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An Analysis of Gender Bias in Bilingual Thematic Children's Picture Storybooks

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Childhood is a period of forming the basic character of every human being, in which basic knowledge about life and living becomes the main goal of the educational process. Various literary works can be used as teaching materials, including those contained in picture story books which can be easily accessed by everyone. However, not only children's storybooks but the textbooks used in schools also show a lot of gender inequality. The purpose of this research was to analyze the gender bias in bilingual thematic children's picture storybooks. The present study used a qualitative design. The researcher analyzed gender from the pictures and text contained in these thematic storybooks. This research discovered bias in gender both in the picture and in texts of storybooks

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is still an issue that many people often talk about. There are some differences in treatment and opportunity between men and women that are still being debated. Especially in Indonesia, even though R. A Kartini has been fighting for women's rights for a long time, until now there is still a stereotype that women have the main task of raising children and doing household chores. This will certainly have an impact on children's development in understanding positive or negative perceptions of gender differences that are formed through this social construction.

Childhood is a period of forming the basic character of every human being, in which basic knowledge about life and living becomes the main goal of the educational process. Social life in the community and its interaction with the surrounding environment will affect its ideological and socio-cultural values. One of the ways to form social-cultural ideology in children is through children's stories. One character that can be built is to understand the values of gender equality. In this case, storybooks have a strategic role in introducing these values to children. Various literary works can be used as teaching materials, including those contained in picture story books which can be easily accessed by everyone. However, not only children's storybooks but the textbooks used in schools also show a lot of gender inequality.

Peterson and Lach (1990) noted that gender portrayal in textbooks reflects social values and behavior. Heilman (2012) noted that how men and women use language is influenced by cultural conditions and social stereotypes about gender roles in communication. Umami (2019) noted that children's literary works included in the books with the title "Kecil-Kecil Punya Karya" were still considered to be less gender-sensitive literary works. It could not cover the fact that these works of children's literature were still not able to meet the qualifications that their works are gender sensitive.

Mante-Estacio, Dumalay, and Rentillo (2018) noted that gender stereotypes like males being authoritative and dominating, and females having submissive attitudes are not reinforced but rather subtly revised as feeling/nurturing verb elements usually attributed to female gender are used by male characters, and verbs showing agency and control (power and status) are prominent in discourses referring to female characters.

The results of research by Mihira, et al. (2021) most English textbooks show an imbalance of representation and gender stereotypes of female characters in the form of dominance of male characters, marginalization of women in domestic roles, a narrow range of work roles for women, and stereotyped characteristics of femininity and masculinity.

Amini and Birjandi (2012) noted that although women make up more than half of the population of the Islamic Republic of Iran and have recently been quite active in various social roles, they suffer from low visibility in both text and pictures. It seems that Iran's Islamic culture tends not to give space for women's visibility. Regarding the portrayal of men/women in activities, women as a whole are stereotyped as housewives and do household chores including cleaning rooms, making tea and baking cakes and only occasionally having the opportunity to research or watch TV. Whereas Men were mostly busy playing football or Ping-Pong, reading newspapers, fixing the car, swimming, finding a new job, buying different things, etc.

Binasdevi (2021) noted that the thematic book of the 2013 curriculum, the revised edition of the 2018 3rd class 4th theme regarding "my rights and obligations" found that the substance of the contents of the book contained gender inequality. Gender inequality is reflected through pictures and story texts which fall into three categories, namely (1) gender inequality in character values, (2) gender inequality in work roles, and (3) gender inequality in preferences.

Setiyawan and Lestari (2021) noted that the appearance of gender bias in children's books is just as dangerous as the issue of radicalism. They found the most prominent form of gender bias is the traditional portrayal of gender relations. Women tend to be introduced to domestic roles related to household and child affairs.

Lee and Collins (2006) examined the gender representation of English textbooks in Hong Kong. Gender equality was examined in seven categories including omission (visibility), roles, generic masculine constructs, titles, order of appearance, pictorial representations of both sexes, and their roles and activities. A comparison of the roles of men and women in recent and previous textbooks shows that textbook authors are becoming more aware of gender equality practices in some categories.

Railsback (1993) noted that gender roles serve to help children construct and make sense of the reality of the world around them. She said that just like any other form of discrimination, gender bias in children's literature affects how children see themselves and others.

The limitation of this research is the researcher focused on a set of bilingual thematic children's picture storybooks which consist of twelve themes published by Lingkar Media, an Indonesian local publisher. The reason why the researchers have chosen this storybook is that it was rare to find children's storybooks on the market with the theme in them.

Picture Storybook

Children's story books are one of the literary works published for children's reading material. This storybook can be used as entertainment or teaching materials for children. Usually, the stories in children's storybooks are simple and adapted to children's intellectual development. Storybooks can also be one source of moral education for children. In general, storybooks published for children will have attractive pictures and colors.

There are many definitions of children's picture story books made by experts, one of which is Sarumpaet (2010: 18) who notes that picture story books are books that tell stories using pictures. In this book, both stories and pictures have the function of conveying stories so that both aspects are equally present, complement and explain each other. According to Tompkins & Hoskissom in Ratnasari and Zubaidah, (2019), picture story books have short texts, generally consisting of 32 pages consisting of words and pictures which are combined in the story to convey information. He said that with a good picture storybook, children will be assisted in the process of understanding and enriching the experience of the story.

In summary, a picture storybook is a book that contains stories that have meaning and pictures that explain the story from the book. Picture storybooks for children usually contain more pictures than text stories. The colors used in the book are also more colorful to attract children's interest in reading.

Gender Bias

Khusen (2014) noted that gender bias is a tendency or prejudice against certain results in gender inequality. The existence of gender bias can be seen in gender inequality which is manifested in various forms of injustice, namely economic marginalization or impoverishment, subordination or being a "second human being", stereotypes or negative labeling, violence, and multi-burden or a longer workload and more types.

Rong, et al (2021) noted that considerable progress has been made in increasing access to education. However, gender inequalities persist throughout the education process. The "circular effect" of gender bias causes the gender bias implied in textbooks to gradually strengthen and continue from generation to generation.

Rahminawati (2001) noted that The emergence of this gender bias (affecting more women) is caused by the values and norms of Indonesian society which limit women's movements and assign tasks and roles that are considered less important than other gender types (men).

From the background of the problems above, childhood is an important time to start introducing gender equality in their daily social life. One of them is by using a picture storybook. However, many of the available story books and textbooks still contain a gender bias. It is very important to analyze the forms of gender bias in children's picture stories, as an evaluation material for textbook writers so they can reconstruct subject matter that is gender biased to be more gender-responsive so that children will have true knowledge about gender.

The research gap of this study was analyzing the roles of women and men in thematic story books because there are very few children's story books in the form of thematic books. It is important to learn because it can help parents recognize how gender bias is between girls and boys in storybooks so they can choose the right storybook for their children. Moreover, the result of this research could give information to the researcher in the future to solve the problems that have been found in the research. In addition, it could help develop children's picture storybooks that are free from gender bias. There were two main questions in this research:

1. What are the differences in the appearances of the male and female characters in the picture?
2. What are the differences between males and females mentions in the text?

2. METHOD

The purpose of this research was to analyze the gender bias in bilingual thematic children's picture storybooks. The study used the content analysis research method, which is included in the qualitative research methodology. The researcher read each book one by one for data collection meticulously. It also allowed children's insight while reading it and how these storybooks could form their ideas and views about gender roles in social life.

2.1 Sample

The researcher used purposive sampling to determine the sample. There was no single dialogue in the story. All of the text was a monologue story. The research explored a set of bilingual thematic children's picture storybooks which consist of twelve themes. All of the storybooks wrote by Rian F. Rahman and published by Lingkar Media. The titles of the bilingual thematic children's picture storybooks for each theme are:

a. Theme 1: Myself. "Me and My Favourites Things". "Aku dan Kesukaanku"
b. Theme 2: My Family. "I Love My Family". "Aku Sayang Keluargaku"
c. Theme 3: My Environment. "Me and My Environment". "Aku dan Lingkunganku"
d. Theme 4: Animals. "I Love Animals". "Aku Sayang Binatang"
e. Theme 5: Plants. "I love Plants". "Aku Sayang Tanaman"
f. Theme 6: Vehicles. "Me and Vehicles". "Aku dan Kendaraan"
g. Theme 7: Universe. "Me and the Universe". "Aku dan Alam Semesta"
h. Theme 8: My Country. "I Love My Country". "Aku Cinta Negaraku"
i. Theme 9: "I Love Cleanliness". "Aku Cinta Kebersihan"
j. Theme 10: "I Like to Save My Money". "Aku Gemar Menabung"
k. Theme 11: "I am A Responsible Kid". "Aku Anak Bertanggung Jawab"
l. Theme 12: "I am An Honest Kid". "Aku Anak Jujur

2.2 Data Analysis

A qualitative descriptive method was used to analyze the selected storybooks. The data analysis technique used was semiotic analysis by Charles Sanders Pierce. The semiotic method analyses data and describes the meaning contained in it. The selection of Pierce's semiotics method was adapted to the research objective, namely to show gender inequality contained in a book.

The theory of Charles Sanders Peirce is a grand theory in semiotics. Peirce reveals semiotics as a whole, a structural description of all signification systems. Peirce wants to identify the basic particles of the sign and

recombine all the components in a single structure (Suherdiana, 2008). The coding categories to be used for data analysis are as follows:

a. Male and female characters in the picture

A tally was made of the number of representatives both male and female characters in each book picture. In this case, the researcher determined the gender based on the appearance shown in the picture and the names given.

Example: Pictures on book's cover

Figure 1. Cover of bilingual thematic children's picture storybooks.

From the picture above, the apparent difference between men and women was men had short hair while women wore hijabs that cover their hair.

b. Male and female mentions in the text

These included both male and female references represented with personal pronouns, e.g. he, she, his, her, etc. In addition includes gender-identifying symbolization, e.g. mom, father, uncle, aunt, etc. A tally was made of the number of male and female mentions found in every instance of the texts.

The researchers analyzed thoroughly the whole bilingual children's storybook series twice to make a sure accurate analysis of the data. Revisiting items was used if there were discrepancies in the findings obtained from both analyses.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The findings of the analysis described above are presented in this section and then discussed in the following section.

a. Male and female characters in the picture

In the thematic bilingual children's storybooks analyzed, it was discovered that male and female characters were unequally in every picture. The picture in all storybooks, the total number of occurrences of males and females was 163 and 42, respectively (Table 1). The ratio of males to females in pictures was close to 8:2. There was a huge gap between the presence of male pictures compared to female ones in the storybooks.

Out of 12 themes, only 1 theme had a more female presence in its pictures. The results showed that the eleventh book also contains a gender bias, where the storybook only had female pictures and none of the male pictures. The fourth and eighth storybooks also contain a gender bias in their pictures, where all pictures were male. The researcher identified gender by picture appearance where males had short hair while females wore the hijab to cover their head and abaya or has long hair.

Table 1
The number and frequency of male/female characters represented in pictures

No	Theme	Percentage %	
		Male Characters	Female Characters
1	Me and My Favourites Things	13 (86.7%)	2 (13.3%)
2	I Love My Family	10 (66.7%)	5 (33.3%)
3	Me and My Environment	27 (96.4%)	1 (3.6%)
4	I Love Animals	7 (100%)	0 (0%)

5	I Love Plants	7 (63.6%)	4 (36.4%)
6	Me and Vehicle	16 (80%)	4 (20%)
7	Me and Universe	15 (83.3%)	3 (16.7%)
8	I Love My Country	30 (100%)	0 (0%)
9	I Love Cleanliness	13 (86.7%)	2 (13.3%)
10	I Like to Save My Money	14 (93.3%)	1 (6.7%)
11	I am A Responsible Kid	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
12	I am An Honest Kid	11 (64,7%)	6 (35.3%)
	Total	**163 (79.5%)**	**42 (20.5%)**

In addition to the eleventh, fourth, and future storybooks already mentioned, thematic storybooks with other themes also contain elements of gender bias, where all pictures have 60% more male pictures compared to female pictures. Out of the twelve themes in these storybooks, all of the themes belong to the man as the main character of the story. Only the eleventh storybook had a female as the main character of the story, the title of the storybook was "I am A Responsible Kid".

b. Male and female characters in texts

The result showed that the total number of occurrences of the male to female characters in texts was 30 and 24, respectively (Table 2). The ratio of male to female characters in texts was 5:4. Texts used the code personal pronoun "I" as the subject. The personal pronoun "I" did not take into account gender differences. In addition, apart from the personal pronoun "I", personal pronouns for the second person and plural (you, we, they) also did not pay attention to gender differences. All the texts in these storybooks used the first person point of view so they often used the personal pronoun "I".

Table 2
The number and frequency of male/female characters represented in texts

| No | Theme | Percentage % | |
		Male Characters	Female Characters
1	Me and My Favourites Things	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)
2	I Love My Family	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)
3	Me and My Environment	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
4	I Love Animals	4 (66.7%)	2 (33.3%)
5	I Love Plants	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)
6	Me and Vehicle	10 (91%)	1 (9%)
7	Me and Universe	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
8	I Love My Country	2 (100%)	0 (0%)
9	I Love Cleanliness	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
10	I Like to Save My Money	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
11	I am A Responsible Kid	1 (20%)	4 (80%)
12	I am An Honest Kid	0 (0%)	4 (100%)
	Total	30 (55.5%)	24 (44.5%)

The male and female characters in storybook texts can also be seen from the use of gender-based nouns such as mom, dad, father, brother, uncle, grandmother, and grandfather. Moreover, in the fourth theme with the title I Love Animals, gender-based nouns were used to identify animals such as roosters and hens. Personal pronouns "She" and "her" were used to identify gender in the twelfth storybook with the title I am an honest kid.

3.2 Discussion

This research discovered bias in gender both in pictures and in texts of storybooks. The examination of the pictures in the children's storybooks described more male pictures than female as shown in the findings. The frequency of both male and female characters in the picture was unequal or imbalanced. The results of the 8:2 comparisons between the male and female character pictures showed that there were gender biases in this set of bilingual children's picture storybooks. Not only gender bias in children's storybooks, a cross-country study

conducted by İncikabi & Ulusoy (2019) highlighted gender bias in mathematics textbooks in Singapore, Australia, and Turkey, they found there was an unbalanced representation of gender across all mathematics textbook samples, the results showed that textbooks from all countries had more male content.

Gender bias was very strong when you read these sets of bilingual children's picture storybooks. The selection of the main male characters for 11 themes and only 1 theme with the female as the main role also clearly shows that there were gender biases in this storybook. In the eighth theme of storybooks, there were seven pictures of Indonesia's national heroes, but not a single of them picture the female national hero. This is also like the results of research conducted by Nashriyah and Khairul (2018) which showed that the scope of work of men is wider than that of women in English senior high school textbooks.

Moreover, the picture of the flag ceremony in the storybooks had all male students and teachers as the participants of the ceremony. Besides the more dominant main characters in this storybook, the family members featured in these storybooks were also mostly male, such as brothers. From the picture illustration in story books, it can be seen that all the friends and teachers of the main male character were male. From this picture, we can also see that the male character in this story goes to an all-boys school.

There was no balance between the presence of male 'characters compared to female characters in texts of storybooks. It showed in Table 2 that the percentage ratio of male to female characters in texts was 5:4, where male characters are more dominant than females. The number of male characters in this set of bilingual children's picture storybooks makes the female characters less visible. Gender equality should be introduced starting from childhood so that children have a better view of gender equality. Johns in Anderson and Hamilton (2005) discovered that children's books with gender role stereotypes caused children to have unfavorable opinions of females, while children's books without such stereotypes caused children to have more favorable attitudes towards females. It seems that parental responsibilities portrayed in children's literature also have a direct impact on parents' and children's attitudes, expectations, and even behavior.

Even though there was gender inequality in the pictures and texts in this storybook, the daily activities carried out by the characters in the story did not show any special differences in the activities carried out by men and women. Like the results of previous studies which explained that women do more household activities, in this storybook the roles of men and women are equal. An example is how the male character helps with washing dishes, sweeping the house, and watering flowers which are more like female duties. This supports Lan & Jingxia's (2019) statement that it is not the innate gender that causes inequality between males and females in real life and that females' abilities are lower than males, but the environment they are confronted with.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion above the male and female characters were found to be imbalanced, and the gap between the differences between both characters ware huge. The stereotype about females was a less important role than males in social life viewed from these storybooks. Nevertheless, the gender representation in the text also showed that male characters had more place than female characters.

Supposedly because these storybooks were intended for children who were in a period of growth and development, the storybook author should not only focus on the main male character. Even though these thematic storybooks had more pictures than texts, the author could also make women the main character because each different theme could be written with different characters that were still related to the previous storyline.

This research only examined thematic bilingual children's storybooks which consisted of twelve themes by one publisher. These storybooks also only provided monologue text and none of the dialogue. The suggestion for future researchers on this topic was a recommendation to analyze more than one publisher and texts that contain not only monologue but also dialogue to have a better and more accurate finding.

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