictures: Visual elements will be analyzed to determine the frequency of male and female depictions.
2. Female or Male Mentions: Textual elements such as pronouns, proper nouns, and titles will be examined for gender distribution.
3. Female or Male Roles: The social, professional, and domestic roles assigned to each gender will be identified.
4. Female or Male Activities: Activities undertaken by male and female characters will be noted to assess traditional or non-traditional portrayals.
5. Female or Male Attributes: Character traits and descriptions will be analyzed to determine whether they reinforce stereotypes or showcase balanced portrayals.
6. Firstness in Mention: The prominence or order in which male and female characters are mentioned will be assessed to understand potential prioritization.

By organizing the collected data into categories that correspond with Logsdon's six aspects, the researcher can identify recurring patterns or deviations in gender representation. This thematic

approach ensures a comprehensive analysis, highlighting whether the textbook presents equitable or biased portrayals of gender roles and attributes.

As said by Miles and Huberman (1994), data analysis consists of three steps: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data condensation is the initial stage in analyzing the data for this analysis. According to Miles, data condensation is the way of determining, concentrating, reducing, separating, and translating data in the field into written records. This study obtained data from documentation, primarily from the New Frontiers 2 English textbook, which consists of 10 chapters and 141 pages. The researcher identified the gender representation in the New Frontiers 2 textbook based on Logsdon's theory.

The second stage is to display the data. The data displayed is a structured and compacted collection of information that enables conclusions and actions to be drawn. In this study, the data related to gender representation from the New Frontiers 2 textbook, consisting of 10 chapters and 141 pages, will be organized based on Logsdon's six aspects of gender representation. This structured display includes the number of male and female pictures, mentions, roles, activities, attributes, and firstness in mentions. The function of data display is to help the reader understand the patterns and themes in gender representation within the textbook, providing a clear foundation for further analysis and conclusions.

Conclusions and verification are the final steps in the analysis process. The researcher concluded this step to explore the meaning of the analyzed data and their implications for the research questions, whereas verification is a series of processes to explain the answers to the formulation of the problem and research objectives. This research aimed to analyze how gender is represented in the selected English textbook using six aspects of gender representation outlined by Logsdon's

theory.

The research procedures involved several systematic steps. First, the researcher thoroughly read all the content within the textbook. Next, all instances of gender representation within the textbook were identified and noted. Following this, the researcher classified these gender instances according to the six aspects of gender representation as outlined by Logsdon, organizing the data into tables for clear comparison. Each identified instance was then placed in specific categories within the tables, corresponding to the names of the six aspects. After organizing the data, the researcher calculated the frequency of each gender representation aspect within the textbook. To analyze gender balance, the researcher examined whether there was an imbalance or balance in gender representation across the content. Finally, the most dominant aspect of gender representation in the textbook, as identified by Logsdon's framework, was highlighted to provide insight into which gender-related elements were most emphasized.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis model, this study follows three steps: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. In the data condensation stage, information was categorized based on Logsdon's (1985) six aspects of gender representation. The findings show that male characters appear more frequently in pictures, with a ratio of approximately 60% male to 40% female. Male-related mentions also dominate the text, making up around 65% of total references. Regarding roles, males are commonly portrayed as leaders and professionals, while females are mostly depicted in artistic roles such as dancers and actresses. In terms of activities, males engage in diverse tasks, while females are primarily involved in arts. Additionally, male characters are often described with strong and professional attributes, whereas female characters are associated with beauty and emotions. The concept of

firstness in mention also shows a clear bias, as males are more frequently mentioned first in paired words, such as boyfriend-girlfriend or manager-dancer.

Table 1. *The Result*

Aspect	Male	Female
Number of Pictures	60%	40%
Mentions	65%	35%
Roles	Leadership	Artistic
Activities	Work	Arts
Attributes	Strong	Beauty
Firstness in Mention	70%	30%

In the data display stage, a table was used to visually present these findings, highlighting the disparities in gender representation. The numerical data reinforces the idea that males are depicted more frequently and in more authoritative roles compared to females. Finally, in the drawing and verifying conclusions stage, it is evident that gender representation in *New Frontiers 2* is unbalanced, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. Males are predominantly positioned in leadership and influential roles, while females are often limited to artistic and emotional portrayals. The most dominant aspect in this analysis is Female or Male Roles, as it clearly showcases the distinction between male leadership and female artistic representation. These findings suggest that the textbook could benefit from a more gender-balanced approach to better reflect equality in educational materials.

CONCLUSION

Gender representation in *New Frontiers 2* shows male dominance. Males appear more frequently (60% in images, 65% in text) and are shown in leadership and professional roles, while females are depicted in artistic and emotional roles. This reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. The most dominant aspect is Female or Male Roles, which emphasizes traditional gender roles by placing males in positions of authority and females in passive or artistic roles. This shows an unequal gender portrayal.

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