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Gender Analysis of Arabic Language Teaching for Children at Madinah Islamic Full Day Elementary School, Slawi Tegal during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

One of the efforts that can be carried out to systematically disseminate gender values is through teaching, be it through the teaching materials or the teaching techniques or strategies. One of the methods observed was through the teaching of Arabic language at Madina Islamic Full Day Elementary School in Slawi Tegal. The research methodology conducted in this study was the descriptive analysis method. The data collection techniques used included observations, interviews, and documentation study. Results of the research indicate that the teaching materials, used by the school from grade one to grade six, show values of gender equality, starting with the appearance of the book cover, the texts of the Arabic language teaching materials, and the exercise materials in the book. Furthermore, based on results of in-depth interviews, it was clarified that gender values in the books are complemented by verbal elaborations given informally by the teachers. Non-verbal explanations are also required in the form of appreciative attitude and treatment given by the educators to the learners, both boys and girls in an equal manner. In relation to the state of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arabic language lessons were taught online.

Keywords

Gender equality, Children, Elementary School, Arabic Teaching

The government of Indonesia defines the language curriculum applied at formal education institutions, starting from early childhood education level up to higher education institution level. Gender values in Arabic language teaching materials for children can be analyzed based on various activities or aspects of teaching, namely learners, teachers/instructors, teaching materials, learning process, and evaluation.

Therefore, the current study on gender analysis of Arabic language for children teaching materials and the teaching process, particularly at Madinah Islamic Full Day Elementary School in Slawi Tegal, is of significant importance. This study examined gender equality values found in the Arabic language textbooks used at the school.

This is a qualitative study with a naturalistic approach. The collected data were analyzed by using the descriptive inferential method. The techniques used in the research include description, organization, and general inference of materials pertaining to the object of study.

Primary data sources were obtained from the field in the form observation, interview, and documentation results as well as triangulation of the analysis of Arabic language teaching materials with gender perspective for children at Madinah Full Day Elementary School of Slawi Tegal. Secondary data were acquired from literary study or theories relevant to the discussed topic of study.

1. The Gender Concept in Culture

Gender is a cultural concept that is aimed at distinguishing publicly recognized roles, behaviors, mentality, and emotional characteristics between men and women. Moreover, Hillary M. Lips defines gender as cultural expectations of men and women. Lindsey also stated, similarly, that all social resolutions regarding whether a person is considered a man or a woman are also included in the field of gender studies[1].

Hence, the concept of gender refers to characteristics attached to women and men based on socio-cultural developments and the changing of times. These characteristics are not simply attributed due to sexual differences found between the two, but because of social will and culture of a given time period (Izzuddin, Dalimunthe, & Susilo, 2021).

Gender equality refers to the concept of balance or equality between men and women as human beings who cannot be entirely measured in a rigid and absolutely similar manner, because men and women have biological differences that cannot be completely overlooked. These biological differences will result in different behaviors and tasks between men and women (Barakat & Bengtsson, 2017).

Textbooks need to be analyzed as they are media for education and social change (Dejene, 2017). Taylor-Mendes (2009) and Craeynest and Chan (2015) assert that students are actually influenced—either directly or indirectly—by pictures found in textbooks. If the pictures displayed in textbooks raise values of gender inequality, the students' mindset will develop accordingly, which will, on a massive scale, create a social construction that sees gender bias as a common phenomenon (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009).

2. Teaching Elementary School Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the pandemic, the education system is required to conduct adjustments due to the spread of the pandemic throughout various countries (UNESCO, 2020). The adjustments of education have been observed in several aspects, namely in the teaching model, student learning model, and teaching media. One of the challenges examined is the transition from offline to online learning (Hung, 2021) (Mælan, Gustavsen, Stranger-Johannessen, & Nordahl, 2021). This is the key factor that "compelled" educators to create innovations in the field of education, because the educators, thus far, have been trained to teach in actual classes (offline). According to a study by Bashir (2021), the major issues with online learning are as follows:

1) lack of access and affordability;
2) cost of internet connectivity;
3) lack of technological competence;
4) challenges related to pedagogy and materials;
5) assessment-related concerns.

According to research by Mak (2021), learning has drastically declined throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically, the current research also suggests that the female students' level of motivation is higher than that of male students. Therefore, a learning process that pays attention to aspects of gender equality needs to be considered. Mak's research can serve as proof that women are capable of competing with men in the professional world.

3. Arabic Language Teaching for Children at Madinah Elementary School during the Pandemic

Prof. Mahmud Yunus, an expert on Islamic education in Indonesia, suggests the use of this method in Indonesia. Many modern Islamic boarding schools applying the Darussalam, Gontor and Darunnajah, Jakarta Islamic boarding school model followed his suggestion and succeeded in implementing this method for teaching Arabic language to young learners. There are also many other education institutions inspired to use this method, including the Madinah Islamic Elementary School in Tegal.

The Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi is located on Ahmad Yani Street in Procot Village, Slawi District, Tegal Regency, Central Java Province. It is, to be exact, situated south of the Grand Mosque of Tegal Regency with some buildings occupying a land area of 7215 m^2.

1 The National Center for Language Development (*Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa*), Department of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, *Pedoman Umum Pembentukan Istilah* [General Guideline for Term Formation], (n.p.; n.d.), pp. 22-23.

In 2016, Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School acquired "A" accreditation status as stated in Decree Number 220/BAP-SM/X/2016 on October 28, 2016. The accreditation status it gained in 2016 has served as a point of reference for them to develop further.

Currently, the school facilities include 15 classrooms, 1 library, and 1 administration room. To develop the students' ICT skills, Madinah Elementary School maintains 1 computer laboratory. There are also two science laboratories available in the school.

4. Teachers and Students

Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi has 9 homeroom teachers, 4 subject-specific teachers, and 3 supervisory teachers, who are all S1 (bachelor's degree) graduates.

The students are learners who need to be considered in the teaching policy. The level of motivation and potentials of the students will greatly determine the learning process. The number of students at Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Data of Students at Madinah Elementary School Slawi-Tegal Academic Year 2017/2018[2]

No	Grade	Number of Students		Total
		M	F	
1	I	25	22	47
2	II	24	22	46
3	III	18	30	48
4	IV	22	18	40
5	V	26	21	47
6	VI	23	17	40
Total Number of Students		138	130	268

Arabic language is one of the sub-subjects of Islamic Religious Education taught at the Complementary Elementary Madrasa (*Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah* – MDT) of Madinah Elementary School in Slawi, aside from subjects such as Al-Qur'an Hadith, Aqidah and Akhlaq (religious belief and morality), and History of Islamic Culture. The Arabic language lessons are taught from grade I to grade VI.

The textbook used by Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi to teach Arabic is the 2013 curriculum-based *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* (Let's Learn Arabic for Islamic Elementary Schools) published by Erlangga. *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* contains six volumes for use at certain levels[3]. Grade I uses *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* volume 1, grade II uses *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* volume 2, grade III uses *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* volume 3, grade IV uses *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* volume 4, grade V uses *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* volume 5, grade VI uses *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* volume 6.

Arabic language learning at Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi is managed by 2 teachers, namely Mohamad Zakaria supervising grade I to grade III, and Rifqoh Khasanah, Lc. supervising grade IV to grade VI.

The duration of each Arabic lesson at Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi is 1x35 minutes.

There are four competencies or skills considered in the Arabic language class, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To accomplish those skills, Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi uses *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab untuk MI* as the textbook of reference. The textbook is based on the 2013 curriculum and it covers all of the linguistic aspects above. Students are taught syntactic models and given exercises/drills relating to the models, then they are taught about *qowa'id* (grammar) to summarize their knowledge about the models.

In addition, other aspects of learning are also provided that do not necessarily follow the pattern above, such as *muhadaṡah* (conversation), *mahfuẓat* (aphorism), and *tarjamah* (translation).

2 Documentation from Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi year 2018 was cited on July 2, 2018.
3 Interview with Rifqoh Khasanah, Lc (one of the Arabic language instructors at Madinah Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi) on July 1, 2018.

5. Gender Analysis of Arabic Language Materials and Teaching it for Children

One of the socio-cultural products that shapes a child's mindset about gender equality is language. The Arabic language textbook used at Madina Full day Elementary School of Slawi Tegal, i.e., *Ayo Belajar Bahasa Arab*, comprises six volumes, written by different writers but published by a single publisher, Erlangga, Jakarta.

Volumes one to three were written by Firman Hamdani, and the covers of volume one and two do not reflect values of gender equality, whereas volume three do. In terms of the contents or materials and figures found in the textbook, all three Arabic language textbook volumes indicate gender equality values.

The fourth book, written by Jalal Sayuti et al., reflects values of gender equality, while the book cover does not.

The fifth volume, by Sri Sabahatun, both book cover and contents entirely reflect gender equality values. This is also the case with the sixth volume, written by A. Syaekhudin, which entirely displays values of gender equality in its contents and cover.

Subsequently, based on in-depth interview results, given the existing teaching materials, more comprehensive elaborations about gender values can be given verbally by the instructors in an informal manner. Accordingly, the instructors need to have a good understanding of gender values. Non-verbal elaborations in the form of appreciative attitude and treatment to learners are also required for both boys and girls in a fair and equal manner. This is done as such so that there is alignment between teaching materials containing gender equal values and the daily habit or exchanges between instructors and learners.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning at Madina Islamic Full-day Elementary School in Slawi, Tegal is unavoidable. The teachers give their instructions online while learners who are still at a very young age and have no experience learning online need the help of not only teachers but also the engaging role of both parents. In the case of the Arabic language lessons, parents tend to provide more help with the technicalities of learning because most of them do not understand Arabic. The online learning method applied for the children is, ultimately, considered to lack both technical and substantive effectiveness in achieving successful Arabic language lessons.

6. Conclusion

The current study indicates that the teaching materials used, namely the textbook used from grade one to grade six, have shown values of gender equality, starting from the appearance of the book cover, the Arabic language teaching materials/contents, and to the exercises in the textbook. Subsequently, based on the results of in-depth interviews, it was found that more comprehensive complementary elaborations of gender values can be given verbally by the instructors in an informal manner. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the teachers at Madina Islamic Full-day Elementary School of Slawi, Tegal have tried to make adjustments to the Arabic language lessons so that the materials can be properly delivered.

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