

Exploring Gender Stereotyping in Online Learning Platforms: An Empirical Study of Indonesian Pedagogical Discourse

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Abstract

Gender stereotyping in online learning platforms can influence how the users, especially students with specific gender roles as the label of a specific sex, are perceived. Various evidence from studies analyzing language materials have shown the significance of how gender stereotyping is represented; however, there has been relatively little empirical research specifically exploring how gender is depicted in online learning language materials. This study aims to investigate the extent of gender stereotyping represented in the learning materials of one online platform used nationally in Indonesia, using the feminist stylistic approach of Sara Mills. This study analyzes the learning materials specific to elementary school level for fourth until sixth grade and junior high school for seventh until ninth grade. This study finds that specific materials for specific grades significantly represent stereotypes through the language used in the written text. This suggests that designers and developers of online learning materials need to be aware of gender stereotyping when designing such materials for students.

Key words

feminist stylistic approach, gender stereotypes, online learning platform.

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Introduction

E-learning or learning with technology has been a phenomenon across the globe and has had a revolutionary effect worldwide (Liu & Wilson, 2001). The digital world has been changing the world of learning, and learning has been influencing global development. As stated by Booth, Godman, and Kirkup (2010), humans nowadays are living in a fast-changing environment in which technology provides the digital tools and systems to support many aspects of life, including all areas of research, scholarship, and education.

An online learning platform is one of the digital tools providing materials to support student learning and literacy. Learners can access learning materials that provide educational content, activities, and support for the management of learning programs using a combination of information and technology communication, with access from anywhere and at any time. While several such online platforms exist, this study investigates one in particular. This platform is the pioneer of online learning platform in Indonesia which provides e-learning content for K-12 students. It has been officially established and incorporated in 2007 with SR Score 81.752 based on startupranking.com. On March 2015, this platform was one of 12 companies representing Indonesia in the CeBIT 2015 event, the largest technology exhibition in the world which is held every year in Germany (WNI, 2020).

However, most stakeholders are aware that the learning materials used by online learning platforms are determined by considering several values that can be explicitly and implicitly represented. As stated by Widodo (2017), English Language Teaching (ELT) materials mostly constitute implicit-explicit moral and cultural values and gender differences that may lead to gender stereotyping representation that should be taken into account. Gender stereotyping in online learning platform language materials is not only an interesting issue to study but is also critical to address. The reason is that representation of gender stereotypes can affect children's affective and cognitive development (Meyer, 2010). Sexist terminology appearing in instructional materials, particularly words and expressions suggesting unequal perception of a particular sex, may influence children's minds (Lee, 2014).

As society tends to impose specific representations of boys and girls in particular roles, the issue of analyzing the representation of gender in language materials has become one of major concern to scholars in a variety of areas, including language policy (Sczesny, Formanowicz, & Moser, 2016), sociology (Breckenridge, Yang, & Poon, 2019), education and learning (Lee, 2018; Wang, 2019), and linguistics (Beatty-Martínez & Dussias, 2019). Textbooks, as one of the most important

language materials, still reveal the presence of gender stereotypes. A study by Lestariyana, Widodo, and Sulistiyo (2020) investigated the visibility of female characters in the two English textbooks mandated by the government for use by junior high schools in Indonesia. The study found that the visibility of female characters is still very low as compared to the males.

Another study by Ariyanto (2018) critically investigated how female and male characters are depicted in the ELT junior high school textbook published by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education. The textbook includes attitudes as social values of English usage presented in the form of visual or written texts. An English teacher may use the textbook as the context of students' social actions. However gender equality as one social value is not adequately represented in the book. Previous studies of gender and language materials such as textbooks around the world have revealed that gender stereotyping is still strongly reflected in the textbook contents with examples from Hong Kong (Yang, 2016), Australia (Lee & Collins, 2010), Iran (Amini & Birjandi, 2012), Japan (Lee, 2019), Arab countries (Al-Qatawneh & Al Rawashdeh, 2019), and Indonesia (Ariyanto, 2018), among others.

However, while studies of textbooks are clearly widespread, there has been limited research into online language teaching materials. It is necessary to critically address the issue of gender stereotypes in online learning platforms' materials as an alternative used by learners in learning a (foreign) language. This study aims to address this issue by analyzing the representation of gender stereotyping in language materials used on one online learning platform in Indonesia, focusing on English language materials for elementary school 4th to 6th grade and junior high school 7th to 9th grade.

As a form of learning material, language plays an essential role in making learners understand the content of the materials. The research gap lies in the fact that previous studies have mostly scrutinized language materials in textbooks, while the present study aims to analyze language materials on an online learning platform as the learning source, using Sara Mills' theory of feminist stylistic linguistics as the analytical tool to find out how gender stereotypes are represented in the language. The results of this study should contribute to critical pedagogical discourse in Indonesia and will also, hopefully, contribute perspectives to the development of language materials and considerations of how both girls and boys should ideally be represented.

Literature Review

Gender Stereotyping in Language Materials

Selecting the right language teaching materials involves making a crucial decision since it takes into account how the society, life, and culture of the foreign language are merged and depicted in the materials. For example, when investigating an issue with a social-cultural context such as gender, more information can be obtained from language teaching materials, thus choosing the information related to social-cultural context suggest “a certain realistic significance for improving such teaching materials” (Ldli & Zhenzhou, 2002, p. 35). In this process, the guiding thoughts and expressions within the materials should have progressive and equitable ideologies, concepts, and values with regard to gender (Ldli & Zhenzhou, 2002).

Some studies have been conducted to investigate whether conceptions of gender are expressed relatively equally and progressively in language teaching materials in textbooks. Lee (2014) asserted various manifestations of gender inequality in textbooks, including female and male visibility, gender stereotyping, use of gender-biased language, asymmetries in the titles used to address females, and *male-first-ness*. Gender stereotyping as one of the manifestations of gender inequality has also become an issue in language teaching materials. Language teaching materials here function as a tool to justify and reinforce gender stereotypes to learners who read them. According to Yang (2016), gender stereotypes are defined as beliefs about the personality traits and behaviors of each sex that are generally held by members of a community. The nature of an individual culture influences the perspective of gender stereotypes, which “are based on socially constructed norms, practices, and beliefs. They are often cultural, based and fostered on religion, and reflect underlying power relations” (Puri, 2011 as cited in Nkosi, 2013, p. 133). One gender stereotype portrays males as stronger beings compared to females, implying men are meant to be the heads or leaders of a particular social system. Males are often characterized as rational, erudite, intellectual, and tenaciously brave, while females are usually characterized as emotional, benevolent, kind, gentle, hardworking, and irrational (Ldli & Zhenzhou, 2002, p. 35). With regard to professions, both female and male characters are generally represented in stereotypically feminine and masculine professions. Males have broader and more diversified job fields than females and are more involved in the broader public spheres, while females are more in the private spheres (Ldli & Zhenzhou, 2002, p. 35).

The existence of gender stereotypes in language teaching materials or textbooks has been investigated by many researchers. Yang (2016) examined how gender is represented in the visual components of two English language textbook series used in most primary schools in Hong Kong. In both sets of textbooks, females were more frequently depicted with long hair than short hair and wearing dresses rather than pants, in both drawings and other images. Giaschi (2000) used critical image analysis, a technique adapted from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to analyze the illustrations in two selected ESL textbook series, *Headway* and *4th Dimension*. In the 35 images analyzed, males were typically depicted as managers, leaders, or protagonists, while females were generally portrayed in the fashion-related domain. In line with Giaschi, in an analysis of isiZulu literary texts for secondary school isiZulu home language learners, Nkosi (2013) found that both males and females are portrayed stereotypically in the books. Women are depicted as teachers, housewives, dependents, and uneducated while men are depicted as heads of family, strong, efficient, artful, business-minded, powerful, and courageous.

Gender stereotypes are internalized in people's minds through different media, such as television, films, and the internet, but language teaching materials are one of the most significant since children or students are frequently exposed to them. Law and Chan (2004) argue that people have internalized views of gender stereotypes are formed by different socialization agents (e.g., schools) and other socio-cultural processes. The online learning platform as the language teaching materials provider in this present study is frequently accessed by students who want to explore beyond the materials given by their teachers. It therefore contributes to children's gender stereotype internalization. Children usually follow and accept what is written in the teaching materials, so gender stereotype exposure will also lead them to have those kinds of conceptions. As Ldli and Zhenzhou (2002, p. 35) stated, "children in the elementary school stage tend to accept mainstream concepts and thoughts passively, and are seldom critical in their thought processes."

Feminist Stylistic Approach

The unequal representation of females and males reflecting society's assumptions and perceptions about specific genders may have an impact beyond that of merely personal opinions. Such perceptions may appear at higher, institutional levels (Mills, 2008). Therefore, in this study, a feminist stylistic approach was adopted to investigate the representation of stereotypes in online learning materials. The

feminist stylistic approach is suitable approach to investigate how gender is represented in language materials and how females and their positions are portrayed compared to males (Kristina, 2020). Mills (2005) maintains that feminist stylistics addresses not only the masculine language represented in texts but also considers contextual elements. According to her, the language aspects of both textual and contextual units are fundamental in analyzing the linguistic units of literary texts. Her theory of feminist stylistic approach defines three levels in analyzing language stereotypes; (a) word-level analysis; sexism in language and sexism in its meaning; (b) sentence and phrase level; naming, sexual harassment of women, self-pitying, and euphemism; and (3) discourse analysis; characterization, fragmentation, focalization, and schemata. Things that need to be considered are whether the sexism in language simply reflects the world or whether there is a case to be made for language affecting the way people perceive the world (Mills, 2005, p. 62). Therefore, the analysis of sexism in language does not only concern on the objecting the difference in language concerning the difference between both males and females but rather on the differences which have effects.

As Mills states, there are three impacts resulting from the use of sexist language: Females are made to feel alienated or that they are not being addressed; the factors that make women see themselves negatively influence their expectations of what women and men can do; and the language used can confuse both female and male readers. To further illustrate the aspects that will be investigated in this study, the following table presents specific gender sexism issues in language materials:

Table 1
Feminist Stylistics Linguistics level of analysis

Language Level	Type of Sexism	Aspects
Word Level Analysis	<p>a. Sexism in Language As stated by Vetterling-Bruggin in Mills (2005), sexist language is language that engenders oppression toward women .</p>	<p>Linguistic Determinism It suggests the differences in the structure of the languages actually determine the different views society have of the world.</p> <p>a. Generic Pronouns The traditional argument is that the terms “his” and “he” are not used for a specific sex; although they refer grammatically to males, they are used to refer to both females and males. Gender-specific language also applies male and female labels based on specific professions, like professors, scientists, and engineers being labeled as male professions while, secretaries, nurses, and librarians are female professions.</p> <p>b. Generic Nouns Sexist language represents a dominant male orientation as used in specific terms, such as the word “man” on the term “mankind.” Examples of avoiding such sexist language would be the use of a gender-free model, such as replacing “man” with “person.”</p> <p>c. Women as the mark form Here, affixes are used to refer to females separately from their male equivalents to differentiate them from the universal male form. Affixes such as; “lady,” “-ess,” “-ette,” “-enne,” and “-trix” create “derogatory” and “trivializing” terms. An example is the term “lady poet” that brings people to argue that the marked gender here refers to the female that make an amateurism label. It is different from the term “poet” that refers the male who write for living. While the generic term is seen as essentially male, a female presence in the language does not seem to exist.</p>

b. Sexism in Its**Meaning**

The meaning may be sex-specific.

Language somehow determines a meaning associated with a specific sex. The association may identify as a connotation.

Language, according to Mills (p. 78), is not a simple place where “meaning is imposed, but where the meaning is negotiated or struggled over”.

a. Names and androcentrism

Most women, who are usually addressed in terms of their marital status, can choose to maintain their own name or join it to their husband’s name (double-barreled name).

Marital status also affects how women are addressed; instead of “Mrs.” and “Miss,” there is the neutral alternative of “Ms.”

b. Semantic derogation of women

The English language tends to exhibit the use of derogatory language toward women. In English, words and phrases can underline concepts whereby male is positive and female negative. One example are the words “master” and “mistress” where the female version is represented as having a sexual and non-prestigious meaning compared to the male.

c. Endearments and diminutives

These are specific words men use to address their partners, such as “pet,” “chick,” and so on. Also, words like “honey,” “sweetie,” or “sugar” usually refer to women, rarely men.

d. Female experiences: euphemisms and taboos

An example is women’s preference for negative euphemisms to describe menstruation, such as “the curse” or “the wrong time.”

e. Lexical gaps: male point of view**f. Dictionaries and gatekeepers**

The Bible are full of prejudice, favoring men and mostly presenting sexual stereotypes. Women are represented less compared to men.

**Sentence And
Phrase Level****Ready-Made
Phrases**

There are some words whose usage portrays women negatively compared to men.

One example is “a woman’s work is never done” in which this sexist phrase emerges as the result of speakers pre-existing knowledge and the condition they experienced. Another proverb is “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” that implies in getting a man’s heart, women should be able to cook. Women are assigned the traditional domestic role of “cooking” to make men give them their hearts.

The proverb is difficult to deal with in conversation because of the ideological values it embodies.

**Presupposition and
Inference**

A presupposition is where users presume that a text is addressing women, or there are gender issues discussed in the patterns or terms. An example is “you are not happy with your looks,” “this woman is happy with her looks,” and “this woman has had surgery.” The third sentence infers “if you want to be happy with your looks, you will need surgery.”

Metaphor

Metaphors can make users think of or analyze particular objects. One example is “Sally is a block of ice” which can be inferred as referring to female sexuality, although it can also be understood another way.

Jokes and Humor

Analyzing jokes is somewhat challenging due to their complexity, although it is also possible to locate sexism at the level of individual words. Sometimes, sexism is masked by humor, and the reader unconsciously takes part in the sexist language because it is concealed by the humor.

An example:

Q: What’s the difference between a rottweiler and woman with PMT?

A: Lipstick

The dialogue above shows that women are ridiculous individuals, in which a trivial thing, like lipstick, is what differentiates her from the dog.

Transitivity Choices

Transitivity here consists of three aspects; material, mental, and relational. The purpose of the analysis was to find out how the world represented the female (material), like in the expression “she swam across the river”; then represented women largely in terms of mind (mental), as in the expression “she thought about the situation”; and the relationship between the two elements in which woman are represented (relational), for example “it is rather cold.” Transitivity is believed to help readers distinguish between the world-views of women.

Feminism and Ideology

For many feminists, women are particularly subjected to the effects of ideology. In many ways, it is clear that there is a range of belief systems about women which do no “fit” with the reality of women’s lives. Transitivity is the basis of interpretation to discover the underlying assumptions in which readers are taking part during the interpretative process. This is the examples of phrases (sample of the lyrics) from the song entitled “Hit” by the Sugar Cubes: (1) This wasn’t supposed to happen, (2) I was happy by myself, (3) Accidentally, (4) You seduced me and (5) I’m in love again. The lyrics of the pop songs mostly portray romantic love as a form of pain and suffering which women should take pleasure in. This ideology is seen a romance as the important element in women’s life.

Discourse Analysis

Characterization

Characterization refers to the words which the reader has learned to use to construct a set of ideological messages, drawing on reader’s information of the way that writings are composed and arranged, and the perceptions which are circulating inside society around how women and men

are. The descriptions of clothes and facial appearance are key to describing the overall assessment and create expectations in the reader about the character.

An example:

“Her olive skin had an underlying coppery sheen, and he thought there was a sizable admixture of Indian in this one.”

The example above shows that a great number of text draw on stereotypical knowledge when presenting information about characters, particularly when these characters are not “fleshed out” but are simply described briefly.

Fragmentation

Female fragmentation is related to male focalization; the female is represented as an object or a collection of objects. There are two techniques for fragmenting the female body. The first is the female body as part of an object and personalization. The second is the female protagonist not represented in a direct form, or individual personalization being written out of the text.

An example:

Above all height my mistress’ praise,

Calling her cheek a blushing rose,

The fairest June did e’er disclose:

Her forehead, lilies; and her eyes,

The luminaries of the skies;

That on her lips ambrosia grows,

And from her kisses nectar flows?

The example above identifies the anatomical elements of females, such as cheeks, forehead, eyes and lips.

Focalization

Focalization is related to the story and the degree of determination. There are two types of focalization, external and internal. External focalization is closely related to the narrating agent and occurs in first-person narratives. The function of external focalization is to cover all dimensions of the narrative, past, present, and future. Meanwhile, internal focalization focuses on the short temporal dimensions, only the “present.”

Schemata

A schemata is a broad-scale framework over a wide range of texts to produce the different appearances of males and females.

Source: reformulated by the author based on Mills (2005)

Research Method

This study used a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to investigate the extent of gender stereotypes represented in online learning materials and also employed a critical pedagogical perspective (critical pedagogy claims that school knowledge is socially constructed) to further analyze the learning materials. This study investigated the representation of gender stereotypes on one online learning platform in Indonesia. This platform is recommended by the Indonesian government because it follows the 2013 curriculum currently used in Indonesian education and provides teaching materials and exercises for all subjects, including English, from elementary to secondary levels. This study focuses on elementary (4th, 5th, and 6th) and junior school (7th, 8th, and 9th) levels. Elementary and junior school students are considered as young learners who tend to follow and accept what is written in the teaching materials, so gender stereotype exposure will lead them to accept and retain these conceptions.

This study collected verbal artifacts in the form of written texts by observing entire sets of materials and exercises. The materials were chosen because they represent gender stereotyping in different topics at elementary and junior high school. The researchers categorized the data by theme and analyzed them based on Sara Mills (2005) feminist stylistic linguistics theory. This approach was selected in order to understand how women are positioned in a language compared to males (Kristina, 2020). Mills (2005) defines three language levels: word-level analysis, sentence and phrase-level analysis, and discourse-level analysis. The three aspects of analysis were applied to all the materials, consisting of several themes.

Results

The findings of this study only reveal sexist language and meaning at the word level since the other levels where stereotype could exist (phrase, sentence, and discourse) do not exist in the online learning materials. As shown in Table 2 below, underrepresentation of females is the first issue highlighted by this study. The data analysis found that female stereotype in language is highly represented at the word level. The authors noted that online learning platform materials for both elementary and junior high school sometimes still show the stereotyping phenomena. The distribution of gender stereotypes in the textual data of online platform materials for elementary school level grades 4–6 is described in Table 2 below.

Table 2

The distribution of gender stereotypes in the textual data of online platform materials for grades 4–6, elementary school level

Grade/ Chapter	Theme	Location	Description	How female represented
Elementary School				
4/4	What is your hobby?	Practice /task	There are blank dialogues about conversations related to asking about hobbies.	Word-level analysis shows females are represented in a sexist fashion, specifically in terms of names and androcentrism.
4/5	Conversations about school	Practice /task	There are blank dialogues about conversations related to the topic of school.	Word-level analysis shows females are represented in a sexist fashion, specifically in terms of names and androcentrism.
4/9	What do you do?	Practice /task	There are blank dialogues talking about occupational roles.	Word-level analysis shows females are represented using sexist language, namely the use of generic nouns and pronouns.
Junior High School				
8/1	Asking and giving help, short functional messages	Practice /task	There is a passage and several related questions	Word-level analysis shows females are represented in a sexist fashion, specifically in terms of names and androcentrism.
8/3	Congratulating & complimenting someone, invitation	Practice /task	There is a passage and several related questions	Word-level analysis shows woman as the mark form is represented in this task.
8/5	Giving advice, writing letters	Practice /task	There is a passage and several related questions	Word-level analysis shows females are represented in a sexist fashion, specifically in terms of names and androcentrism.

Patterns in the way women are addressed based on name and androcentrism are highlighted in the following tables.

Table 3

Written text: Sexism in its meaning in names and androcentric

Sudiro : Joe, please meet my teacher, **Mrs.** Grace
 Joe : Morning, **Mrs.** Grace, I am Joe
 Mrs. Grace: Morning, Joe, Nice to meet you
 (*Grade 4 chapter 4*)

Hello everybody, this is **Mrs.** Shandy, my mother
 (*Grade 4 chapter 5*)

The patterns presented in Table 3 show how woman are addressed and shows how sexism in meaning is represented in the online learning platform materials for Grade 3. The table shows that in addressing women, instead of using a neutral term like Ms., the dialogue and phrasing still address adult females using Mrs. or Miss, usages that address women in terms of their marital status and are not gender-neutral. Women might choose whether to use their husband's surname after the Mrs. title or not. "Grace" in "Mrs. Grace" is a feminine given name. Meanwhile, in the case of "Shandy" in "Mrs. Shandy," whether she used her husband's surname or her own name cannot be identified because "Shandy" is a unisex given name. However, it is different from the use of Mr. with which both married and unmarried males can be addressed.

Table 4

Written text: Sexism in meaning in names and androcentrism

Dear Susan,
 Mom is in the office now. I need you to send a package to **Mrs.** Grace. It is the pink package with a red ribbon in the living room. There is a name, "Lisa," on the package. You can find the address of **Mrs.** Grace near the telephone
 Love,
 Mom
 (*Grade 8 chapter 1; errors in the original text*)

Dear **Miss** Titik, Selina wasn't at school yesterday.
 (*Grade 8 chapter 5*)

As with Table 3, Table 4 shows how women are addressed in a sexist way in the online learning materials for Grade 8, not in a neutral way. Here, women are still addressed using Mrs. or Miss. As mentioned previously, Mrs. and Miss address women in terms of their marital status, and therefore are not gender-neutral. Women might choose whether to use their husband's surname after the Mrs. title or not. "Grace" in "Mrs. Grace" and "Titik" in "Mrs. Titik" are feminine given names.

Table 5

Written text 2. Language sexism in generic nouns

What does he do?
He is a policman

What does the Tom do?
He is a postman

What does she do?
She is a policwoman

(Grade 4/ chapter 9)

The patterns described in Table 5 above are asking about somebody's profession and the text shows language sexism in generic nouns. Sexist language in generic nouns is marked by a specific term, such as the use of the word "man" in "policeman" which tends to be male-oriented. Table 5 clearly emphasized that "policeman," "postman," and "policewoman" are overtly used to indicate specific occupational roles for a particular sex. As stated by Mills (2005), if language is still male-oriented, it can be inferred that sexist language is construed clearly. Instead of using terms specific to men or women, gender-free language should be used.

Table 6

Written: Language sexism in generic pronouns

What does he do?
He is a scientist

(Grade 4/ chapter 9)

The text in Table 6 shows language sexism in generic pronouns, which is

marked by labeling males and females based on specific professions. The pattern dialogue in Table 6 above is talking about male occupational roles as scientists. Males rather than females are represented as having the specific profession of scientist (Mills, 2005). Although the online platform does not represent women as having traditional female occupations such as secretary, nurse, and librarians, neither does it represent them in specifically “male” professions such as professor, scientist, or engineer.

Table 7

Written text: Language sexism in woman as the mark form

She felt like a princess in a fairy tale.

(Grade 8/ chapter 3)

The text in Table 7 shows language sexism in women as the mark form. The word is categorized as language sexism in women as the mark form when there is affixes that refer to females. It emphasizes deviation from universal male forms, such as “lady,” “-ess,” “-ette,” “-enne,” and “-trix.” In Table 7 above, the affix “-ess” can be seen in the task for 8th-grade students. The marked gender “princess” is apparently intended to show people that the term refers to girl instead of male using a term known to be derogatory or trivializing. When the attribute “princess” is changed to a male attribute “prince,” the term does not show the existence of the girls

Discussion

This analysis of an online learning platform mostly used by learners in Indonesia demonstrates to some extent a sexist position towards the female gender. Sexism in written form appeared at the word level using generic nouns, pronouns, women as mark form, names, and androcentrism. Notably, gender fairness in the avoidance of sexist language in the representation of women has not been adequately addressed in online language materials. The findings show that online materials for both elementary and junior high school students covertly display language sexism in the tasks or practices. The writers of these language materials appear to have not handled the issue of gender bias fairly, especially based on the principles of feminist stylistic linguistics advocated by Mills and presented herein. The findings of this study, in the word-level analysis, shows the word choice of Mrs. or Miss is

frequently used in the language material. The material maker of the online learning platform's word choices reflect gender stereotyping based on the marital status issue. According to Stafford and Kline (1996, p. 216), "in American society, the titles of Mrs. and Miss are generally used to differentiate woman according to marital status and to identify women in terms of their relationship to a particular man." The use of Mrs. can be followed by her husband's surname to show the unity and commitment of the marriage or accompanied by her own name for self-enhancement (Stafford & Kline, 1996). The use of the husband's surname is the result of tradition, which builds a social construction. Tradition forces a married woman to adopt the name of her husband and to use the title Mrs. (Stafford & Kline, 1996). It is different from the use of Mr. because here the word applies to all males, both married and unmarried. In the present study, the presented character gives her name as Mrs. Grace in the language teaching material. The other name, Mrs. Shandy, cannot be identified because "Shandy" is a unisex given name, and the language teaching material lacks social context. The term Ms. can be employed to avoid the differentiation of married status and the identification of women. The use of Ms. to address women, as an equivalence of the male Mr., might reduce gender inequality and stereotyping since it does not reveal marital status.

This present study also found the use of generic nouns in the online learning platform's teaching material. The addition of specific male or female suffixes in a particular occupation shows the sexist language. As McConnell and Fazio (1996, p. 1011) stated, "Gender-marked language can have an impact on perceivers' of social targets". It leads to stereotypes of masculine and feminine occupations. Masculine occupational titles can bias a perceiver's perception of the target's personality characteristics in a masculine-congruent manner (McConnell & Fazio, 1996). To reduce the use of sexist language in the language teaching material, the authors might use the person-suffix: "person-suffix titles might serve as a language marker for perceivers to consider the possibility that the target may not be male" (McConnell & Fazio, 1996, p. 1008).

In Indonesia, gender equality in the usage of language material on online learning platforms does not appear to be critically translated into training materials and questions. This evidence shows that the authors of online learning platform materials need to implement gender equality into the language used for those materials; in this way, covert gender bias or stereotypical representations would be eliminated. In line with Dahmardeh and Kim (2020), the representation of gender stereotypes across the world involves an imbalanced depiction of both girls and

boys. Although the Indonesian government has introduced regulations regarding gender fairness in every aspect of life, the representation of women in online learning materials is not equal. The developers of these materials should promote and be aware of language materials that are free from sexism and this should be a significant consideration (Lee, 2019).

Conclusions and Suggestions

It is vital to present gender fairness in language material. Teaching materials, including those provided by online learning platforms, have to pay attention to gender equality representation. To build and improve students' awareness, students should play an active role as both users and participants in the learning activity process (Widodo, 2017, p. 149). This study reveals that one of the main online learning platforms in Indonesia still represents gender stereotypes at the word level, both in sexist language and in meaning. In contrast, the other level of stereotypes cannot be identified in the online learning materials. This is because Indonesian language teaching materials lack social and cultural context. The texts in the language teaching material are brief and tend to take short cuts. Authors should provide social and cultural context in the texts to avoid ambiguous or unidentified meanings.

Promoting language to be free from gender stereotypes should be the concern of all. It is necessary for material makers to represent the gender fairly in language materials to prevent language learners from absorbing gender misrepresentations. However, avoiding gender stereotypes in language can be challenging. One solution is using gender-free language (Mills, 2005, pp. 73-74); replacing Miss and Mrs. with Ms. would reduce sexist language in the teaching materials. The "Ms." title to address both married and unmarried women is equivalent to the "Mr." title for males since it does not show marital status. The replacement of male and female suffixes in occupational titles with person suffixes can also avoid language sexism. It is more neutral than perceiving a specific occupation as having masculine or feminine characteristics.

The importance of gender equality in learning materials has to be a particular concern in education. With regard to the classroom context, the teachers' function to convey the content of the textbook may have the opportunity to control the textbook gender bias. In the same situation in relation to online learning platforms, special supervision from both parents or teachers is needed because each student can access such materials at home and learn independently without teacher

supervision. Results of the study suggest that the authors or developers of teaching materials must consider the evidence from this research and build gender equality into the learning materials, especially in online learning platforms. It is the authors and material developers who choose the wording that indicates gender equality. It is also the authors and material developers who must consider the issue of gender equality in social context usages, such as in dialogues, speech bubbles, and visual materials. Further studies critically examining gender equality and bias as social values in ELT online learning material in the EFL context would help in furthering progress on this issue.

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