

Gender Representation in Merdeka Curriculum ELT Textbooks: A Corpus-assisted Study

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Abstract:

Gender representation in English textbooks has been an issue for a long period of time; it is important to monitor and assess the evolution of English textbooks regularly. This research examined how gender representation is presented in Merdeka curriculum-mandated English textbooks since there are gender imbalances and gender misconceptions in previous mandated English textbooks. Gender-related references used in the textbooks are analyzed using the Corpus tool and then measured to see how each gender is represented. Textbook analysis is important since they deliver values and could impact student's perception of gender. This research intended to examine gender-related references and characteristics, therefore, corpus tools such as KWIC, plot, cluster, word, and collocate are used. This research found five categories of gender-related references in these textbooks: famous names, fictional names, ordinary names, generic nouns, and pronouns. Moreover, it is found that the Merdeka curriculum English textbooks did not present equal gender representation where male references are underrepresented and portrayed to only possess two emotions, happy and sad. Yet, female references dominated the presentation and portrayed as independent individuals who experienced lots of emotions such as furious, falling in love, ashamed, and other emotional attributes. Hence, the imbalance representation in textbooks should be revisited and should be based on more various natures of human emotions and roles.

Keywords: corpus-assisted, gender references, gender representation

1. INTRODUCTION

English textbooks remain useful in the classroom despite the development of technology, since textbooks provide a roadmap and framework for the entire course both for teachers and students (Garton & Graves, 2014). Textbooks give the teacher a sense of security and track, while for students, a textbook is a form of independence where students can explore the material by themselves outside the teacher's prepared materials. The Ministry of Education in Indonesia is currently developing and launching the Merdeka curriculum, where students are given the freedom to explore and learn material. This curriculum is formulated to bring back student-centered learning where the freedom of thinking should be possessed first by the teacher as mentioned in the Indonesian 1945 decree (Dharma et al., 2020). To support the independence of student learning, many prompts and reading materials are presented in the newest sets of English textbooks for high school. Various kinds of texts are present in the textbooks to enrich student's knowledge, text like multimodal, descriptive, analytical, expository, narrative, and procedure could be found in three of the Merdeka curriculum textbooks.

It is found that the newest sets of English textbooks for the Merdeka curriculum cover a wide range of text and reading subjects. Following this reason, practical information about different cultures, people, lifestyles, beliefs, and values are delivered alongside the learning material. Then, it raised two issues regarding textbooks, matters of portrayal and authenticity are brought up because of how wide the subjects, especially when learning language, the learners most likely learn the language together with its culture and values (Harwood, 2010). Textbooks are more than educational resources. It helps teachers to invest beliefs and attitudes, including differentiated gender roles in students (Mustapha, 2012). The information in textbooks not only piques students' attention but also gives them a hazy picture of what men and women are supposed to do in society. School textbooks are also known to be an important factor that could construct gender identities, and reinforce gender discrimination, by delivering specific gender values that are attached to the material and affect students' perception of gender at a subconscious level (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Ullah & Skelton, 2013). The imbalance in gender representation in textbooks has the potential to cause a few social problems, including social inequality, gender discrimination, and gender biases. These problems may arise as a result of unequal gender representation in textbooks, and they may manifest in a variety of ways, including gender stereotyping, unequal visibility, biased firstness, and a host of other things. According to Habib et al. (2020), a gender stereotype is a generalized opinion or preconception about traits and behaviors that must be possessed or exercised by a particular gender. School textbooks also have an authoritativeness where students believe that textbooks could not go wrong. It has significant potential to influence students, therefore textbooks have a critical role in constructing students' perception of gender identities (Rohmawati & Putra, 2022). These reasons led the researchers to investigate the use of gender-related references in Merdeka curriculum English textbooks.

To support this research to reach the objective of research, corpus linguistics is applied. Incorporating corpora as the primary resource and point of departure, corpus linguistics is one of the factual methods used in linguistics to analyze and describe language (Winnie, 2013). Corpora are collections of machine-readable texts that serve as a representative sample of a wide range of languages (Gabrielatos, 2014; McEnery & Wilson, 1996). Additionally, a corpus is a tool that electronically stores real instances of language use. Evidence of how people use language is provided by various sources, including radio broadcasts, academic papers, fiction and

non-fiction books, business meetings, phone conversations, and more (Bennett, 2010). Textbook is one of the real pieces of evidence and the real use of English practice in school, therefore, corpus linguistics is chosen to reach this research's objective.

This study aims to determine whether the most recent Indonesian English textbook sets for the Merdeka curriculum support gender equality. It is crucial to examine the English textbooks that are used in schools to increase awareness of the value of equally weighted gender representation and the use of linguistic features for both sexes. Similar cases of gender stereotypes and gender representation imbalance can be found in Indonesian ELT textbooks, particularly mandated English textbooks. Despite several curriculum changes, there are still many gender inequalities in Indonesia's previous mandated ELT textbooks. In junior high school English textbooks, females are depicted as housewives or workers with low-paying jobs such as singers and babysitters (Lestariyana & Nurkamto, 2022). Female and male characters in English textbooks appear to be associated with masculine and feminine actions. In previous mandated English textbooks for junior high school, actions such as 'playing football' performed by boys and 'reading novels' performed by girls were assumed to be less physical than boys (Suwarno et al., 2021). Another study found that male subjects were overrepresented in visualizations and written texts in Indonesian ELT textbooks (Tyarakanita et al., 2021). Gender stereotyping was still prevalent in Indonesian ELT textbooks. These are some of the reasons why it is critical to examine the content of school textbooks to avoid future gender discrimination and misconceptions about men's and women's roles in society. Discriminatory gender representation may impede students' academic or mental development and motivation (Bernat, 2015). Students would feel out of place if a specific gender advanced, and this could influence their perception of what it means to be male or female. Ideally, students should not be limited by the concept of gender ability, as both genders are equally capable of achieving and developing themselves to achieve personal goals.

Based on the elaboration, it is evident that this issue has been widely discussed, but little is known about gender representation in the latest textbooks using the newest curriculum in Indonesia, namely *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Hence, this study especially focused on analyzing gender representation and characteristics in the newest mandated English textbooks for high school using corpus tools, especially *Antconc*. This study then attempts to answer the following question: (1) how male and female references are used in the textbooks? and (2) what are the collocates of the male and female references? The results of the present study can show the representation of men and women in the textbooks from the latest curriculum in Indonesian and how they are associated with their emotions and actions. This study can contribute to raise the awareness of gender representation in English textbooks and encourage textbook writers, teachers, and students to establish a more equal gender balance in teaching and learning environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Observing the body of literature, imbalanced gender representation in textbooks is a common occurrence. For example, several gender representation issues can be found in Saudi EFL textbooks, including male firstness, female stereotyped with domestic chores, and unequal representation of females and males (Sulaimani, 2017). Similarly, in Indonesian junior high school English textbooks, an awareness of equal gender awareness and responsiveness is already presented, however gender stereotyping is visible and still dominating the textbooks; women are traditionally posited as housewives, mothers, and family managers through a gender role lens, to

some extent (Lestariyana et al., 2020). On the other hand, male characters are shown to have a significant advantage in design and occupation in Iranian EFL textbooks, while female characters are rarely seen (Jannati, 2015). Despite this, issues concerning gender representation have been present since the 1970s, when Ann Oakley, a sociologist, identified sex-related stereotypes in school textbooks (Brugilles & Cromer, 2009). Whether male or female, under-represented characters could consciously or unconsciously affect students' perceptions about their attitudes and future roles. Furthermore, Sanchez's research stated that stereotypical roles have contributed to sexism in many ways, including decision-making, use of free time, personal freedom, and relationship dynamics (Sánchez Aguilar, 2021). In recent research on gender representation in Indonesian junior high school textbooks, an ongoing gender stereotyping could be seen, where males possess a wider role than females (Paramitha et al., 2023). Male firstness was also found in previous mandated EFL textbooks, specifically in their grammar section; a gender bias occurred with the male having more positive adjectives and the female having more negative adjectives, implying that female characters have less attitude than male characters (Agni et al., 2020).

There are some attempts in textbooks to present equal gender representation, though they are not perfect. A comparative study of Iranian EFL textbooks revealed that some textbooks have more balanced gender equality than others (Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015). Gender stereotypes have yet to be addressed in Hong Kong, where balanced gender representation quantity has begun to be seen in their English textbooks (Lee, 2014). Female representation in ELT textbooks is mostly as a conversation starter and is associated with stereotypical roles such as mother, teacher, nurse, and housewife, with women primarily portrayed as carers. While males were presented with authoritative positions such as working in offices or other public domain occupations (Ullah & Skelton, 2013). There are many prejudices against each gender that can be seen in textbooks, where males are always doing exertive activities and females are always doing leisure activities or chores (Brugilles & Cromer, 2009).

This study is focused on gender-related references presented in the textbooks, where they will show what kind and how both females and males are portrayed in the textbooks. Gender references are the terms used to refer to the actor of the sentences or the phrase that specifies the subject in a sentence (Eriksson, 2022). There are many actors or subjects in textbooks to present the material; this study will examine gender-related references in textbooks. There are various types of gender-related references, such as well-known English pronouns, indefinite pronouns, epicene pronouns, terms of address, character names, and common nouns (Eriksson, 2022; Yu Jin et al., 2013).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses the qualitative method, which is a method involving interpretive and naturalistic approaches to its subject matters. Qualitative research is a method where the researchers could study the object in its natural setting, in an attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena or cases in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. This goes well with corpus-based studies, where the researcher will use the example of languages that are practically and widely used by people. Moreover, the Qualitative method allows the researcher to involve various empirical material-case study, personal experiences, introspective, life stories, interviews, and observational, historical, interactional, and visual text that describe an individual daily life and problematic moments in an individual's life (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

This research intended to examine what gender-related references are used in the *Merdeka* curriculum. Therefore, if a research design is adjusted to reach the objective, it is likely that this research goes very well with corpus-assisted research. Corpus-assisted research is research where corpus tools are used to support data analysis. The corpus software used in this research is Antconc, it is a tool developed by Laurence Anthony to analyze concordance; there are several tools that are used in this research, they are *Keyword in Context* (KWIC), plot, cluster, collocates, and word(list).

The research focuses on Indonesian-mandated English textbooks released by the Indonesian government to support the country's newest curriculum, the *Merdeka* curriculum. Three textbooks for high schools were used in this research, namely “Work in Progress” for grade X, “*Tingkat Lanjut*” for grade XI, and “English for Change” for grade XI of Islamic educational high school and equal. High school textbooks are chosen with the critical period of the student's formation in mind. Students in high school are more likely to begin thinking critically in this grade; despite the fact that there are three grades in high school, the *Merdeka* curriculum is a relatively new curriculum that began to be implemented in schools this year.

Several steps must be completed to achieve the study's objective in this research. First, the researcher entered the compiled textbooks into the corpus tool. The researcher then used the Antconc corpus tool to determine the frequency of related gender terms that appeared in the textbooks. 'Word' is the Antconc tool used to collect gender-related references. The researcher then collects data characterization using corpus tools, of which there are several, including 'collocates' and 'clusters'. For the third goal, the researcher condenses all female and male references into a single keyword, then runs analysis in Antconc using 'plot' tools to determine the distribution of each gender presented in the textbooks.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Gender Reference Categories

After running an analysis of three of the textbooks, the researcher found that there are five categories of gender-related references used: famous names, fictional names, ordinary names, generic nouns, and pronouns.

Table 1. Gender-Related References

Textbooks	Gender-Related References	Frequency
Work in Progress- Grade X	Famous names, Fictional Names, Ordinary names, generic nouns, pronouns	204
English for Change- Grade XI	Famous names, Ordinary names, generic nouns, pronouns	465
<i>Tingkat Lanjut</i> -Grade XI	Famous names, Fictional Names, Ordinary names, generic nouns, pronouns	1178

Table 1 consists of the results of gender-related references found in the textbooks after a thorough corpus analysis using Antconc. In almost all of the five categories found in three of the textbooks, it is found that *Tingkat Lanjut* for grade XI has distributed lots of gender-related references in the material. *English for Change* textbook, which is a textbook specified for Islamic institutions and equal, did not present any fictional names in their material, while *Work in*

Progress for grade X textbook was seen to distribute the last gender-related references among three of the textbooks analyzed.

4.1.1 Famous names

Famous names are found in three textbooks; the famous names are literal people's names, the majority of those are Indonesian influential people, and some of whom are foreign artists. English for Change textbooks had the highest number of occurrences of famous names among the three textbooks, with famous names appearing 79 times. In all of the textbooks analyzed, most of the influential people appearing in the material are environmental activists. Since one of the themes presented in the curriculum is the environment, real Indonesian environmentalists like Tasya Kamila and Aeshnina is assumed to have appeared to inspire the student who read the material.

According to the famous names presented in textbooks, there are some differences in characteristics between males and females, as famous females with diverse backgrounds appeared more frequently, famous female references have more diverse characterization such as contributing, inspiring, influencing, environmental hero, activist, directing, and producing. While famous male references did not appear in various fields, mostly in the athlete theme, famous males did not have varied characteristics; they were tied with physical movement, such as being very fast, could jumping very high, and although one of them is attributed with award-winning information, some of them did not have specific characterization and were only mentioned in textbooks.

4.1.2 Fictional Names

In textbooks, the category of Fictional Names includes a collection of famous characters from folklore, fairy tales, fiction, or movies. Obviously, *Tingkat Lanjut* textbooks have the most occurrences because they include so many folklore, fairy tales, fiction, and movies. Along with other fiction, the textbook includes names like Edmund from Narnia and *Bawang Merah & Bawang Putih* from Indonesian folklore. *Tingkat Lanjut* is also seen presenting equal culture-related text; they present both foreign and Indonesian famous narratives. Because there are numerous reading passages about the mentioned fictional names, there are a variety of characteristics in both female and male fictional names. It has been discovered that both female and male fictional names share some characteristics such as poverty, sadness, and happiness. Although female fictional names appear nearly twice as frequently as male fictional names, several characteristics can be learned from the *Tingkat Lanjut* textbook.

There are some fictional names in Work in Progress textbooks, but none of the fictional names presented in this textbook are accompanied by a characterization. Famous names in this textbook are only mentioned or have audio material that will not be analyzed in this study. While there are no fictional names in the English for Change textbook, it is assumed that because the textbook is to be used by Islamic institutions and equals, this textbook presents almost real-world-like information in delivering its material. Furthermore, no theme that would be appropriate for presenting fictional names is presented in the textbook scope and sequence.

4.1.3 Ordinary Names

Ordinary names are common in Indonesia used to present the materials in these textbooks. The materials in all three of the textbooks examined have common names. Ordinary names are frequently used to present dialogue in these textbooks. In comparison to the other categories,

male ordinary names were discovered to have a higher number of occurrences than female ordinary names. *Tingkat Lanjut* textbook still has the most occurrences out of the three textbooks. Despite some disparities in the number of occurrences, female and male ordinary names share some topics and characteristics. For example, in English for Change and *Tingkat Lanjut*, the male and female references are conversing about healthy food and diet; they both share what they like and dislike, so they share similar characteristics. Male references have more characteristics than female references because they have more appearances, such as football and work as a former legislator.

4.1.4 Generic Nouns

Generic Nouns are gender-specific nouns found in textbooks. Examples include words like mom, dad, princess, king, and so on. Three of the textbooks contain a large number of generic nouns that are distributed fairly. *Tingkat Lanjut* textbooks, like the other two categories, contain more generic nouns than the other two books. Female generic nouns appear to have a higher frequency of occurrence than male generic nouns. A variety of characteristics are assigned to each reference; some of these characteristics are also shared by female and male references, such as emotion; they share sad and happy emotions. For notes, male references are mostly associated with activity such as burned, drive, and remarried. While female references include many emotional characterizations such as "falling in love", "furious", "lovely", "panicking", "beloved," and many more. It implies that females have a lot of emotions while males have less.

4.1.5 Pronouns

There are three female pronouns and four male pronouns that are frequently used in textbooks. Following on from the previous discussion, the *Tingkat Lanjut* textbook presents higher pronouns than the other two books. The characterizations for both pronouns did not differ across three textbooks, but the number of occurrences differed significantly, with female references dominating the materials. Male references are seen to do more physical attributes in the pronoun category, such as trained, destroy, and exercise. Female characters are seen to be associated with beauty, achievement, various emotions, and beliefs. Despite this, male references are seen to attach two types of emotions that are similar to the previous category, which are happy and sad.

4.2 Frequency of Occurrences

Gender-related references are also interesting to study in terms of the frequency of occurrences in the textbooks. Table 2 shows the occurrences of each category for female and male references.

Table 2. Gender-related references in textbooks

Gender-Related References	Female occurrences	Male occurrences
Famous Names	82	43
Fictional Names	155	141
Ordinary Names	28	45
Generic Nouns	305	130
Pronouns	506	414
Total Number of Occurrences	1076	773

Examining the number of occurrences of each gender in textbooks reveals an imbalance in the presentation of gender-related references. Male references occurred only seven hundred and seventy-three times, while female references occurred 1,076 times. Male references are underrepresented, with only a few characterizations implying how a narrow male could express himself. Although there are more male references in the Ordinary Names category, the number does not contribute significantly to the overall representation of male references. However, given previous research in Indonesian ELT textbooks indicating that female references are underrepresented, both development and deterioration are occurring simultaneously. Gender references between female and male are relatively balanced in previous Indonesian-mandated English textbooks, which is a detriment for these new sets of English textbooks because female references occur far more frequently than male references. Furthermore, male references in these new sets of English textbooks are associated with a relatively narrow range of characterizations, particularly because they tend to do physical activities and have fewer emotions than female references. However, there is a shift in what female references do, as previous research found that females are associated with domestic chores and leisure activities (Suwarno et al., 2021). In these new Merdeka curriculum textbooks, female references are seen to be very active, particularly in environmental awareness; there are many female representations who played important roles such as environmentalist, director, producer, writer, and many more. It is a positive step towards reducing the risk of gender stereotypes in which women can only do leisure activities and housework.

Table 3. Gender-Related References in three of the Textbooks

Categories	Highest Distributor
Famous name	English for Change-Grade XI
Fictional name	<i>Tingkat Lanjut</i> -Grade XI
Ordinary name	<i>Tingkat Lanjut</i> -Grade XI
Generic noun	<i>Tingkat Lanjut</i> -Grade XI
Pronouns	<i>Tingkat Lanjut</i> -Grade XI

Finally, in terms of gender references, *Tingkat Lanjut* has the most occurrences in presenting fictional names, ordinary names, generic nouns, and pronouns; as previously discussed, the scope of *Tingkat Lanjut* textbook is narrative, expository, and descriptive texts. As a result, there are numerous reading passages in *Tingkat Lanjut* to encourage and inspire students of folklore, fairy tales, and famous stories. As a result, *Tingkat Lanjut* has the highest gender-related reference distribution, as there are many characters in the reading passages who must be referred to with pronouns, and pronouns are absolutely the highest contributor of gender-related references.

4.3 Collocations of Gender-related References

After analyzing three textbooks, some patterns regarding how each gender is portrayed in the textbooks could be identified. The male character is portrayed with a lot of negative constructions as well as positive constructions; although the number of positive constructions is higher than the number of negative constructions, there is a slight difference, implying that it is almost a perfect balance of both constructions. Male characters are found to be tied with rough

characterization and doing physical activities such as killing, playing football, screaming, and many more.

Table 4. Male Characteristics

Categories	Examples	Collocates		Location
		Positive	Negative	
Famous Names	Cristiano Ronaldo	strong determination, very fast		Work in Progress-X
Fictional Names	Edmund		reluctant, sneaked, teased, enchanted,	Tingkat Lanjut-XI
Ordinary Names	Tom		running out of time, havent finished,	Tingkat Lanjut-XI
	Rashid	*mentioned in relation to other names, but no characteristics		Tingkat Lanjut-XI
Generic Names	King	commanded, assigned, surely, pleased	passed,	
Pronouns	His	wealth, leadership	mood,	English for Change-XI, Tingkat Lanjut-XI, Work

Female references have an imbalance of positive and negative construction, with the positive construction dominating. This difference in how female and male references are constructed could imply that females have more positive characterization than males, whereas males may be known as individuals with more negative characterization than females. This could be a problem in the future where students would feel out of place if a specific gender advanced, and this could influence their perception of what it means to be male or female. Ideally, students should not be limited by the concept of gender ability, as both genders are equally capable of achieving and developing themselves to achieve personal goals.

Table 5. Female characteristics

Categories	Example	Collocates		Location
		Positive	Negative	
Famous Names	Aeshnina Azzahra Aqilani	Hero, justice		English for Change-XI
Fictional Names	Anidori Kiladra Taliana Isilee	Lovely, Princess,	struggled, feel alienated	Tingkat Lanjut-XI
	Susan, Cinderella, Caroline	*mentioned in relation to other names, but no characteristics		Tingkat Lanjut-XI
Ordinary Names	Sindi	Love, favorite, healty, eat		English for Change-XI
Generic Names	Daughter(s)	bravely, imagine, beautiful	struggled, lazy, poor	Tingkat Lanjut-XI
Pronouns	Her	beauty, achievements, activism		English for Change-XI, Tingkat Lanjut-XI, Work in Progress-X
	She	lucky, proud	Ashamed, miserable,	English for Change-XI, Tingkat Lanjut-XI, Work in Progress-X

According to the findings above, both female and male references have their own positive and negative construction. Male references are less positive than female references and female references are less negative than male references. Female reference characterizations are also constructed positively through their action and emotions; despite the fact that there are few negative actions and emotions, the positive construction dominates the entire female reference construction. Female references are portrayed as brave, beautiful, active, healthy, lovely, and a variety of other positive characteristics, implying that females are independent, brave, and intelligent individuals. Although some negative characteristics are presented, they are all those of the villain in the fictional passages. Male references, on the other hand, are characterized primarily through their actions. Males can be leaders, command, have strong determination, and have any positive construction. It implies that they are all supposed to be male. However, many negative actions presented by the male character could indicate that it's fairly common for males to do destruction, not do homework, be teased, and any other negative construction presented in textbooks. Not all the negative construction in male references comes from fictional passages; some appear in ordinary names, and it could be a dangerous implication that male is normally doing everything constructed in textbooks.

5. DISCUSSION

This research's findings demonstrate that there are some differences in how the textbooks portrayed male and female references in their materials. In three of the textbooks analyzed, the results of the corpus study show that male characters occurred less than female characters. Among five categories of gender references, females dominated four of them: famous names, fictional names, generic nouns, and pronouns. Then, the highest presentation is the female pronoun, this could happen because there are lots of female nouns. Then, the highest presentation is the female pronoun, this could happen because there are lots of female nouns. This unbalanced gender representation is not new in gender studies on textbooks, however, this result is in contrast with the findings of Tyarakanita et al. (2021), who are reporting that male subjects in English textbooks are overrepresented. Their study shows females are passively represented in conversation, language sexism surrounds both genders and masculine bias happens, especially in visual representation. Complexly followed, the previous curriculum ELT textbooks analyzed with the secondary ELT textbooks in 2021, show various types of biases towards male characters, stereotyping, linguistic bias, cosmetic bias, fragmentation and isolation, and imbalance selectivity. Males dominated the presentation in terms of visibility, firstness, generic construction, occupation, and activities, while females were stereotyped as housewives and house maintaining activities and less physical activities; on the opposite, males have more complex outdoor, physical activities and even more prestigious occupation (Jannati, 2015; Shallaita et al., 2021; Suwarno et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, in the newest mandated English textbooks for high school, it is the opposite. Female references are overrepresented and possess various characteristics, occupations, and personalities, for example, emotional feelings like anger, sadness, shame, fear, and more. Almost all of the famous names presented in the textbooks are female, there are environmentalists, directors, actresses, and so on. In the newest mandated English textbooks for high school, it is the opposite. Female references are overrepresented and possess various characteristics, occupations, and personalities, for example, emotional feelings, such as anger, sadness, shame, fear, and more. Almost all of the famous names presented in the textbooks are female, there are

environmentalists, directors, actresses, and so on. While male references are underrepresented and do not possess various emotions and occupations, only two kinds of emotions are presented and surround male references which are happy and sad; furthermore, there is only one famous male name that is a writer of children's stories. In a similar manner, a study by Mebratu (2022) shows a low presentation of male adjectives and pronouns, however, males also dominated the visibility, first position, point of view opinion, common noun pairs, pronoun pairs, and proper name pairs in the language used in the textbook (Bachore, 2022). These differences between research findings that vary between male and female domination imply that efforts were made by textbook writers across the globe to achieve gender balance in the language used in the EFL textbook.

Students could unconsciously or consciously process that males could not possess various emotions, it is either happy or sad. Moreover, the complexity of female characters could belittle male students, since they are not familiar with the presentation of males doing house chores, feeling sympathy, and other complex emotions. Textbook writers should be more aware of gender representation as it could affect students' perception of their role in the real world by exposure to the material in the textbooks. In this research, the findings show that female references are more frequently used and have richer emotional characteristics, although there are some positive things that could be gained from the complex representation of the female characters, such as female students will find that they could be anything, independent, contribute values and be smart like the various famous name presented in the textbooks. On the other side, prior research unveiled that female representation in textbooks tends to be family-oriented, fantasy, and pretending, while the male has more complex representation like showing competitive attitude, sportsmanship, aggressiveness, liveliness, courage, leadership, and problem-solving (Anjarwati, 2020).

However, there are also some negative things that could affect students such as their perception towards males; in the findings, there are several negative traits with not enough exposure to other positive traits, which could lead to negative understanding towards male students. Moreover, females show a greater balanced portion of positive and negative collocates than males. This could affect male students' perception of their attitude and roles in the real world; students should not assume that their role is limited to a certain level type of act. Textbook writers should improvise and develop more complex presentations about males and females, and not limited to the visibility presentation, but more exposure to things such as providing context, emotion, and characteristics also should be done in school textbooks to familiarize students with diversity. Previously, in most ELT textbooks feminine pronouns were linked with domestic activities, while masculine pronouns were linked with paying bills, buying cars, repairing cars, and other activities outside chores (Bujupaj & Gashi-Berisha, 2020; Sulaimani, 2017).

Nevertheless, important developments towards female representation in textbooks are made and provided in the newest sets of English textbooks for high school. Considering how stereotypical the previous textbooks were towards females portraying them with socially relaxing activities and housewives (Lestariyana et al., 2020), these newly mandated textbooks did such an important representation in portraying females as independent beings. The textbooks under study demonstrated the portrayal of independent women more explicitly; women are active and have careers, inspiring and contributing to society. Female characters in the textbooks also do physical activities and various range of careers similar to men in any previous textbooks.

This study also shows that male characters could act negatively too; some negative actions are represented by the male characters in the textbooks, for example not doing homework, teasing, moody, reluctant, and any negative deeds shown in the textbooks. The representation can lead to the normalization of negative actions done by men and the presentation is not as well balanced as female characters' characteristics. However, textbooks are media that attract the public and are not likely to be questioned by the student; thus, textbook writers should be more aware as education programs and material should help students identify gender roles and develop strategies to avoid potential gender disparities in the textbooks (Lee, 2014; Wijayanti et al., 2022).

6. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded in terms of gender-related references in textbooks, that there are five categories presented in the textbooks: famous names, fictional names, ordinary names, generic nouns, and pronouns. There are some patterns that can be drawn from the three textbooks analyzed. For example, *English for Change* for grade XI did not present fictional names, which is assumed because it is a textbook used for Islamic institutions and equivalents, and the scope and sequences in the textbook are not suitable for fiction. *Tingkat Lanjut* for grade XI, on the other hand, contributes the most gender-related references in their material and has the highest number of occurrences among the three textbooks. *Tingkat Lanjut* textbook had the most occurrences of fictional names, ordinary names, generic nouns, and pronouns, while the *English for Change* textbook had the most occurrences of famous names. *Tingkat Lanjut* is thought to have the most occurrences because the scope and sequences of the textbook encourage students to write their own expository, narrative, and descriptive texts, and there are many reading passages in the textbook for students to learn.

It can be concluded that the new Merdeka curriculum's mandated English textbooks depicted gender inequality, with male references as the minority. Male references also lacked emotional characteristics other than sadness and happiness, whereas female references experienced anger, sadness, fear, and shame, implying that it is uncommon for male individuals to experience these emotions. There have been some changes in female representation; previously, in other studies, female references were mostly underrepresented and associated with limited occupations such as domestic chores, nursing, and leisure activities; however, in these textbooks, female references are seen to be very active and independent. However, male representation is deteriorating, with male references seen to have a variety of negative characteristics and limited emotion.

However, this study only investigated two EFL textbooks for senior high school (grade 10 and grade 11) as the book for grade 12 is not available yet. Grade 12 students were still being taught using *Kurikulum 2013*. Besides, the present study only used one single corpus, the textbook corpus, and does not use any reference corpus as a control corpus or does not compile non-government textbook corpus. For future research, it is suggested that the study also covers all grades of each level in secondary schools. Future studies can also include EFL textbooks published by private publishers to make a bigger corpus or to make comparisons.

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