

A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN INDONESIAN EFL TEXTBOOKS

Nurul Chojimah^[1], Estu Widodo^[2]

^[1] nurulchoy2@yahoo.com

^[1]UIN Sayyid Alirahamtullah Tulungagung, Tulungagung, Indonesia

^[2]Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang Indonesia

Abstract: Gender inequality remains a prevalent issue in countries such as Indonesia in many communication and social media. One such medium is EFL textbooks. This qualitative study aimed to investigate how visual gender representation in EFL textbooks and describe social factors contributing to the patterns of the representation. The data for this study were human images in three EFL textbooks for senior high school students in Indonesia published by the Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia. Coding and classifying were the methods of data collection. Three dimensions of discourse—description, interpretation, and explanation—were used as the framework for the data analysis. The current study reveals that females and males are visually represented symmetrically, yet the stereotyping of males and females remains prevalent. Women’s movement might be the backgrounding of the depiction of the two genders in a symmetrical position. However, subtle conventional gender stereotypes are also portrayed in this study.

Keywords: Gender inequality, gender representation, EFL textbooks, visual representation.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality remains a significant global issue (Moracco et al., 2003; Radović-Marković, 2016; Mohd, 2011; World Health Organization, 2014). It manifests in various social practices regardless of the societies and cultures. Women are often portrayed differently than men in the areas of education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Cultural norms and stereotypes entrench the disparities of men and women.

Based on the Global Gender Report Gap (2022), Indonesia is ranked 92 out of 146 countries with an index of 0.697. Specifically, inequality in Indonesia is highlighted in four areas: political empowerment, economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival. Likewise, no law comprehensively regulates the protection of women’s rights. In addressing inequality, Indonesia still relies on various instruments such as The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination

against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) convention. It implies that the discrimination faced by women is not only in the domestic sector but also in the public sector (Ardhanariswari & Haryanto, 2021). Another research confirmed that due to company regulations, women rarely take strategic positions in companies (Larasati, 2021).

However, some progress has been made in particular areas, such as politics and education. Efforts on gender quotas and women-friendly public facilities have boosted the progress of women’s equality. The portrayal of women has also been strengthened in the social, political, and educational sectors. This has slowly eliminated the prejudice that women are one step behind men.

Such changing images of gender are still crucial to look for. One of the women’s

images and representations that are significant to trace and evaluate is in educational textbooks, including English textbooks. Textbooks in education pose a very strategic position. As the primary source of learning, textbooks might serve as the means for spreading knowledge and values. Textbooks are an effective tool for shaping learners' attitudes, including attitudes toward gender differences. The textbook writers describe and visualize gender in line with how society views gender (Sulaimani & Elyas, 2018).

By far, extensive research on gender representation in EFL textbooks focuses on linguistic aspects. The transitivity of the reading texts (Emilia et al., 2017), male and female titles (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Lee, 2018), male and female-oriented topic presentation in dialogues and reading texts (Almghams, 2020), the frequency of names, nouns, pronouns, and adjectives attributed to women and women (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010) are a few examples of studies using linguistic as a means to view gender representation in EFL textbooks. These studies represent men and women in consistent ways. Behavioral stereotypes are addressed in EFL textbooks under study: men are represented as independent, strong, active, adventurous, and other adjectives associated with masculinity. By contrast, women are commonly depicted as passive, physically weaker than men, dependent, and other characteristics associated with femininity.

However, EFL research focuses on images or pictures less than linguistic aspects, whereas verbal and visual images mutually reinforce and are difficult to disentangle (Fairclough, 2001). In science and technology, visualizations are seen as the most complete and explicit way of explaining things, and words become supplements, comments, footnotes, and labels (van Leeuwen, 2008). As well, images could be an instrument to conceal and blur ideas. Visually communicated racism could be easily denied and much more easily dismissed as "in the eye of the beholder" than verbal racism (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Verbal and visual messages in textbooks commonly convey social conditions such as gender inequality. Verbal messages are commonly incorporated with visual images to amplify messages in textbooks. The significance of visuals in written and printed materials is obvious (Fairclough, 2001)

because both verbal and visuals mutually reinforce and are challenging to disentangle. Furthermore, images are to communicate beyond the expressive ability of oral or written language (Giaschi, 2000).

Given the significant function of visual images, as mentioned earlier, visual images incorporated into texts are worth critically analyzing. Giaschi (2000) states that the visual element has become increasingly predominant in EFL teaching materials and considers that an adapted version of CDA-critical image analysis to interrogate these images is justified and appropriate. To Giaschi (2000), pictures can be analyzed from seven aspects:

- (a) the activity of the images;
- (b) the activeness of the characters;
- (c) the passiveness of the characters;
- (d) the owner of the status;
- (e) the body language in the pictures;
- (f) messages behind the clothes;
- (g) the eye direction.

This research uses some of those aspects with modification. The modification is the use of occupation along with the activities. As such, it focuses on activities and occupations, activeness and passiveness, the body language of the images, the clothes of the images, and the eye direction of the images. Based on the prevalence of gender inequality, the strategic position of textbooks, and the minimal research on visual images in EFL textbooks elaborated in the earlier paragraphs. This study aims to describe the visual representation of gender and social factors contributing to the representation.

METHOD

Data for this study were human images taken from three EFL textbooks for senior high school students in Indonesia published by The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia: Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress (Hermawan et al., 2022), Bahasa Inggris (Bashir, 2017), and Bahasa Inggris (Widiati et al., 2018). Those three books are selected as data sources in this study since they are primarily used in senior high schools in Indonesia. Such popularity indicates that the linguistic and visual representation of gender in books is consciously and unconsciously accepted in educational discourse.

The detailed description of the books under study is in Table 1.

Table 1 The Books under Study

No.	Title	Authors	Editors	Year	City	Publisher
1	Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA/MA/SMK Kelas XII	Utami Widiati, Zuliati Rohmah, Furaidah	Rasti Setya raini	2018	Jakarta	Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi
2	Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress SMA/MA/SMK Kelas X	Budi Hermawan, Dwi Haryanti, & Nining Suryaningsih	MA. Czarna Gemzon Espiritu	2022	Jakarta	Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi
3	Bahasa Inggris	Makhrum Bashir		2017	Jakarta	Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi

The data were collected through reading, coding, and classifying. The books were read thoroughly, and as human images appeared, they were coded and classified according to their gender. The classifications are males or males in a single frame, females or females in a single frame, and females and males in a single frame.

This study applies three discourse dimensions to analyze the data: description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 2001). Description is the stage in which human images in books are described and counted according to the items proposed by Giaschi (2000): activities and occupations, activeness and passiveness, body language, the messages behind the clothing, and the direction of the eyes of male and female images. The focus of this stage is the frequency of occurrence of each item and the description of each image.

Interpretation is the stage in which the coded images in the description stage are qualitatively interpreted to uncover deeper meanings and insights. It involves situating the data within its cultural and social context,

refining and developing themes, and examining the relationships between elements. The findings are then presented in a detailed and nuanced manner.

Explanation explains the social factors contributing to the use of images found in the earlier stages. It analyzes the broader social, cultural, and historical contexts and explores how several broader factors, such as societal norms and power dynamics, influence the way images are used and understood. This stage helps provide a comprehensive understanding of what the images mean, why they are used, and how they resonate with the audience.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Following Fairclough's stages of analysis (2001), this chapter is divided into three parts. They are description, interpretation and explanation.

Description

In the description part, the profile of the books and the visual representation of women are presented and described.

The Profiles of the Books

The first book is Bahasa Inggris for SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Grade XII, published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2018. This book is the one for teachers. This book was designed to implement the 2013 Curriculum. This book was written by three female authors: Prof Utami Widiati, Prof Zuliati Rohmah, and Dr Furaidah, all English lecturers. This book is student-oriented, and students are required to be active. Using this book, students are not provided with knowledge but are led to seek it.

Book two is Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress for SMA/SMK/MA Grade X. The book was published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. This book is the response to the Merdeka Curriculum. Part of implementing the curriculum is providing teaching and learning materials that are fun and interesting and equip students with the needed knowledge and skills. Budi Hermawan, an English Lecturer of UPI Bandung, Nining Suryaningsih, and a school English teacher, and Dwi Haryanti, an English teacher of SMA Negeri Cirebon, wrote this book.

Book three is Bahasa Inggris for SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Grade XI. This book was published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2017. The author is Mahrukh Bashir, M. Ed, a Master of Education and Guidance. She is a Curriculum Advisor who graduated from the International Islamic University in Malaysia.

The Frequency of Occurrence of the Images

The three books under study contained 187 human images. Of those, 92 are female images in single frames, 75 are male images in single frames, and 20 are males and females in single images. Table 2 presents the detailed number of frequencies.

Table 2 Frequency and Distribution of Gender Images in EFL Textbooks in Indonesia

Textbooks	Images			Total
	Female Images	Male Images	Male-and-female Images	
Book 1	37	18	12	67
Book 2	13	26	4	43
Book 3	42	31	4	77
Total	92	75	20	187

Activities and Occupations in Pictures

Regarding activities and occupations, it was found that females and males are depicted similarly; both are actively involved in public occupations. The five most frequently occurring occupations representing females are career woman, teacher, student, athlete, and entertainer. Out of 92 female images, 13 of them (14%) are images of a career woman whose activities are working in an office, as seen in Picture 1.



Picture 1. A career woman (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

The frequency of teachers is less than that of career women. There are 10 images of

female teachers (10.8%) teaching in the books under study. The clothing and the accessories worn by the characters, gestures, and the properties confirm that the image is a teacher as presented in Picture 2.



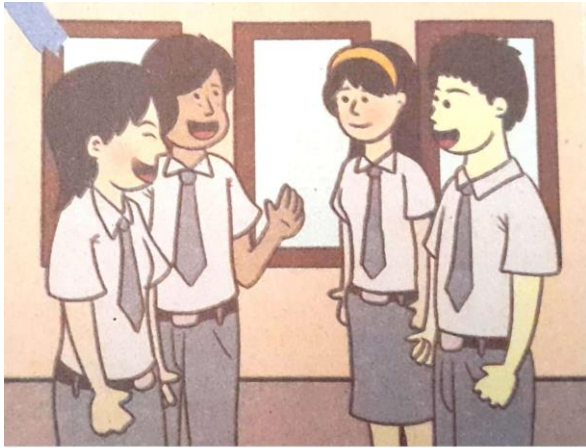
Picture 2. A Female Teacher (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

The image of female athlete occurs as frequently as the teacher image: 10.8% (ten images).



Picture 3. A Female Athlete with her Medal (Source: Kemendikbud, 2022)

The image of a student is the fourth occupation commonly used to represent females. A female is represented as a student in female and male images. There are nine images (9.7%) of students, as seen in Picture 4.



Picture 4. Female and Male Students (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

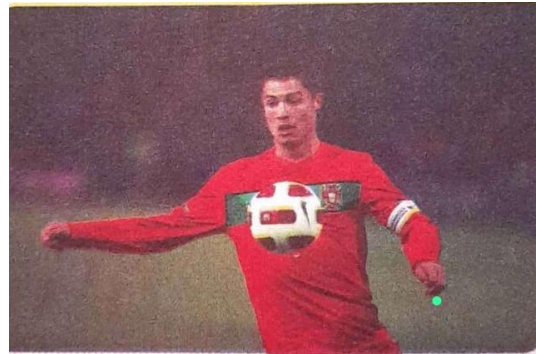
The activities of students in those pictures are mostly talking to each other and discussing something. Entertainer is another occupation used to represent females as seen in Picture 5.



Picture 5. A Female Singer (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Other social roles for females, such as housewife or mother, occur in very little frequency. Only two images depict a female as a mother, and one picture represents a wife.

The male has more various occupations yet in a small amount of frequency. The athlete and teacher are in the first rank. The image of male athletes and teachers has the same frequency: nine times (9.5%). The activities in the image of the athlete are sports activities, such as playing football, as seen in Picture 6.



Picture 6. Cristiano Ronaldo, a Football Player (Source: Kemendikbud, 2022)

In addition, the male is depicted in other various roles and their typical activities—executive, scientist, politician, husband, army, policeman—yet in a very small number of frequencies, each of which appears less than three times.

The Activeness and Passiveness

The activeness and passiveness are traceable in 20 male-and-female pictures. In 50% of the images, the male is the doer, and the female is the receiver of actions; in other words, the male is in active roles, and the female is in passive ones. A male doctor examining a boy while the mother of the boy is witnessing them is an example of the activeness and the passiveness of male and female as seen in Picture 7.



Picture 7. A Doctor examining a Boy. (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Another picture indicating a male as the doer is in Picture 8. The activeness of the male is realized in the writing on his jacket, saying May I help you, while the female is standing beside him. It seems that the lady needs his help.



Picture 8. A Man is ready to help a lady (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

There are seven images (35%) representing women as active doers, as seen in Picture 8. The woman in Picture 9 is active; she is feeding her husband, and the husband is the recipient of the action.



Picture 9. A Wife is Feeding her Husband. (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

In three images, or 15% of the pictures, males and females are equally active because they both are the doers of an action. Picture 10 represents a female and two males interviewing an interviewer.



Picture 10. One Female and two male interviewers interviewing one male interviewee. (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

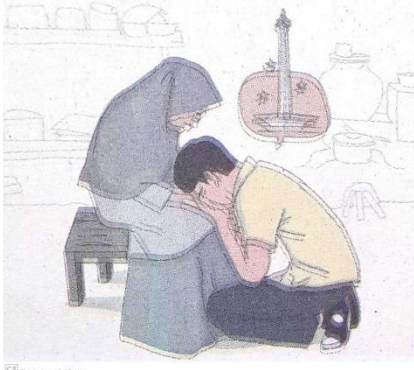
The Body Language of Pictures

The body language in male and female images showed various messages depending on the role of each gender. When males are in an active role, they show power, self-confidence, and distance, as seen in Picture 11. It shows that the man is an active one. He is showing something, and the woman is noticing. Standing up in the distance, the body language of the man indicates power and control to the woman.



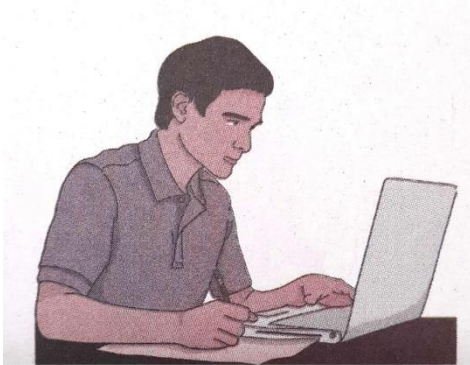
Picture 11. A Husband giving instructions to his wife. (Source: Kemendikbud, 2017)

Likewise, when the female is in an active role, her higher stature is highlighted, suggesting that she shares more power, as presented in Picture 12. The image of a woman sitting on a chair while the son is kneeling on the floor shows the power relation between a mother and her son; the mother's power is manifest in her seat, and the son's lower position is seen from how he sits.



Picture 12. A Son is kneeling before his Mother (Source: Kemendikbud, 2022)

The body language of males in male images indicates busyness, relaxation, cheerfulness, and high concentration and intensity. For example, in Picture 13, a male works with his laptop. Staring at a laptop while his right hand is holding a pen indicates that the man is busy with his work.



Picture 13: A man is working with his laptop (Source: Kemendikbud, 2022)

In other pictures, the male's body suggests macho relaxation, such as playing games, as seen in Picture 14.



Picture 14. A Man is playing a game (Source: Kemendikbud, 2022)

Cheerfulness is another message being communicated by male images as in Picture 15.

Through his smiling face, we can see that he is teaching delightfully.



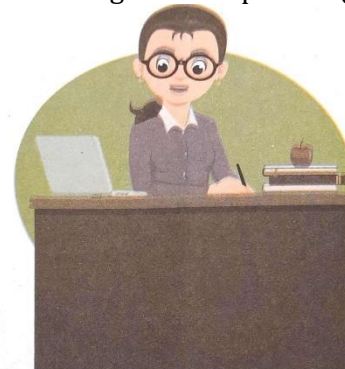
Picture 15. A Man is teaching delightfully. (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Another male picture communicates high concentration and intense in a war ground as visualized in Picture 16.



Picture 16. Army Members in a War Ground (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Likewise, female images communicate busyness, relaxation, and cheerfulness in the work environment. Body language indicating busyness in work environment is represented with a multi-tasking lady. Her eyes are fixed at the front angle, the laptop is open, and her hand is holding a pen (Picture 17).



Picture 17. A Woman working in her Office. (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

The message of relaxation is represented in other female images. For example, a lady is listening to music. She is using a headset, her eyes are closed, and her palms are pressing the headset, suggesting that she genuinely enjoys the music (Picture 18).



Picture 18. A Young Lady is Listening to Music (Source: Kemendikbud, 2022)

Cheerfulness is another message frequently presented in female images. For example, a student wearing a senior-high-school uniform is smiling cheerfully while her right hand index finger is pointing out an apple (Picture 19).



Picture 19. A Female Cheerful Student (Source: Kemendikbud, 2022)

Messages behind the Clothes

There is little difference between male and female clothing. Generally, female sartorial can be classified into five modes: casual, formal, Muslim, sportswear, and school uniform.

Females in the three books are primarily presented in casual clothing. Of 122 pictures containing female images, 53 (43%) are in casual attire. For example, a young lady wears a striped tank top with a long-strap bag on her shoulder and a book on her left hand (Picture 20).



Picture 20. A Young Lady in her Casual Clothes (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Formal dress is the second rank regarding the number of occurrences; 25 females (20.4%) are presented in formal dress. The formality of the sartorial can be seen from the shirt combined with a blazer, a skirt, and high-heel shoes worn by a lady in Picture 1, or a shirt combined with a blazer, trousers, flat shoes, and eyeglasses as seen in Picture 21.



Picture 21. A Young Lady in her Formal Dress (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Muslim wear frequently occurs in the books under study. The image of ladies wearing Muslim wear appears 11 times (9%) in the data. The clothes covering all parts of the body except the face and palms are the mark the Muslim wear, as seen in Picture 22.

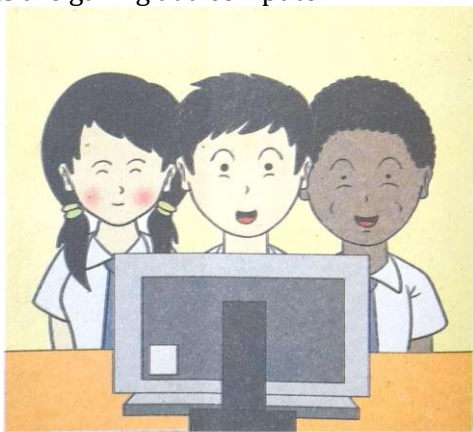


Picture 22. A Young Lady in her Muslim Wear (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Sportswear and school uniforms are other clothing modes worn by female pictures with limited frequency. Likewise, the sartorial modes for males are casual, formal, sports wear, and institutional uniforms. Muslim wear is the point of difference between female and male sartorial. None of the male images is presented in Muslim wear.

The Direction of Eyes

The direction of the eyes is how the male gazes at the female and vice versa. In male and female images, the eyes are mainly directed to a specific object, such as a computer, a toy, or a boy. In Picture 23, a female student and male students are gazing at a computer.



Picture 23. Male and Female Students are starring at a computer. (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

In a few images, however, a female is gazing at a male and vice versa, as seen in Picture 24. In the picture, the female’s eyes are directed at the male, and the male gazes at the female. They are mutually gazing. It suggests that they are in an equal position. Neither the male nor the female has more power.



Picture 24. Male and Female starring at each other (Source: Kemendikbud, 2018)

Likewise, when men and women dance, they gaze, suggesting that they mutually ‘need.’ Their eyes indicate that neither man nor woman is superior to the other. Picture 25 is an example.



Picture 25. Male and Female starring at each other (Source: Kemendikbud, 2017)

Interpretation and Explanation

How are the findings described earlier interpreted? The findings could be interpreted from the perspective of gender symmetry and stereotyping.

Gender Symmetry and Stereotyping

As stated earlier, females are not underrepresented in the three books under study. Regarding the frequency of occurrence, females in single images have a greater frequency than males. When dealing with activities and occupations, females and males are treated similarly because both genders have occupations in public spheres. The male is

depicted as athletes who commonly do sportive activities, and so are females. The male is visually represented as a teacher whose activity is teaching, and so are the females. Both males and females are described as executives. The woman is depicted as an entertainer whose main characteristics are beauty and expressiveness. The stereotyped social roles for females, such as wives and mothers, occur in shallow frequency. From this, it can be highlighted that females and males are treated equally, and the non-underrepresentation of women makes the books seem gender-equality oriented.

Turning to activeness and passiveness, it is revealed that most males and females are not depicted as symmetrically as the activities and social roles. Most male pictures indicate the activeness of the male. Turning to the clothing modes, both males and females have similar modes. In relation to the eye direction, there is not much difference between males and females.

The characteristics of gender inequality suggested by Mansour (2022) are not manifest in the books. No female is marginalized or subordinated; most images suggest that women are empowered and independent. The worn clothes and properties do not radiate negative labeling for women. Likewise, no violent image is found for women. This finding is not in line with previous studies by Ahmad & Shah (2019; Emilia et al., 2017; Mihira et al., 2021; Yonata & Mujiyanto, 2017).

Despite the symmetrical position of females and males in the books, the conventional stereotyping towards females and males remains prevalent, albeit very subtly. The stereotypical perception of females as 'nurturers' can be found in the high frequency of portrayal of females as teachers. Likewise, the stereotyped social roles for males, such as 'hard' and macho occupations such as politician, scientist, policeman, and army, remain apparent in this research. The prevalence of subtle stereotyping is consistent with the findings by (Damayanti, 2014; Lee, 2014, 2018).

Social Factors Leading the Gender Symmetry and Stereotyping

The movement of women's organizations and the awareness of women's rights in politics and education are the social

facts witnessed by the authors of the books. Since the reform era, women's organizations moved forward. They were not merely concerned with domestic issues, and the movement's peak was the establishment of the National Commission of Anti-Violence towards Women (known as Komnas Perempuan) in 1998. The issue of Law Number 31, 2002, concerning Political Parties, and Law Number 12, 2003, concerning General Elections, both for boosting the number of females in the parliament, were another proof of women's rights awareness. The equality in education between females and males is traceable from the number of females completing studies at all levels. It is confirmed by the National Statistics Bureau that the number of females completing studies until the university level is bigger than that of males (Hakiki & Samudro, 2021).

Those data suggest that females and males are equal. Neither female nor male is superior to the other. The equality between females and males is 'recorded' in the memory of the authors of the books, and it might lead to the encoding of gender symmetry in the books under study. It is believed that as a social practice, language is a part of society and not somehow external (Fairclough, 2001). In *Language and Power*, Fairclough argues that linguistic phenomena are social in that what we speak and write and how we interpret what we listen and read are socially determined. In the context of this study, the book's authors align with the progressive movement of Indonesian women's organizations, the increased number of female representatives in parliament, and the equality in education. The data might internally drive them to depict females and males symmetrically visually. As such, the symmetrical depiction of females and males is the realization of language as a social practice.

Despite the equal and symmetrical position between females and males depicted in the books, the stereotyping perception that women are nurturers remains prevalent. Why is a woman necessarily associated with nurture? Women as nurturers is an inevitable fact. Naturally, a child is conceived, born, and breastfed by his/her mother because the mother is the first figure close to the child. It is the mother who can interpret the baby's crying; it is the mother knowing the baby's feeding schedule, and it is the mother who can

bathe the baby's fragile body. Shortly put, a mother knows all the baby's needs. Relying on this, a woman is eventually associated with nurture issues. Tasks related to nurture, such as caring and teaching, are relevant and fit women. The association between women and nurture is culturally rooted. The belief in the tight relationship between women and nurture gets firmer when incorporated with the empirical data confirming that most teachers in Indonesia are female (Annur, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Visual representation of gender in Indonesian EFL textbooks and social factors leading to the pattern of the representation are the primary concerns of this research. It reveals that females and males are visually represented symmetrically. Visual images suggest that none is superior to the other. The

active movement of Indonesian women's organizations and the awareness of women's rights in politics and education might be one of the factors leading to the depiction of the two genders in a symmetrical position. Despite the symmetrical treatment, stereotyping for males and females remains apparent. In addition, the attainment of Indonesian women might be a social factor leading to the visual gender equality representation in the books under study.

Gender equality needs to spread massively to realize equality in society. Textbooks, including Indonesian EFL textbooks, might serve as an excellent medium to spread the idea of equality. Studies using more samples and other methods are required to portray gender in EFL textbooks comprehensively.

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