

**GENDER BIASED ELEMENTS IN THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS**

**FOR THE STUDENTS OF JUNIOR HIGH**

**SCHOOL IN INDONESIA**



**RESEARCH PAPER**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

Women are generally assumed to become inferior to many aspects of life; in short, women are located just where men's shadow fall. In the old Javanese culture; for example, women were completely determined as servants of men as if their existence were created and devoted only for the advantages of 'the manhood power'. They were made as the kitchen people, assigned as the house keeper and prohibited to taste school. John Knox, in this work entitled *The First Blast of Trumpet of Against The Monstrous Regiment of Women* published in 1558, states that women are weak by nature, "nature, I say, does paint them forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish." Therefore, these two issues about women, at least, can be a representation of an idea that for centuries we have lived in a male-dominated society.

Women have a different way of speaking from men, a way of speaking that both reflect and produces a subordinate position in society. Women's language, according to Lakoff (1972) as quoted in Eckert (2003:158) is rife with such devices as mitigators (*Sort of, I think*) and inessential qualifiers (*really happy, so beautiful*). This language, she went on to argue, renders women's speech tentative, powerless, and trivial; and as such, it disqualifies them from positions of power and authority. In this way, language itself is a tool of oppression – it is learned as part of learning to be a

woman, imposed on women by societal norms, and in turn it keeps women in their place.

English is one which women are explicitly and implicitly treated to be inferior to men. The English language has two sets of pronouns for the third-person singular: he/him/his and she/her/hers. It is practically impossible to talk about individuals without explicitly and implicitly mentioning their sex. When A mentions a person unknown to B, B must find out whether the third person is male or female in order to know how to phrase him/her. If A doesn't give any adequate information about that third person, B will usually use the pronoun he/him/his as the ultimate choice in order to phrase an expression. In English, the language tells us that so many words for unpleasant talk have a semantic feature of [+female] on them (Chaika,1982:361). Further, Chaika states gender - biased language affects everyone, both males and females. However, this fact has also been biased towards the male dominated language. Chaika also states that a person who is gabby, talkative, and gossipy and who acts as a nag, a shrew, a chatterbox must be a woman. Moreover, Chaika also initiates several questions dealing with stereotypical issues toward women; the questions are as follows:

What is a man? There are none. A woman is a nag when she asks for something too often. What is a man? Persistent. A woman who complains or criticizes a shrew. What is a man called in the same way? There is no single word for it. Women gossip; but men? They 'shoot the breeze', a far more pleasant and potent activity

These are the proof of how English language is definitely a male-dominated language. Besides, in our culture, men are viewed as being the superior sex and this is reinforced by the use of biased terms such as ‘mankind’, which in fact refers to the whole human race. ‘Fireman’ and ‘postman’ are also the two examples of why English is assumed as a male-dominated and gender-biased language. Society as the language user has also created stereotypical male and female gender identities. ‘Dear sir’ becomes the most used opening greeting in letters which are sent and received by people generally. Another example, Annie Edson Taylor is described as “the first person to go over Niagara falls in a barrel”, while the Neil Armstrong is “the first man to walk on the moon”.

The compulsory English textbooks for students of Junior High School in Indonesia are likely three of many books that still employ such kinds of gender biased issues. A name of ‘Dr. John’ (Dr. *Male name*) could be easily found in this book; meanwhile, there a single name with a considered-prestige academic title which refers to female name. In such case, we usually make a gender-biased tendency by putting into the inferior occupation. Many times we subconsciously assume that men are having a privilege to occupy the superior occupation; e.g. ‘he’ for a professor, doctor, soldier, scientist and ‘she’ for a nurse, secretary, babysitter. Moreover, women are generally assumed to be more emotional than man; *upset, sad, crying* are examples of words that are usually referred to woman. In this book, the following expression can be found: ‘she will be upset. She is *more emotional* than we all are’. Why is our choice of pronoun referred to ‘she’? In this book, there is no single expression stating that ‘a man’ can be *upset, sad, and crying* too.

Based on the phenomena above, the writer is interested in conducting a research towards gender biased elements in the English textbooks which are compulsory for students of junior high school in Indonesia. The research paper is entitled: **GENDER BIASED ELEMENTS IN THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR THE STUDENTS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN INDONESIA.**

### **B. Limitation of the Study**

The main theme of this research is only dealing with gender biased elements that appear in the compulsory English textbooks for students of junior high school in Indonesia. Therefore, the data taken are only related to the main theme, gender biased elements, and the data resources are limited to three compulsory English textbooks for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Junior High School written by Mukarto, dkk.

### **C. Problem Statement**

The problem statements formulated by the writer are as follows:

1. What kinds of gender biased elements appear in those English textbooks?
2. In what kinds of context of situations do gender biased elements appear?

#### **D. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To describe the kinds of gender biased elements that appear in those English textbooks.
2. To describe in what kinds of context of situations gender biased elements appear.

#### **E. Benefits of the Study**

The writer hopes that the research would be useful for the reader and the writer himself. Those benefits are:

##### 1. Theoretical Benefit

This research can make general people , including the book writers, realize that women are not supposed to be inferior to men.

##### 2. The Practical Benefit

###### a. For the Students

The result of this research can be used as a reference to improve the ability of students in understanding more about gender biased in English textbooks.

###### b. Other Researchers

To give additional information for other researcher who want to conduct further research on the related field.

## **F. Research Paper Organization**

The organization of this research paper is given in order to make the readers understand the content of the papers as follows:

Chapter I is Introduction which consists of Background of the Study, Problem statement, Objectives of the study, Limitation of the study, Benefit of the Study, and Research Paper Organization.

Chapter II is Review of Related Literature. It consists of the notion of sex and gender, Notion of gender, Gender and sociolinguistics, Gender, language, and society.

Chapter III is Research Method, it consists of type of research, the object of the research, source of the data, method of collecting data, and technique for analyzing data.

Chapter IV is Research result and discussion. In this chapter, the writer presents the data analysis, the findings and discussion.

Chapter V is Conclusion and suggestion.