MULTIMODALITY IN THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK IMAGES : GENDER REPRESENTATION ANALYSIS

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A B S T R A C T

Gender representation in educational materials plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of societal roles. Previous studies have predominantly examined gender representation through written text, often overlooking the visual dimension, particularly in English textbooks. This study investigates gender representation through images in a tenth-grade English textbook using a multimodal discourse analysis, specifically focusing on representational aspects. A total of 131 images were examined, but only three met the criteria for analysis—each featuring both male and female human participants. These images were analyzed based on the roles, actions, and contexts in which each gender was portrayed. The findings indicate a balanced and non-stereotypical representation. In the first image, a male and a female student appear as academic equals without hierarchical cues. The second image features two women and one man in a professional environment, where one woman assumes a leadership position. The third image depicts a mixed-gender social setting with equal participation and non-hierarchical interaction. These portrayals challenge conventional gender stereotypes and suggest a shift toward more equitable and inclusive gender representation. The results underline the importance of visual analysis in identifying and promoting gender balance in learning materials. It is recommended that educational content developers incorporate more images that reflect gender equality across various domains to support a more inclusive learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

Gender representation often frames men and women as if they belong to entirely different worlds, reinforcing the idea that their roles, abilities, and ambitions are predetermined by nature rather than shaped by society. Historically, gender representation has frequently favored the depiction of males as dominant figures, whereas females are often represented in subordinate roles. This disparity is apparent in linguistic practices, visual portrayals, and the nature of activities allocated to each gender. male figures are more frequently shown in professional settings and leadership positions, while females are often depicted in nurturing or supportive roles. Gender representation in educational

materials, particularly in English textbooks, plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of societal roles and norms associated with masculinity and femininity.

One way to identify the issue with gender representation in general textbooks such as magazines, comics, and novels is by examining the prevalence of gender stereotypes that align with traditional roles assigned to men and women. This observation raises the question of whether similar patterns exist in English textbooks, particularly those used in senior high schools. Research indicates that an uneven distribution of roles, characters, and activities across genders can lead to under-representation of one gender (Aguilar, 2021). Many educational materials depict women primarily in domestic roles—such as housewives, cooks, or caregivers—thereby reinforcing the stereotype that women are chiefly responsible for household duties and childcare. In contrast, men are often portrayed as breadwinners, tasked with providing for the family's financial needs and overall well-being.

Furthermore, a lot of studies have shown that women are frequently depicted as more subdued and possessing lower social status in relation to their occupations (Wu & Liu, 2015). On the other hand, men are often characterized as more assertive, chaotic, and aggressive. In terms of activities, Lee and Collins (2009) found that men were more likely to engage in physically demanding pursuits like athletics, while women were more often associated with less strenuous activities such as music or sewing.

Several previous research have investigated the representation of gender in English textbooks, uncovering a range of findings concerning the depiction of men and women. Numerous textbooks continue to display imbalanced representation, especially in visual and textual content, where male characters frequently prevail (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Yang, 2011). Research has also highlighted the ongoing presence of gender stereotypes, particularly the frequent portrayal of women in conventional roles like housewives or teachers (Fadhila &Yan, 2017). In contrast, some studies have documented cases of improved gender representation in specific textbooks, indicating progress towards achieving equality (Nagatomo, 2010).

Nonetheless, these findings do not hold universal applicability, as numerous studies persist in identifying significant disparities. One study highlighted the prevalence of male characters in both illustrations and dialogues, which plays a significant role in perpetuating gender biases within the narrative (Sudewi et al., 2021). Similarly, female characters were frequently found to occupy passive roles, whereas male characters were portrayed in positions of leadership (Ekasiwi & Ena, 2022). A detailed examination explored the

linguistic dimensions of gender representation, highlighting the employment of lexical hedges and fillers that sustain stereotypes associated with gendered language (Suwastini et al., 2023).

Although numerous studies have examined gender representation in English textbooks (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Yang, 2011; Fadhila & Yan, 2017; Nagatomo, 2010; Sudewi et al., 2021; Ekasiwi & Ena, 2022; Suwastini et al., 2023), these studies have predominantly adopted a discourse analysis approach with written text as its based of analysis, as well as focused primarily on the aspects of gender stratification, neglecting the aspect of images as non-linguistics text that can also give a wide range of exploration on the gender representation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate the gender representation on the textbook for senior high school from non-linguistics aspects, the images, by using other methodological way in analyzing it.

The novelty of this study lies into two aspects: first, the current research offers a new conceptual framework by preferring a specific element of textbook for senior high school, that is images, as non-linguitics text that will be analyzed regarding gender representation. Second, this study seeks to address this gap by adopting a multimodal discourse analysis as it methodological framework to overlook other critical dimensions of gender representation, which is representational modes.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study analyses how might the meaning of images be revealed through multimodal discourse analysis proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) which is consisted of three elements, namely representational, interactional, and compositional. But in this study only analyze Representational elements. The researcher used the English textbook *English in Mind* for 10th grade to accomplish this research. This book was written by Herbert Puchta & Jeff Stranks and Richard Carter & Peter Lewis-Jones and edited by Hendytio Rumbiono. This textbook consist of 1m4 units and 128 pages.

The data for this study is derived from a textbook that consists of 14 units and contains a total of 131 images. As the focus of this research is on gender representation, not all images are included in the analysis. The study specifically selects images that feature both male and female participants in the same frame, allowing for a comparative analysis of how each gender is depicted. The images chosen for analysis are limited to those featuring real human figures, excluding cartoons or animated characters. This decision is made to ensure that the analysis reflects realistic portrayals of gender roles, which are more

likely to influence learners' perceptions. By focusing on real-life representations, the study aims to provide a more accurate understanding of gender dynamics presented in the textbook.

Out of the 131 images available in the textbook, only 3 images meet the criteria for this research. The selection of these images is based on specific criteria to ensure a focused and meaningful analysis of gender representation. Firstly, only images that depict both male and female participants together are included. This allows for a direct comparison of gender roles, actions, and relationships within the same context, making it possible to examine how each gender is portrayed relative to the other. Secondly, the analysis is limited to real human figures, meaning that only photographs of actual people are selected, while illustrations, cartoons, or animated characters are excluded. This focus on authentic representations ensures that the findings reflect realistic portrayals of gender roles that are more likely to influence learners' perceptions.

1. To analyze the images systematically, content analysis will be deployed in thjs section by applying the three metafunctions proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Representational analysis focuses on identifying **participants** (people, objects) and their **actions** within the images. The goal is to uncover the roles and activities associated with each gender. The researcher will examine different elements of the images, which include:

    a. Participants: Identify the gender of individuals depicted in the images and analyze their roles and actions. This involves observing whether male or female characters are portrayed in active or passive roles and in what settings (e.g., workplace, home, school).

    b. Processes: Analyze what actions each gender is shown performing, such as leading, collaborating, or following, to determine if there are patterns that reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles.

    c. Circumstances: Examine the contexts in which these actions occur, such as locations and objects associated with each gender, to uncover any implied gender norms.

2. Next, the researcher will organize the findings by noting the page numbers, chapters, and image captions where representations of gender appear. The data will then be compiled into tables to provide a clear overview of how gender roles are visually represented across different sections of the textbook.

3. After organizing the findings in the table, the next step is to classify the data based on the type of actions and roles assigned to each gender, such as professional, educational, domestic, or social roles. This classification will help in understanding if one gender is portrayed in a more dominant or diverse range of roles compared to the other.

4. Lastly, the researcher will draw conclusions based on the analysis of the representational function. The conclusions will summarize key findings about how gender roles are depicted in the images, identifying whether these representations reinforce stereotypes or suggest a more balanced view of gender roles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Pic 1

The image features a young man and woman walking side by side in what is clearly an academic setting—a school hallway with bulletin boards and educational materials in the background. Both individuals are portrayed in a manner that emphasizes equality and mutual respect. They are smiling, maintaining eye contact, and appear to be engaged in a friendly and balanced conversation. Their physical proximity, open body language, and casual attire all contribute to a visual narrative that avoids gendered stereotypes and instead reflects inclusivity and equal social roles.

From the perspective of the narrative process, the image depicts action and interaction. The male and female participants are both actively involved in a shared activity—walking and conversing—without any indication of hierarchy or dominance. Their mutual gaze and the symmetry of their positions within the frame construct a visual storyline that promotes balance and cooperation rather than traditional gender roles, which often place men in leading or authoritative positions and women in passive or secondary ones. In this image, neither gender assumes a dominant role; rather, they are both portrayed as equal participants in a moment of peer interaction. Simultaneously, the conceptual

process in the image supports a more static and symbolic representation of identity. Both individuals are situated in a school environment and dressed in a neutral, modern style, which communicates their shared identity as students. The absence of gendered symbols—such as domestic tools for women or professional instruments for men—further strengthens the idea that both are equally embedded in the academic and intellectual sphere. This symbolic framing supports a progressive depiction of gender, where access to educational and social spaces is not determined by gender norms.

The circumstantial elements of the image, such as the setting and associated objects, also reinforce this interpretation. There are no contextual clues suggesting traditional roles tied to home, caregiving, authority, or leadership. Instead, the setting provides a neutral, inclusive backdrop that positions both participants as learners and peers. This eliminates any implication of a gendered hierarchy and instead suggests a shared space of opportunity and engagement. This image serves as a strong example of a non-stereotypical, balanced representation of gender roles. Men and women are depicted in non-traditional roles, with neither shown as more active or passive than the other. Both genders are equally engaged, equally visible, and equally valued within the visual narrative and conceptual message.

Pic 2

The image features three individuals-two women and one man-engaged in a collaborative office environment. All participants are dressed in formal business attire, with one woman standing confidently on the left in a black blazer and white shirt, a man seated centrally in a pinstripe suit, and a second woman seated on the right in a light-colored blazer. Their positioning and attire immediately signal equality in professional status, with no visual hierarchy suggesting dominance based on gender.

In terms of participants and processes, the standing woman appears to be leading a discussion or presentation, as indicated by her active posture and central role in the composition. The seated man and second woman are shown participating in the interaction, with the latter smiling toward the camera while holding documents, suggesting

engagement and professionalism. This distribution of actions challenges traditional gender stereotypes by portraying women in both leadership and collaborative roles, while the man is depicted as an equal contributor rather than an authority figure. The circumstances further reinforce this egalitarian narrative: the modern office setting, devoid of gendered symbols (e.g., domestic items or overtly masculine/feminine decor), positions all individuals as equally competent professionals. The absence of stereotypical contextual cues, such as a woman holding a coffee tray or a man dominating a meeting, underscores a deliberate shift toward neutral, inclusive representation.

When classifying the data, the roles depicted align with professional and collaborative functions rather than domestic or subordinate ones. Both women are shown in positions of potential authority-one standing assertively and the other actively contributing to the discussion-while the man's seated posture does not imply passivity but rather collaborative engagement. The diversity of representation is notable, with racial diversity among the participants and a gender ratio (2:1 in favor of women) that subtly subverts the historical overrepresentation of men in professional contexts. This framing suggests an intentional effort to normalize women's leadership in workplaces and present gender equality as a default standard.

In Pic 2, both men and women are portrayed in non-traditional roles. The women are depicted in professional business attire and are actively participating in a workplace setting-one even appears to be leading or presenting, which challenges the traditional stereotype of women being relegated to passive, supportive, or domestic roles. The man is also shown as a professional, but not in a dominant or authoritative position. This balanced representation moves away from conventional gender roles and instead presents both genders as equals in a modern, professional context. Neither gender is shown as distinctly more active or passive. In fact, the image subverts traditional expectations by depicting a woman in the most active role (standing, possibly leading a discussion or presentation), while the man and another woman are seated and engaged in the interaction. All participants appear involved and attentive, with no one relegated to a purely passive role. This visual arrangement emphasizes equality and collaboration, rather than reinforcing a hierarchy based on gender.

Pic 3

The image captures four young adults-two females and two males-seated around a small, round table in what appears to be a relaxed café or student lounge environment. The participants are similarly aged, suggesting a peer group, and are dressed in casual, colorful attire that does not conform to any overt gendered dress codes. The females, positioned on the left side of the table, wear a green cardigan and a purple-pink outfit, while the males on the right are dressed in green-striped and pink polo shirts. This balanced composition immediately communicates a sense of equality, as there is no visual hierarchy or spatial dominance based on gender.

Delving into the participants and their roles, the image demonstrates a deliberate effort to portray both males and females as equally involved in the social interaction. Each individual is engaged in the conversation, as evidenced by their open body language, direct eye contact, and genuine smiles. No participant appears isolated or marginalized; instead, the group dynamic is one of inclusivity and mutual respect. This is significant, as it contrasts with traditional depictions in educational or social imagery where one gender-often males-might be shown as the central figure or leader, while females are relegated to peripheral or passive roles. Here, the visual cues suggest that all participants are valued and active contributors to the group's social exchange.

In terms of processes, the actions depicted are collaborative and interactive. All four individuals are participating in the conversation, with gestures and expressions indicating active listening and engagement. There is no evidence that one gender is dominating the discussion or assuming a leadership role; rather, the interaction appears fluid and balanced, with each person contributing equally. This challenges conventional gender norms that often assign assertiveness and leadership to males and passivity or supportiveness to females. The image, therefore, not only avoids reinforcing these stereotypes but actively subverts them by presenting both genders as equally capable of social agency and participation. Examining the circumstances further enhances our understanding of the image's message. The setting-a public, neutral space such as a café-lacks any objects or background elements that would suggest traditional gender roles, such as domestic items

for women or symbols of authority for men. The round table, a subtle but important detail, symbolizes equality, as it eliminates any "head" position that might imply hierarchy. The presence of drinks and the informal atmosphere reinforce the idea that this is a space for open, egalitarian social interaction, free from the constraints of gendered expectations.

When the findings are organized and classified, it becomes evident that the roles assigned to both genders are strictly social and peer-based, with no indication of professional, domestic, or educational hierarchies. Both males and females are depicted as friends or acquaintances, sharing a moment of camaraderie and mutual enjoyment. The equal numerical representation (two males and two females) further underscores the image's commitment to balance and inclusivity. There is also an implicit message about diversity and acceptance, as the group dynamic is one of harmony rather than competition or division.

The image presents non-traditional gender roles for both men and women, challenging conventional stereotypes through its composition and contextual cues. Traditionally, social and educational imagery often depicts men as dominant figures in group settings (leading conversations, occupying central positions) and women as passive listeners or supporters. However, in this image, both genders are portrayed as equal participants in a casual social interaction. The two men and two women are seated symmetrically around a round table, a visual metaphor for equality, with no individual positioned as a leader or given hierarchical prominence. Their roles are strictly social and collaborative, devoid of associations with domesticity, authority, or gendered expectations. This framing aligns with contemporary ideals of gender neutrality in social spaces.

Regarding activity levels, neither gender is depicted as more active or passive than the other. All participants are engaged in mutual conversation, evidenced by their open body language, direct eye contact, and shared smiles. The absence of overtly dominant gestures (e.g., pointing, standing, or interrupting) or submissive postures (e.g., looking downward, withdrawing) reinforces the idea of balanced participation. The women are not relegated to passive roles like note-taking or serving refreshments, nor are the men portrayed as commanding the discussion. Instead, both genders contribute equally to the interaction, reflecting a modern, egalitarian approach to social dynamics.

Discussion

The detailed visual descriptions of Pics 1, 2, and 3 offer compelling counterexamples to entrenched gender biases frequently documented in Indonesian EFL textbooks. These

images are especially relevant when examined through the lenses of visibility vs. role disparity, linguistic and visual stereotypes, and emerging trends in gender representation.

In the area of visibility vs. role disparity, Yanti and Wirza (2022) identified that while female characters were often more visible in vocational high school EFL textbooks, they were usually placed in passive or supportive roles, while males were depicted in dynamic and authoritative contexts. Similarly, Rizkiyah et al. (2022) found that male figures were associated with professional and public roles, while females were confined to domestic or background settings. The images examined here disrupt such portrayals. For example, in Pic 1, a male and female student are equally involved in a shared academic space, with no cues suggesting hierarchy. Their mutual gaze, physical proximity, and body language reflect an egalitarian dynamic, challenging the idea that increased visibility of women in textbooks necessarily translates into equitable roles. Distinguishing between gender and sex is challenging due to their interconnected nature. Gender constitutes a multifaceted interaction of biological, social, and cultural elements. Thiyagu (2015) defines gender as the roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women within families, societies, and cultures. This perspective emphasizes that gender is not a static attribute but rather a social construct that varies across diverse cultures and historical contexts. Gender encompasses a broad spectrum of identities and expressions, which can differ significantly from the binary classifications of male and female. Butler (1990) offers a comprehensive analysis, positing that gender is performative, shaped by the repetition of actions and behaviors that align with societal norms and expectations. This performative aspect suggests that individuals actively create their gender identities through daily practices rather than simply embodying pre-defined roles. In contrast, sex refers to the biological differences between individuals' genitals and their physiological functions (Cromer & Brugeilles, 2009). It encompasses characteristics such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, and hormonal profiles that define male and female identities. While sex is typically assigned at birth based on observable physical traits, it is important to recognize that this binary classification does not account for intersex individuals who may possess a combination of male and female anatomical features or chromosomal patterns.

Visual stereotypes also persist in many textbooks. According to Hasanah et al. (2021), illustrations often depict women in traditional domestic roles or as dependent characters, while men are shown in positions of agency or control. Likewise, Fithriani (2022) reported linguistic patterns in EFL materials that reinforce conventional gender roles, referring to men as "breadwinners" and women as "homemakers." Against this backdrop,

Pic 2 stands out. It shows a professional setting where two women and one man are collaboratively engaged, with one woman taking a clear leadership role. The absence of domestic cues or gendered symbols reflects a conscious effort to portray all participants as equally competent professionals, countering the gendered binaries seen in much of the literature.

Gender representation in textbooks materials has been widely studied, revealing consistent patterns of bias and inequality. Research on Arabic language textbooks, particularly those used in Islamic schools in Indonesia, indicates a notable male dominance in both verbal and visual representations. Male characters are more frequently depicted across various themes, with the exception of the theme of "traveling," which is female-dominated (Kuraedah. et al. 2023) This highlights the need for pedagogical interventions, such as developing supplementary materials and promoting gender equality through government-endorsed textbooks. Similarly, studies on mathematics textbooks have uncovered implicit gender biases; for instance, a study of German mathematics books found that male characters were more often associated with problem-solving and intellectual activities, while female characters were portrayed less prominently or linked to traditional roles (Mills and Mustapha, 2015). A larger-scale quantitative analysis of 1,255 school textbooks from 34 countries revealed pervasive gender bias across subjects. Women and girls were underrepresented compared to men and boys and were often depicted in stereotypical roles such as nurses or housekeepers, with less association to work or achievement and more emphasis on appearances and domestic settings (Crawfurd. et al. 2024). Although higher-income countries showed somewhat less unequal representation, stereotypes persisted globally.

Examinations of senior high school English textbooks indicate the presence of systemic gender biases in textual representations, reinforcing stereotypes consistent with traditional biological roles. Male pronouns, including he and his, constitute 63% of generic examples in textual representation, thereby reinforcing the perception of males as the default gender in professional contexts. Phrases such as "A doctor treats his patients" implicitly establish men as authoritative figures in high-status professions, while women are linguistically marginalized (Habib, 2021). Occupational roles illustrate this imbalance: males are predominantly represented as engineers (82%) and politicians (75%), positions associated with leadership and technical expertise, while females are overrepresented as teachers (65%) and nurses (78%), roles connected to caregiving and support. This textual asymmetry reflects societal stereotypes, implicitly instructing students to link men with

public, decision-making roles and women with nurturing, subordinate positions (Sujatmiko, 2021).

Visual representation intensifies these biases by utilizing imagery that reinforces gendered expectations. In STEM-related visuals, males represent 58% of the subjects, frequently portrayed in dynamic poses such as running, debating, or leading, which highlight their agency and authority (Wu & Liu, 2015). Their central placement in images, along with the use of bold colours such as blue and black, increases their prominence and authority. Conversely, females are often depicted in peripheral or passive roles, such as supporting male counterparts or observing events. Pastel colours such as pink and yellow, which are culturally associated with femininity, contribute to the trivialization of their presence. A textbook image may depict boys actively conducting a science experiment at the center, while girls are positioned at the margins, passively taking notes. The compositional choices indicate to students that male contributions are innovative and impactful, whereas female roles are portrayed as secondary (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The influence of these representations is significant. Textbooks reinforce biological determinism by consistently associating males with STEM fields and leadership through both text and visuals, suggesting that men are inherently suited for technical or authoritative roles. In contrast, girls absorb the notion that their inherent role is in caregiving or supportive tasks, which diminishes their ambitions in STEM fields or leadership positions. According to UNESCO (2019), these portrayals are associated with reduced female enrolment in STEM programs worldwide (UNESCO, 2017). Moreover, the insufficient critical engagement of teachers with these materials, stemming from inadequate training, permits stereotypes to remain unchallenged, thereby entrenching them further into students' perspectives. This cycle sustains gender inequities, constraining career options and reinforcing societal hierarchies well beyond students' departure from the classroom.

On the topic of emerging trends, some progress has been observed. Chojimah and Widodo (2023) highlighted examples from Indonesian EFL textbooks that incorporate more balanced visual and textual representations, including depictions of women in STEM careers or public roles. Similarly, Luthfiah et al. (2023) documented cases where textbooks presented female characters as active contributors in academic and professional contexts. Pic 3 complements these findings by showcasing an evenly gendered group of students in a public, neutral environment. The symmetrical layout, open interaction, and absence of

stereotypical gestures create a narrative of mutual respect and parity, emphasizing inclusivity and non-hierarchical social participation.

Finally, the pedagogical implications of these visual shifts are significant. As Yanti (2023) notes, textbook visuals shape students' perceptions of gender and influence classroom interactions. Without critical intervention, materials that reflect traditional roles can perpetuate harmful stereotypes. However, images like those examined here can aid educators in fostering critical thinking and promoting gender equity in language education. These visuals may be used to stimulate discussion, model inclusive practices, and demonstrate what equitable gender representation can look like.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study analyzes gender representation in images within a 10th-grade English textbook, employing multimodal discourse analysis with a focus on representational elements. The findings indicate that the selected images present a more balanced depiction of gender, challenging traditional stereotypes associated with the roles of men and women. In the first image, both a male and female student are shown walking together in an academic setting, with no visual indicators of gender-based hierarchy. The second image portrays two women and one man in a professional context, with one woman clearly taking a leadership role, thus subverting the traditional depiction of women in subordinate positions. The third image illustrates an egalitarian social interaction between male and female peers, further eliminating traditional gendered roles. These findings highlight progress in achieving more equitable gender representation in English textbooks, which can positively influence students' perceptions of gender roles.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that educational material developers pay closer attention to gender representation, not only in professional or domestic contexts but also in illustrating gender equality across various fields. Incorporating images that depict men and women in equal roles—whether in academic, professional, or social settings—can help counteract prevalent gender stereotypes. Furthermore, adopting a broader multimodal approach to analyzing gender representation in educational materials is crucial to ensure that gender roles presented are not only equal but also foster an inclusive understanding for students. This approach will contribute to reducing the reinforcement of traditional gender norms and promote more inclusive pedagogical practices.

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