

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter encompasses the introductory sections of the research. It covers background of the research, research questions, aims of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, clarification of the main terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1. Background of the Research

In recent years, the concept of gender has been considered as one of the most important aspects that need to be taken into account in education, as well as other fields. Many issues related to gender differences have been explored including the portrayal of gender in visual media, print and non-print media, especially in learning materials. Regarding this, special attention has been given to one kind of learning materials which has been widely used in schools; textbooks (see Evans & Davies, 2000; Toçi and Aliu, 2013; Yang, 2011; Yasin et al, 2012). The content within textbooks is believed to have a significant role in educating students; they are sources of information which at the same time create an image of what is tolerable in a society (Toçi and Aliu, 2013). Moreover, textbook is considered as the most potential instruments that can help students to build desirable attitudes (Sumalatha, 2004, cited in Toçi and Aliu, 2013).

Over the past decades, an intention of conducting the research in the field of gendered-content materials in textbooks has raised a number of interests (Kereszty, 2009). It is derived from the awareness in providing students with appropriate service, including learning materials, to avoid misconception of gender i.e. gender biasness and sexism (Evans & Davies, 2000; Yasin et al, 2012). Sexism in textbooks, as Xiaoping (2005) suggests, can be avoided by presenting the figure of men and women in a fair range of human interests, traits, and capabilities without omitting the action and achievement of women. This is considered important because this is how the students who are exposed with the learning materials subconsciously form their own images of males and females as

members of society. This emanates from the scope of gender that reveals a room for identities to be constructed, understood, as finely as put forward how students invest difference of attitudes towards male and female identification (Clegg, 2008; Gove & Watt in Woodward, 2000). The notion is reaffirmed by Penelope Eckert (2003) who positions the students as adolescences who are going through a life-stage at which a tremendous amount of identity work is being done, and the conception of gender is salient towards the formation of self-identity.

Concerning the importance of gender conception to the development of students' identity, the research is triggered to understand the portrayal of gender roles through the presentation of male and female characters, particularly in English textbooks for eight graders in Indonesia. Among various kinds of learning materials presented in the textbooks, the research focuses on one kind of materials that is considered as the most powerful one; story. Stories are frequently claimed to bring many benefits since they provide examples of authentic language in social discourse manifested throughout the story (Wright, 1997; Garvie, 1990, cited in Cameron, 2001). The topic being issued in the discourse posits representation of reality, including the conception of gender (Narahara, 1998, cited in Aina & Cameron 2011). Thus, it is important to consider the way(s) in which gender is portrayed throughout the stories, because that is how the students are able to acquire the concept of gender in society.

In order to conduct the analysis and for the data to be able to be interpreted, the research espouses Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) focusing on Transitivity system (Halliday in Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) as a tool of analysis. SFL is employed in order to give new insight towards the phenomenon discussed as it allows the research to reveal representational meaning in texts (Sari, 2011; Unsworth, 2000). Besides, the use of Transitivity analysis is expected to be able to help the research to discover the portrayal of gender based on the categorization of gendered-clauses into their types of Process, Participant, and Circumstance. Furthermore, the portrayal of gender based on the analysis will be clarified through a descriptive explanation by taking the perspective of gender

asymmetry proposed by Diana Francis (2004). The framework is expected to be able to depict the way(s) in which gender is verbally portrayed.

1.2. Research Questions

The research is expected to investigate the problems classified in the following question:

- 1) In what ways do the selected English textbooks verbally represent gender roles?

1.3. Purposes of the Research

With reference to the problem investigated, the research is aimed at:

- 1) Finding out the way(s) in which the selected English textbooks for eight graders portray gender roles through their gendered characters.

1.4. Scope of the Research

The limitation has been made to specify the problem in the research. It is intended to investigate the portrayal of gender roles in two different English textbooks for Junior High School Grade VIII. The selected texts are chosen based on the characters play in the story which has been specified to gender representation involving the appearances of females and males. This implies that any other stories beyond the stories which characters are categorized as ‘non-human’ are not taken into account. Thus, the research focuses on the appearance of gendered characters by applying the analysis of Transitivity system which belongs to the SFL’s ideational metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) as the tool of analysis. The analysis is done by denaturalizing their gendered contents through the categorization of the Process, Participant, and Circumstance. Finally, the result of Transitivity analysis will be further interpreted to reveal how gender is constructed based on the framework of gender asymmetry suggested by Diana Francis (2004).

1.5. Significance of the Research

The research is expected to provide various significances as follows:

- 1) To theoretical frameworks, the research can enrich the existing theories of gender in relation to education, particularly in textbooks as learning materials.
- 2) To students and teachers, the research can be a consideration in choosing learning materials especially narrative for the process of teaching and learning in relation to the existence of gender differences.
- 3) To future researchers, the research can give benefits as a guideline to support their research. Furthermore, it is expected to be able to contribute to the development of English textbooks especially in presenting the gendered content materials.

1.6. Clarification of the Main Terms

As a sustainability of convenience for the research and to avoid misunderstanding, several main terms will be briefly described and specified below.

Gender is a social determination which perceives ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male (Reeves and Baden, 2000, p. 3). Gender and sex are commonly related but partly distinct areas, gender is a part of ideologies, values, and beliefs associated with being a woman or man in a particular society (Woodward, 2000), while sex is defined as biological characteristics categorizing someone as either female or male (Reeves & Baden, 2000).

Gender roles are the product of social interactions between individuals and their environments, and they give individuals cues about what sort of behavior is believed to be appropriate for what sex which is based on a society's beliefs about differences between the sexes (Blackstone, 2003).

Gender asymmetry is an imbalance quality of males and females stemming from the culture of domination and power asymmetry that emerges and develops around the time of colonization in Western part of the world which is still valued and operated in society (Francis, 2004).

Gender stereotype is a belief which comprises static notions about feminine and masculine traits, regardless of social, cultural, or historical variations between the nature of women and men's lives (Schmenk, 2004).

Narrative is a text which consists of the representation of an event or a series of events which is purposively made to entertain the readers. This definition is drawn from the definition of narrative proposed by Abbott (2008) who defines narrative as the representation of an event or a series of events. In addition, Ricoeur (cited in Richardson in Pelan et al, 2004 in Abbott, 2008) adds that the foundation of narrative is plot. The plot unfolds in which subsequent events are always entirely dependent on preceding to one another. In addition, narrative is similar with story, which is defined as an account of imaginary or real events told for entertainment (<http://www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/story>).

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a functional-semantic approach to language which explores both how people use language in different contexts, and how language is structured for use as a semiotic system (Eggins, 2004). SFL views language as a resource for making meaning rather than as a system of rules (Christie, 1990; Halliday, 1994a; Halliday and Martin 1993, cited in Emilia, 2005). These grammar attempt to describe language in actual use and they concerned not only with the structures but also with how those structures construct meaning (Gerot and Wignell, 1994, p. 6).

Transitivity, according to Systemic Functional Linguistics, is a system that belongs to the ideational or experiential metafunction and is the overall grammatical resource for construing goings on (Martin, Matthiessen and Painter, 1997, p. 100, cited in Emilia, 2005). In short, transitivity refers to grammatical system by which the experiential meaning of the clause is achieved.

1.7. Organization of the Research

The research is organized in five chapters. Each chapter has subtopics which specifically elaborate detail information regarding different focuses. How the chapters are organized is as follows.

Chapter I: Introduction, provides background of the study, research questions, purpose of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, research methodology, clarification of main terms, and organization of the research.

Chapter II: Literature Review, consists of related theories, ideas and issues in which the principles and justifications of the research is grounded. This part enables the research to strongly build foundation for better understanding.

Chapter III: Research Methodology describes approaches and procedures, research designs, subject of the research, data analyses, and content analyses all manifested in the research.

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussions, reports the result of the research. Besides reporting the result, the chapter will also promote an idea of discussions where the collected findings are available to be interpreted.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions, presents conclusions drawn from the research findings. In addition, suggestions for future are also be included in this chapter.

1.8. Concluding Remark

This chapter has elaborated the introduction of the research. It has presented background, statement of problems, purposes of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, clarification of the main terms and the organization of the paper. In the next chapter, literature review of the research will be discussed in detail.