



Ministry of Education and Culture  
Republic of Indonesia



Guidebook

# Language and Gender

## Early Socialization

*We hope you make use of this book as well as possible. In all parts of the book, we provide a variety of suggestions and explanations of activities for parents and teachers, because they are the primary educators who know very well the condition of the children. This book provides the inspiration how to take advantage of a variety of activities as positive lessons. If you want to enrich this book with other additional activities, keep trying and make sure they are inspiring.*

Written by **Ella Yulaelawati**

## Foreword

Director of Early Childhood Education Development  
Directorate General of Early Childhood and Community Education  
Ministry of Education and Culture  
Republic of Indonesia

A high quality education for children before they turn five yields significant long-term benefits. There are evidences that affect children's development in the first years of life. Family poverty is an important mediator of the influence of community resources and children's innate abilities. Increased access to early childhood education (ECE) services can have positive effects on the development outcomes and girls' education, even in the short run.

The scope of ages for early year learners is 0-8 years, and in Indonesian education system, girls at early years are in ECE services (0-6 years) and in primary school (7-8 years). However, for early year girls from poor families, they have insufficient access to pre-primary and primary schools because their parents tend to keep their young girls at home for several reasons. In terms of quality, the girls at early years also suffer from irresponsible gender classroom activities. ECE and primary school teachers have insufficient knowledge and skills creating gender bias for girls' development.

Stereotypes and sexism limit the girls' potential growth and development because internalizing negative stereotypes impacts their self-esteem and ultimately, academic performance. Long-term gender bias effects for the girls at early years become most apparent in adolescence. Thus, in order to improve access and quality for young girls, gender mainstreaming at early years is important. Therefore, since 2013, the Directorate of Early Childhood Education and Development (Directorate of ECED) aim to improve

quality of girls' education through access, provision of community-based ECE Centers, early-year gender mainstreaming, parenting and teacher training.

The Directorate of ECED develops a series of Guidebook for Improving

Girls' Education and Early Year-Gender Mainstreaming, which aims to improve access and quality of girl's education and early-year gender mainstreaming. The guidebooks include: i. Pocket Book: Gender Mainstreaming in Education, ii. Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting, iii. Language and Gender (Early Socialization), and iv. Gender Responsive Teaching Materials.

The guidebooks were prepared in Indonesian language; particular thanks go to Mr. Cecep Somantri and Ms. Mita Adhiwijna who prepared the texts in English, and to Ms. Kurniati Restuningsih who coordinated the overall activities and supervised the publication.

I trust you will enjoy reading these guidebooks and urge you to take a lead for improving girls and women education as well as gender mainstreaming.

Jakarta, April 2016

**Ella Yulaelawati**  
*Director*



# Part 1

## Background Knowledge

### A. Introduction

How do gender and language interact? Over the last couple of decades, linguists, anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, and feminist thinkers have examined various aspects of this question. Today there are dozens of books and hundreds of fields of study that offer gender and language, as well as various articles about gender and language that can easily be found in many journals. However, the topics covered in the books and the journals are far from comprehensive and scattered; showing that there is no theoretical coherence in the study of language and gender over the years.

Although the most obvious function of language is to communicate information, it also contributes to at least two other functions that are equally important, but less often recognized: (1) to establish and maintain social relationships, and (2) to express and create social identities of the speakers. Such functions may be rarely recognized because the information about class or race is not delivered as much as what we say and how we say it.

Language is a communication practice mediated by the linguistic system. Linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics offer a platform

where communication practices can be defined so broadly, allowing a discourse between language and gender. Linguistic competence refers to knowledge that underlies the ability to produce and recognize the linguistic structure. On the other hand, from the perspective of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, knowledge of grammatical function of a language is not necessarily able or sufficient to ensure verbal practices. It requires paralinguistic and pragmatic considerations that start from:

- The need for a convention in which people engage with each other in a linguistic activity.
- Recognition of linguistic competence that is continuously developed in conjunction with the system that functions in social situations.
- Development and mastery of linguistic and communication competences.
- Integration of social locus of linguistic practice and system developed by the category and group of speakers.

Recognition towards the four considerations above shows that both language and social world are not static and happen just like that. It is maintained and sustained in everyday activities.

### B. Language and Gender

It has long been known that in many cultures women and men use different forms of language. This difference usually lies on the style rather than on the variety of language. There was an impression that women talk in 'smooth' way in their social contacts, regardless their origin and class. In the past this impression was further reinforced by the absence of harsh and rude words as well as taboo references in women's conversation. The opposite impression was given to men.

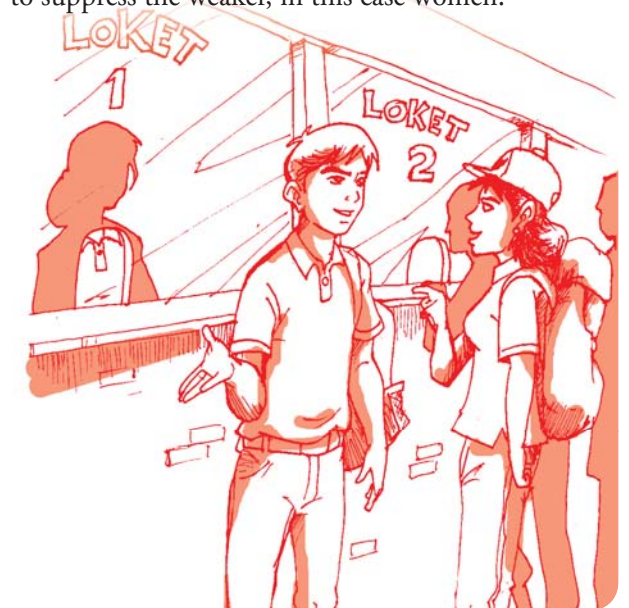
According to Chomsky<sup>1</sup>, a linguistics expert, there are four possibilities that relate to the socio-culture when we learn a language. **First**, the social structure can influence and determine the structure of language or behavior. **Second**, the structure of language and behavior can influence and determine the social structure. **Third**, the relationship is reciprocal. **Fourth**, the social and language structures are completely unrelated.

If we take the first possibility, we can say that language is the result of community consensus. The consensus will be greatly influenced by the dominance of existing authorities because they have the power to make policy. In *Bahasa Indonesia*, there are linguistic terms that biologically aim to distinguish the gender, such as phoneme /a/ for the masculine and phoneme /i/ for the feminine gender. However, the differences in language used by men and women are very difficult to be discovered by simply taking a

<sup>1</sup> Chomsky, Noam (1972). *Language and mind*. (Enl. ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

look at biological consideration. Much research that examine the relationship between language, gender, socio-politics and culture show that the language used by men and women is indeed different.

The difference used by men and women will be more visible when we look at it from the community's nature and culture. Most communities around the world are patriarchal. Language is one of the things that suffer from discrimination in any patriarchal society. Due to this condition, women experience a dilemma and discriminatory in terms of language in two ways; **first**, how they learn (if not taught) to speak, and **second**, how they treat language. In certain ways, language would be used by people who dominate, where in a patriarchal society males are the dominant, to suppress the weaker, in this case women.







The manifestation of gender inequality in the language that is caused by patriarchal culture can be seen from some of the following case examples.

1. Masculine and Feminine

Some vocabularies distinguish people through masculine and feminine terms, and here are some examples.

Feminine		
Indonesian	Translation and Meaning in English	
Ibu kota	Mother of Town	Capital City
Nenek Moyang	Grand Ancestor	Ancestor
Dewi malam	Princess of Night	Moon

Masculine		
Indonesian	Translation and Meaning in English	
Dewa perang	God of War	Commander
Raja hutan	King of the Jungle	Tiger
Raja siang	King of Day	Sun

Similar to *Bahasa Indonesia*, feminine and masculine terms also occur in english. For example, pronoun ‘he’ can refer to both men and women, but not for ‘she’.

The phenomena of masculine and feminine terms in *Bahasa Indonesia* and english above lead to some interesting conclusions. *First*, feminine terms seem to represent peace, passivity, quietness, and patience. *Second*, masculine terms have the impression of controlling, aggressive and strong.

2. Language of Children Song

Feminine	
Indonesian	Translation and Meaning in English
<b>Judul: Bangun Tidur</b>	<b>Title: Wake Up</b>
<i>Bangun tidur ku terus mandi</i>	After I wake up, I take shower
<i>Tidak lupa menggosok gigi</i>	Never forget to brush my teeth
<i>Habis mandi ku tolong ibu</i>	After bathing, I help my mother
<i>Membersihkan tempat tidurku</i>	Making my bed

Masculine	
Indonesian	Translation and Meaning in English
<b>Judul: Aku seorang Kapiten</b>	<b>Title: I am a Captain</b>
<i>Aku seorang Kapiten</i>	I am a Captain
<i>Mempunyai pedang panjang</i>	I have a long sword
<i>Kalau berjalan prok-prok-prok</i>	When I walk, prok-prok-prok
<i>Aku seorang Kapiten</i>	I am a Captain

There are examples of children song taught in Indonesian Early Childhood Education that taught influence perceptions young children’s gender and stereotypes. The following children songs dislinguish gender roles of being feminine and masculine.

3. Euphemism

Euphemism is an effort to smoothen the language used to describe certain things. Sometimes euphemism will give the impression of politeness and high manner to make others in the conversation not feel offended or disrespected. In some contexts, euphemism is very important to be learned and taught. For example, in english, when a learner wants to go to the toilet, very gently (s)he would say “May I wash my hands?”. Likewise, in *Bahasa Indonesia*, the equal expression in this context is “*Maaf, apa saya boleh ke belakang sebentar?*” (“Excuse me, may I go to the ‘back’ for a moment?”).



Obviously, those two expression in two languages have a different meaning from their literal meaning. However, everyone understands the purpose and the main purpose of the sentences.

Euphemism then turns to create a gender bias when it comes to define the roles of work into pronoun. For example, in english, the pronoun of nurse is ‘she’ and everybody -> ‘he’. Another example is a lot of working professions that end with the word ‘man’ regardless he is a female or male. For example, ‘policeman’, ‘mailman’, ‘weatherman’, and so on.

C. Introduction to Responsive Gender Language

This brief introduction to gender responsive language is intended to provide an equal affirmation for both men and women in terms of language. It signifies a stepping stone effort to ensure a framework of equal treatment and recognition.

1. Equal Treatment and Recognition

Women participate in a variety of aspects in the society. Language is a medium of communication that is most fundamental to reflect this participation. However, the sexual stereotype, exclusive sentences and words that degrade women are still often heard in everyday conversation or found in written language in workplace communication. The



language is not in accordance with the noble objective of gender equality.

To sincerely give equal treatment, women should be seen, heard and treated equally. It means that in communication, we are to avoid using language that could be misinterpreted and stereotyped.



## 2. Equal Opportunity in Working Field

With the increased participation of women in the workplace, someone might assume that gender equality has been achieved because of the quantity of women in the workplace has been fulfilled. But it should be understood that there are a variety of obstacles for women to be considered in important and challenging job, or even in acquiring promotion and career development. Gender bias in communication exists and sometimes marginalizes women, limiting the acceptance of women as equal partners.

## 3. Clarity of Expression

There are words and phrases that have not been able to fully convey what we want to say. A good communication should contain clear information so that it will not be misinterpreted. It is also important to that we are to avoid sexist expressions at whatsoever reason, since it will create stereotype that will linger for a long period of time.

### D. Why Responsive Gender Language?

*Bahasa Indonesia*, which is derived from the Malay Language, basically has no form lingual or grammatical markers that indicate masculine or feminine nature of a word. However, due to the absorption of other languages, *Bahasa Indonesia* has some markers that show lingual masculinity and femininity. Some of the markers are: suffixes -wan,

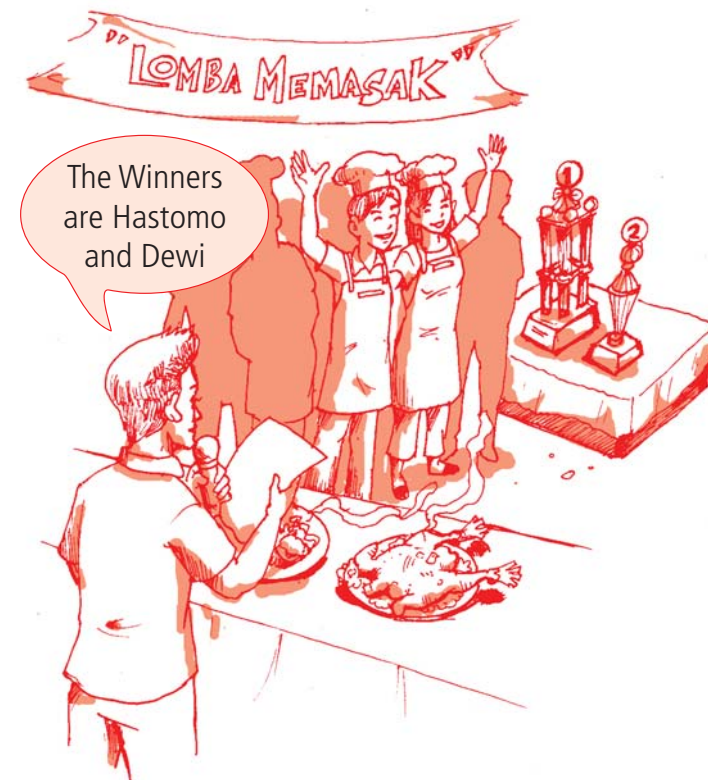


-wati, -man, -in, -ah, -at, -ita, -ni, -anda, -andus, phoneme /a/ in the end of the word, and phoneme /i/ in the end of the word.

The morphological processes that occur in masculine and feminine forms in *Bahasa Indonesia* are reduplication, affixation, and change. These three processes create inflected forms that describe gender. The existence of gender categories (masculine and feminine) in the language lead to the emergence of gender bias. Gender bias in *Bahasa Indonesia* is marked with words that are in favor of men. In general, the words used for men (the masculine forms) can be used for both men or women, while the words used for women (the feminine forms) only apply to women.

Gender bias in language can be influenced by the values that exist in the society, social roles, and culture. The bias is more apparent with the existence of gender polarization showing that women are considered inferior, while men hold the superior status.

If we want to promote gender equality between men and women through language, it has to start from restrictions on the use of markers that show specific gender alignment. On the other hand, there is a need to educate people from their early age about linguistic elements that have neutral meanings.



The Winners  
are Hastomo  
and Dewi



## Part 2

# Practical Knowledge

### A. Gender Identity Development Begins at Home

For most children, being a boy or a girl is something that feels natural. At birth, babies are assigned male or female based on their physical characteristics. This refers to the “sex” of the child. When children are able to express themselves, they will declare themselves to be a boy or a girl; this is their “gender identity.”

#### How Does Gender Identity Develop in Children?

Children, by around two-years-old, become conscious of their physical characteristics. Before their third birthday, most children are easily able to label themselves as either a boy or a girl. A year





after, by age of four, most children have a stable sense of their gender identity. During this time, children learn gender role behavior—that is, doing “things that boys do” or “things that girls do.”

Before the age of three, children can differentiate toys typically used by boys or girls and begin to play with children of their own gender in activities identified with that gender. For example, a girl may gravitate toward dolls and playing house. By contrast, a boy may play games that are more active and enjoy toy soldiers, blocks, and toy trucks.



In addition to their choices of toys, games, and sports, children typically express their gender identity in the following ways:

- Clothing or hairstyle



- Preferred name or nickname
- Social behavior that reflects varying degrees of aggression, dominance, dependency, and gentleness.
- Manner and style of behavior and physical gestures and other non-verbal actions identified as masculine or feminine.
- Social relationships, including the gender of friends, and the people he or she decides to imitate.



## What Can Parents Do to Help Gender Identity Development in Children?

Here are some ideas that parents can do to help their children cope with the gender identity development that they experience:

- Children’s books or puzzles showing men and women in non-stereotypical gender roles (e.g. working moms, male nurses, female police officers, etc.)
- A wide range of toys for all children, including baby dolls, toy vehicles, action figures, blocks, etc.



- By age six, most children spend the majority of their playtime with members of their own sex and may gravitate towards sports and other activities that are associated with their gender. It is important to allow children to make choices regarding what sports and other activities they get involved in.



## B. Classroom: A Place to Begin Lessons on Gender

Gender stereotypes and norms can influence both student behavior and the educators' responses to it. Educators do not only have a great opportunity to encourage students to question gender stereotypes, but also to reinforce these messages when managing student behavior.

Behavior is not just affected by an individual, but also by the culture and environment in which it occurs. Young people have a strong desire to be accepted, recognized and valued by their surroundings, including school.



Creating schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students are common goals for

all educators. Educators play an important role in creating gender-expansive environments that affirm all children and allow them to express their interests and find confidence in their strengths.



## Ideas for Educators in the Classroom

- Help students expand their possibilities – academically, artistically, emotionally – and see that there are many ways to be a boy or a girl.
- Use inclusive phrases to address your class as a whole like “Good morning, everyone” or “Good morning, scholars” instead of “Good morning, boys and girls.”





- Group students in ways that do not rely on gender. Avoid situations that force children to make gendered choices, such as boys line up here and girls line up there.
- Develop classroom messages that emphasize “All children can...” rather than “Boys don’t..., Girls don’t...”
- Provide role models for all children that show a wide range of achievements and emotions for all people. Read story books in your classroom to ensure inclusion of good role models.
- Be a role model! When possible, give examples of how you or people you know like to do things outside of gender stereotypes.



For example, if you’re a woman who likes carpentry, do a math problems related to woodworking. If you’re a man who likes to cook, create a math problem measuring recipe ingredients.

- Use lesson plans designed to expand understanding of gender. Provide opportunities for students to look at the qualities all children share.





## Part 3

### Final Words to Remember

#### A. Language and Gender Since Early Years

Educating children gender equality through language should be carried out as early as possible. Otherwise, children will have tendency to discriminate their opposite-sex peers.

Parents and teachers can contribute in this regard by teaching, guiding, and providing knowledge about gender to children. However, it is important to note that the role of a teacher is very strategic to inculcate gender equality. When children grow up, they can be responsive to gender discrimination. Once a teacher at the school touches gender issues, children will continue to remember, until adulthood.

Not only parents and teachers, education service providers and policy makers could also play role in fostering more flexible gender roles in children. Although parents can have an influence on children's gender development, their impact can sometimes be overestimated. Because gender is a social category that organizes virtually every segment of society, there are multiple sources of socialization in children's gender development. Besides parents, these potentially include other family members, peer groups, friends, the media, and teachers. As children get older and become more autonomous, the influences of peers and the media often become especially powerful.



Parents can try to encourage their children to play with a combination of feminine- and masculine-stereotyped toys and play activities during early childhood; however, they may find their efforts run counter to children's attitudes once they are exposed to peers and the media. In addition, parents can be mindful of the kinds of peers with whom their children affiliate. They may be able to foster greater gender-role flexibility through encouragement of organized mixed-gender activities in which girls and boys learn to work together as equals. Finally, parents can make a concerted effort to discuss and challenge gender stereotypes with their children.

**Further information:**  
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