Linguistic Sexism And Gender Role Stereotyping In Malaysian English Language Textbooks

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Abstract

Sexist language and gender stereotyping do not only disparage, but can also lower the dignity of one group of people, usually women/girls. If left unchecked, these negative norms of behavior and attitude could be institutionalized and gradually become part of our social and cultural code. Recent research findings indicate a strong presence of gender bias and linguistic sexism in the language and content of educational materials such as textbooks and practice books. This paper addresses linguistic sexism and gender role stereotyping in Malaysian English language school textbooks. Specifically, it looks at: If sexism is inculcated very early in life, how is it inculcated and what is inculcated? Are our school textbooks indirectly and unconsciously functioning as a conduit for the indoctrination and enforcement of sexism and sex role conformity among young Malaysians? This paper presents the preliminary findings of an on-going research study that documents the extent of gender bias and linguistic sexism in selected Malaysian primary and secondary school English language textbooks.

Keywords: linguistic sexism, gender role stereotyping, English language school textbooks, gender.

Introduction

Malaysia in its 50 years of independence is now mid-way in its quest toward becoming a developed country by the year 2020. To achieve this goal, the National Mission, a policy and implementation framework is presented that outlines Malaysia's priorities for the next 15 year phase to 2020. Currently, the 9th Malaysia Plan is in place that will chart the nation's development agenda for the first 5 years of the National Mission (2006-2010) that places great emphasis on the need to pursue programmes that will enhance the nation's capability to compete at the global level, to strengthen national unity, to bring about better distribution of income and wealth as well as a higher quality of life. Thus, citizens' well-being and their living in harmony are of the outmost importance.

The quality of the nation's human capital is the most critical element in achieving the National Mission, and so, human capital development is a key thrust in the 9th Malaysia Plan. Capacity building initiatives of the government include development of knowledgeable, skilled and innovative human capital as a basis of a knowledge-based economy.

Children and the young generation are Malaysia's strongest assets in its goal to becoming a progressive and developed nation. To invest in human capital development, the harnessing and the channeling of efforts to inculcate in children not only knowledge and skills for daily life and future workplace but also inculcating in them progressive thinking, attitudes, strong moral and ethical values are important. Within this, not less important is to inculcate in children awareness of a world in which both males and females live harmoniously together, i.e., to inculcate in them an equitable notion of the world that has equal place for both males and females in it.

Children acquire gender identity and an understanding of gender roles even before they step into school. They internalize what they see as appropriate qualities and attitudes associated with being masculine and feminine through socialization within the family. However, educational processes and relations within the school system further contribute to the formation of these values and views of gender identity and the maintenance of socially accepted gender roles (Posner, 2003) usually at the cost of the educational experience that girls receive (Nambissan, 2004). Schools develop and reinforce social norms such as sex segregations, stereotypes, and even discriminations which exaggerate the negative aspects of sex roles in the outside world even when attempts at alleviating them are being made.

For many young children in Malaysia, the act of reading and the practice of reading are particularly sustained more so in schools than at home through early reading texts, particularly through school textbooks. Much about what young children understand about the world, how the world works, the social relationships within it, the norms and practices of the culture as well as what they understand about their everyday life come from these influential sources. Such importance are the school texts to the nation that the Ministry of Education takes great pains to monitor the development of these texts by appointing authoritative ministerial committees to oversee the development of these texts

from their inception, their printing, their distribution and their use. In Malaysia, the recommended texts are used for some years before they are replaced by new texts.

Textbooks in Malaysian Schools and Their Roles

In Malaysia, in the education system, specifically at the primary and secondary school levels, educational materials especially school textbooks are highly regarded for the following reasons. They:
(a) are providers of information and knowledge about the world around us;
(b) are a repository of truth and knowledge that are looked upon with great credibility and authority;
(c) are one of the primary instruments for shaping thinking, attitudes and principles;
(d) aid the government in development and nation building to produce a young generation of balanced individuals in knowledge and skills as well as loyal and respectful of family, religion, race and country; and
(e) are conveyers of messages on how social relations are organized and offer a pattern of a preferred individual and behavior model in our society.

Thus, students and to some extent teachers, are "less free to disregard or be critical of educational materials than they are of the media" (Smith, 1988, p. 37). They are "frequently required to absorb and assimilate" the educational materials in great detail (Smith, 1988). Generally, according to Smith (Smith, 1988), when it comes to such educational and reference materials, people become much more receptive and susceptible to the messages that these materials relay swaying them to the influence of these materials.

Occurrence of Sexism, Linguistic Sexism and Sex-role Stereotyping in School Textbooks

The 1960's and 1970's mark the starting point for active research in the portrayal of gender roles (as well as other issues including ethnicity, socio economic status and many others) in education. Researchers have found that not only in the explicit agenda of education but also in the " hidden curriculum" (Lee & Gropper, 1974 as cited in Wood, 1994; Kimmel, 2004) that there are reinforcements of sexist conceptions in the institutional organization, in the content including the curriculum, educational materials and textbooks as well as in teaching styles that "reflect gender stereotypes and have the effect of sustaining gender inequalities by privileging white males and marginalizing and devaluating female and minority students" (Wood, 1994, p.207) . Researchers in the US have noted the prevalence of gender stereotypes in children's story books (Weitzman, et al., 1972) and soon many researches followed suit all over the world to investigate the phenomenon. The categories of analysis have included: (1) the frequency of appearances or invisibility of characters; (2) the portrayal/representations of characters in social, occupational and political activities and (3) the depiction of personality characteristics.

With regard to the three categories in textbook content analysis, the summary of the research findings are as follows:

(1) The frequency of appearances or invisibility of characters. Very few studies affirm fair treatment of both genders in textbooks. Generally, the findings show: (a) there are more males than females presented in illustrations (pictures, drawings, photos, etc.) and in the texts; (b) when females are visible, they are usually insignificant or inconspicuous; (c) no textbooks had more females than males; and (d) there were books without females but none without males.

(2) the portrayal/representations of characters in social, occupational and political activities. Generally, the findings show: (a) characters are assigned traditional roles which are stereotyped emphasizing family and occupational roles, usually associated with one gender; (b) female role assignments are more restricted and less varied while males are assigned a wide range of occupations, females appear in fewer/less diverse roles; (c) females are mostly depicted around/outside the home doing non-enumerated tasks (e.g., domestic chores) while males are depicted to interact in the wider community, earning, possessing more and are involved in decision-making; and (d) the spheres of activities are divided along masculine and feminine lines.

(3) the depiction of personality characteristics. Generally, the findings show: (a) differences in behavior and personality characteristics between both genders; (b) traditional masculine and feminine traits are prevalent- females are more gentle and compassionate while males are more independent/risk takers; (c) males are more positively portrayed, e.g., as problem solvers/independent leaders, females are negatively portrayed as dependent/subservient; (d) males are given a wider range of traits, females are severely restricted to a narrow range of traits; (e) males are depicted as active, involved in the outdoors while females are passive and are nearly always involved indoors; and (f) males are portrayed as powerful and females powerless which do not reflect the changing social statues of females in the society today.

In Malaysia, local researchers such as Saedah & Siraj (1990), Sandra Kumari & Mardziah (2003) and Jariah Mohd. Jan (2002) have indicated occurrences of sexism and sex-role stereotyping in Malay language reading texts and English language texts in Malaysian schools. Despite efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination, there are occurrences of sexism, i.e., prejudice or discrimination based on gender (Bahiyah Abdul Hamid, 2002; Bahiyah Abdul Hamid, 2003) in school textbooks. Also, both genders are treated and represented unequally through language which can be termed "linguistic sexism" (Bahiyah Abdul Hamid, 2002; Bahiyah Abdul Hamid, 2003) and there are occurrences of sex-role stereotyping, i.e., standardized mental pictures commonly held by members of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, affective attitude or critical judgment because that person is male or female (Bahiyah Abdul Hamid, 2002, 2003) in school textbooks.

Much of the studies carried out have been fragmented and isolated with regard to their focus of research and the age group studied. Studies have been undertaken to focus on

either female (see Bhog, 2002 for instance) or male (see Evans & Davis, 2000) representations in textbooks with very few researchers looking at both male and female representations together[1] Within these analyses, many researchers further isolate the age group studied to be the focal point of their research study Sanda Kumari & Mardziah Hayati (2003) for secondary year 4 textbook analyses and Jariah Mohd. Jan for the first level primary school years 1-3. No local study so far has been comprehensive and large scale, undertaking to study both primary and secondary textbooks in its entirety for the occurrences of linguistic sexism and sex role stereotyping. The authors of this paper are not only attempting to carry out a comprehensive and large scale study done in Malaysia to fill in the knowledge gap with regard to the occurrences of linguistic sexism and sex role stereotyping in Malaysian English language school textbooks but also to complement it, where a measurement of the awareness, attitudes and opinions of not only teachers but also students will be carried out in the on-going research study. This paper highlights only a small part of the overall study.

Effects of Sexism, Linguistic Sexism and Sex-role Stereotyping in School Textbooks

Henry, Hamilton & Thorne (in Gundykunst, 1998, p.119) exert that sexism is manifested mainly through language. If so, what are the negative effects of sexism, linguistic sexism and sex-role stereotyping in school textbooks on children and on nation building? How does sexism, linguistic sexism and sex-role-stereotyping upset harmony in the society? The following are answers to this question:
(1) Sexism and gender stereotyping mold in the young a sexist mindset; legitimizing the ideology that sexism is the natural order of things (see amongst others Kimmel, 2004; Steward et al., 2003; Smith, 1988);
(2) Sexism and gender stereotyping lower the self esteem of children and young adults creating a void that has detrimental effects on the self images, aspirations and motivations of both genders(see amongst others Kimmel, 2004; Steward et al., 2003; Smith, 1988);
(3) The unequal treatment of both genders may share a mutually contributory relationship with gender biased classroom practices where one gender is favored over the other making the classroom context disharmonious (Steward et al., 2003; Smith, 1988);
(4) Gender stereotypes limit both genders to certain modes of behaviour, course of study and career choices thus preventing them from realizing their full potential (see amongst others Kimmel, 2004; Steward et al. 2003; Jariah Mohd. Jan, 2002; Smith, 1988); and
(5) Social ills, e.g., violence, sexual violence, domestic violence and sexual harassment at the workplace have largely come about because of sexism and gender stereotypes.

As negative messages such as sexism, gender bias and sex-role stereotypes go unchallenged in school texts; they are read and re-read by generations of students as well as teachers. Textbooks indirectly and unconsciously function as conduits for the indoctrination and enforcement of sexism and sex role conformity among young Malaysians.

Objectives of the Paper

In view of the negative effects to children specifically as discussed above and to human capital development and capacity building, this paper presents the preliminary findings of an on-going research study that documents the extent of gender bias and linguistic sexism in two selected Malaysian primary school texts using the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. The reported preliminary findings in this paper are the outcome of an on-going research study conducted in several phases as discussed in Yuen et al. (2007). This paper specifically reports on only one phase of the research, mainly with regard to the content analysis of data, the outcome of the pilot research conducted from March to May 2007. It will only discuss the preliminary findings of two selected primary school textbooks from the sample texts of the pilot study before a more comprehensive report is published in December 2008.

It is hoped that this paper will raise awareness and develop critical thinking not only about the issue of linguistic sexism and gender role stereotypes in Malaysian school textbooks but also to create awareness for a new, more acceptable, harmonious and equitable notion of the world for the equal place of both males and females in it.

Research Questions

This paper does not represent the findings of the complete set of research questions for the on-going research study. The findings reported in this paper are only related to the primary level texts analyzed following the research questions below:
Are there occurrences of linguistic sexism and gender role stereotyping in the Integrated Primary School Curriculum or in Malay, Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR henceforth) English language textbooks studied? If so, how are linguistic sexism and sex role stereotyping perpetuated in these language textbooks?

Methodology

The main corpus of the on-going research study are English language primary school textbooks (year 1-6) and English language secondary school textbooks (year 1-5), in total there are 21 textbooks. The pilot study took into consideration a randomly selected number of primary and secondary school textbooks. This paper discusses the findings of the pilot study with regards to only 2 textbooks from the primary level, namely, year 3 and year 6. It is extremely important to find out if there are occurrences of linguistic sexism and gender role stereotyping in the texts selected as they are used by children at their formative age and what they are receptive to within the texts play an important part in formulating their cultural and social values specifically where gender relations is concerned. The following are particulars about the texts.

The primary year 3 text:
Authors: Audrey Lee Bee Yoke, Manjindarjit Kaur & Shanti David (3 females)
Year of Publication: 2004
Illustrator: Salmah Rahim (A female)
Graphic Designer: A. Kamagarajan (A male)
Editor: Tam Lye Suan (A female)
Publisher: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Abadi Ilmu Sdn. Bhd.
No. of Units: 10
No. of Pages: 122
No. of Words:1863 (largely filled with illustrations-pictures, drawings, etc.)

The primary year 6 text:
Authors: Abdul Majid Mohd. Din (A male) & Dena How Peng Teng (A female)
Year of Publication: 2004
Illustrators: Hafiz Ghanim Ahmad Yusof (A male) & Rosli Hamid (A male)
Editors: Hanizan Hussin (A female) & Nadzmi Nadzim (A male)
Publisher: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka and DTP Enterprise Sdn. Bhd.
No. of Units: 10
No. of Pages: 140
No. of Words: 3233 (more words and less illustrations as compared to the primary year 3 text)

Research Design

The on-going research study involves several phases outlined in Yuen et al. (2007), Subakir Mohd. Yassin et al. (2007) and Azhar Jaludin and Bahiyah Abdul Hamid (2007).

The phases leading to the pilot study are briefly discussed below:

Phase 1: Creation of the main corpus database
The data used to develop the corpus are taken from English language textbooks adopted by the Ministry of Education Malaysia - KBSR (year 1-6) and KBSM (year 1-5); 21 textbooks in total. The process involved:

1. **Digitization process**. The textbooks are first transformed into digital form by a scanning procedure.

2. **Format conversion process**. The scanning process produces a .jpeg format of the textbook. This format is then converted to word document file and later into text files. The word document files contain both pictures and text data while the text files contain only text data. The conversion process from .jpeg to word document is not 100% accurate, which means that manual editing needs to be done to ensure accuracy. The conversion from word document to text document is also a laborious process, since the process will extract all the pictures and tables and the text files need to be manually adjusted to ensure accuracy and consistency.

3. **Merging process**. During the scanning process each page of a textbook is split to a different file, for example if a textbook is 110 pages long, it will be split to 110 files. These different files need to be catalogued and merged and only then will the data be ready for phase 2.

Phase 2: Content analysis

1. Content analysis is conducted with the aid of the database created in phase 1, to examine the contents and language used for occurrence of linguistic sexism and sex role stereotyping in Malaysian KBSR (year 1-6) and KBSM (year1-5) English language textbooks adopted by the Ministry of Education Malaysia.
2. The database will be analysed for:
   a. representations of male and female human characters, adults and children as well as masculine and female animal and inanimate objects,
   b. terms of address and referencing devices used,
   c. social roles depicted for male and female characters,
   d. activities associated with male and female characters depicted including those in professions, sports, games, hobbies and leisure activities, and
   e. types of linguistic structures and language used for males and females
3. The data were then processed using Wordsmith Tools 4 to generate a word list of frequency of words and then tabulated into figures and percentages. The identified items were then classified into categories and frequency. Finally, the frequencies were converted into percentages and compared across gender (Azhar Jaludin & Bahiyah Dato' Hj. Abdul Hamid, 2007; Subakir Mohd. Yassin et al., 2007)

This paper will discuss the findings of the pilot study on the occurrence of linguistic sexism and gender role stereotyping in the two selected textbooks specifically in terms of the following categories:

(a) The number of male and female characters
(b) The terms of address used
(c) The use of male and female pronouns
(d) The use of male and female nouns with regard to the family
(e) Occupations/activities associated with male/female characters.

Data Analysis – Wordsmith 4 and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

To aid analysis of data, the use of computer software helped us to understand the corpus of data (primary and secondary school textbooks) and then Fairclough's (1989) 3 stage Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to the written discourse of the corpus of data. Wordsmith Tools 4, a computer software, was used: a) to generate a frequency list of words and b) to assist in finding the collocation of words from the data. Through Wordsmith Tools 4, observation of how words are used and what words were frequently utilized in the corpus of school textbooks were achieved. The Wordsmith Tools 4 software we used generated word lists in alphabetical and frequency order. This enabled us to compare the school texts lexically. Then, the Concord Tool in the software created

concordances (lists of words in context and show the environment in which the words occur), find collocates of the word, identify common phrases, and display a graphical map showing where the word occurs in the corpus. This assisted us in classifying words in terms of their importance and significance to the author/s of the school textbooks. The above together with the Keyword Tool, which identifies key words whose frequency is unusually high in a particular type of discourse, assisted us to characterise words/phrases/texts according to genres. Thus, the use of the software complemented the Critical Discourse Analysis carried out on the written discourse of the school textbooks studied.

The corpus of the school textbooks, i.e., the written discourse as well as the illustrations (pictures, drawings, photos that accompany the written discourse or in which written discourse were embedded) was then subjected to Fairclough's (1989) three stage Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, hereafter) which views language use as a social practice, shaped by and shaping social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs of individuals. In the first stage, an analysis of formal textual features was done to facilitate formal text description. The interpretation of the relationship between text and social interaction was carried out in stage two. This enabled us to analyse the norms, mental standards of socially accepted behaviour in specific roles/relationships used to produce, receive, and interpret the text. The last stage helped us explain the relationship between social context and cultural context, i.e., within Malaysian settings where the depictions of gender roles and relationships in the school texts are matched and interpreted in their particular Malaysian context and culture.

CDA is defined by Fairclough (1989; 1992; 1995) as discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often obscure relationships between discursive practices, texts, and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes. By focusing on how social relations, identity, knowledge, and power are constructed through written and spoken texts in communities, schools, the media, and the political arena (McGregor, 2003), CDA strives to explore how these non-transparent relationships are a factor in securing power and hegemony and it draws attention to power imbalances and social inequities in the hope of creating linguistic and social awareness in people.

Findings

The Malaysian English language primary textbooks analysed perpetuate gender stereotypes in the following ways. First, there is a precedence of males over females where males are represented as standard. Second, there is bias towards the experiences of males over females in the portrayal/representations of characters in social, occupational and political activities. Third, there is bias in the depiction of personality characteristics that run along traditional masculine and feminine traits.

A. The precedence of males over females

When males are the focus in the majority of the pages in the textbooks, students are led to believe that males are the norm, the standard in the society. In both the textbooks analysed, the male and female characters are recognized through proper nouns used. This is consistent to the findings of the studies by Saedah (1990), Chandranand Mardziah (2003) and Subakir Mohd. Yassin et al. (2007). Both male and females may be prone to linguistic sexism and sex role stereotyping. It was found that the female writers of the English language Year 3 textbook showed that they were gender bias in that they foregrounded males 114 times compared to the 64 times they foregrounded females in the textbook they co-authored (see Table 1). The writers of the English language Year 6 textbook also showed gender bias even though the textbook was written by a male and female writer. In this text, males were foregrounded 375 times compared to the 201 times females were foregrounded (see Table 2).

(i) The number of male and female characters:

Table 1: Primary Year 3

Male	114
Female	64

Table 2: Primary Year 6

Male	375
Female	201

(ii) Terms of address used

The findings are interesting for this category as it can be seen from Table 4, i.e., from the Year 6 textbook analysed that the use of female terms of address is more than those of male terms of address – 35 compared to 9. However, the Year 3 textbook showed a bias for male terms of address even though the margin is slight. What is important is to note that the use of terms of address show role stereotyping and in the two texts studied, they may give cues to ethnicity. In Malaysian society, terms of address cue us to the relational ties between individuals in terms of respect for the age as well as status of the interlocutors in the interaction (Subakir Mohd Yassin et al., 2007) and they may cue us to the ethnicity of the interlocutors involved. The address forms "Encik", "Cik", "Puan" are used exclusively for Malay interlocutors/characters while the terms "Miss", "Mrs.",

"Lady", "Mr." and "Master" are used in conjunction with non-Malay characters. The use of "Master" and "Lady" in the Year 3 text refers to characters of English origin as they appear in a story.

Table 3: Primary Year 3 – terms of address

Male	
Encik	3
Mr	4
Master	1
Female	
Puan	2
Miss	2
Mrs	1
Lady	1
TOTAL	
Male	7
Female	6

Table 4: Primary Year 6 – terms of address

Male	
Sir	5
Mr	4
Female	
Mrs	11
Puan	11
Cik	10
Miss	3
TOTAL	
Male	9
Female	35

 (iii) The use of male and female pronouns.

"He" is used as the unmarked third-person singular pronoun just as in other texts where "man" and "mankind" are used as terms to describe the human race. This is more salient in the Year 6 textbook as can be seen in Table 5 below with a significantly higher number of occurrence, i.e., 78 than the third person female subject pronoun 'she' at 47. The Year 3 textbook also confirms the higher use of the third person male subject pronoun "he" at 19 times as compared to the use of "she" at 9 times. What is interesting to note is that the use of the third person female object pronoun "her" is significantly higher in both the

texts studied with its use of 12 and 14 times in Year 3 and 6 respectively. While the numbers look positive, in grammatical terms, in the English language, object pronouns are back grounded as subject pronouns are fore grounded for example in the sentence: He/she (subject pronoun- fore grounded) saw (verb) her/him (object pronoun – back grounded). In the sentence above, subject pronouns are given more prominence than object pronouns as they also are the actors of the verb form and have more volition than the object pronouns.

The use of the reflexive pronouns "himself" (singular third person masculine) and "herself" (singular third person feminine) in the Year 6 text also show bias toward the masculine. However, there is no usage of both the masculine and feminine reflexive pronouns in Year 3. They are rather difficult to grasp for young children as "reflexive pronouns are used to replace nouns or pronouns that refer to the same person (s) or thing (s) in the same clause acting as the subject of the sentence" (Bahiyah Abdul Hamid & Wijasuriya, 1998: 20). Thus, introducing reflexive pronouns is deferred to a later stage in the teaching of English in primary schools. Besides this, reflexive pronouns do not exist in Bahasa Melayu and the reflexive action is indicated by the "ber" verb form (Bahiyah Abdul Hamid & Wijasuriya, 1998: 20). In Bahasa Melayu, according to Bahiyah Abdul Hamid & Wijasuriya (1998: 20), "Dirinya" can be used for "himself", "herself" or "itself".

Table 5: Primary Year 3 and Year 6 – number of male and female pronouns

Pronoun	Year 3		Year 6	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
He/She	19	9	78	47
Him/Her	5	12	20	37
Himself/Herself	0	0	5	2
TOTAL	24	21	103	86

B. Bias towards the experiences of males over females in the portrayal/representations of characters in social, occupational and political activities

Generally, the findings show:
(i) Characters are assigned traditional roles which are stereotyped emphasizing family and occupational roles, usually associated with one gender:
As the table below shows (see Table 6), both textbooks analysed show a bias in the number of male nouns used with regard to the family. The table shows that for the two books analysed, the number of male nouns used exceed those used for females, i.e., 114 male nouns as opposed to 45 female nouns. Overwhelmingly, males are fore grounded

more in their traditional roles as father. While society acknowledges the role of the mother as nurturer and caregivers, fathers are the ones given more acknowledgements lexically.　Where the family is concerned, the three most used nouns for males in the textbooks are "Father", "uncle" and "brother" while those used for females that are statistically significant are "mother" and "sister".

Table 6: Primary Year 3 and 6 – the use of male and female nouns with regard to the family

Nouns	Male		Female	
Primary 3	Father	19	Mother	6
	grandfather	3	daughter	1
	brother	1	ma	1
	grandfather's	1	& sister	1
	grandpa	1		
	& son	1		
Frequency		**16**		**9**
Primary 6	Father	38	Mother	17
	uncle	24	sister	11
	brother	13	daughter	2
	son	5	mother's	2
	uncle's	5	niece	2
	father's	4	aunt's	1
	brothers	3	& mum	1
	grandfather	3		
	dad	2		
	nephews	2		
	sons	2		
	& uncles	1		
Frequency		**102**		**36**
Total		**118**		**45**

Further, the textbook analysis found the following:

(ii) female role assignments are more restricted and less varied while males are assigned a wide range of occupations, females appear in less diverse roles;
(iii) Females are mostly depicted around/outside the home doing non-remunerated tasks (e.g., domestic chores) while males are depicted to interact in the wider community, earning, possessing more and are involved in decision-making;
(iv) the spheres of activities are divided along masculine and feminine lines.

Table 7: Primary Year 3 and 6 – The occupations of Male and Female Characters

Occupations	Male	Female
Primary 3	Fishmonger, hunter, baker, chairman, farmer, grocer, tailor, actor, butcher, fisherman/men, king, waiter, magician, manager, painter, plumber, policeman/men, potter, programmer, referee, scientist, soldier/s, surgeon, thieves, veterinarian	Florist/s nurse, teacher, Actress, cashier, astronaut
Frequency	**29**	**12**
Primary 6	Teacher/s, doctor/s, engineer/s, Explorer/s, scientist/s, Manager, programmer, wholesaler, Farmer, headmaster, police, sailor/s, Supervisor, trapper, army, captain, Monitor, shopkeeper, waiter, businessman, chairman, cook, footballers, goalkeeper, headman, hunter/s, lawyer, painter, pilot, policeman, referee, soldier/s, tailor, watchmen, workers.	Nurse, operator, singer/s, Hostess, housewife, secretary, zoologist
Frequency	**113**	**22**
Total	**142**	**34**

Findings (ii), (iii) and (iv) above are evident in the two school texts analysed. With regard to occupations portrayed in the textbooks analysed for males and females, there is a preponderance of males being dominant in varied types of occupation as compared to females who are relegated to less varied occupations (see Table 7 above). In the two texts analysed, illustrations such as pictures give us cues as to which gender occupies which occupations.

Females are still relegated to the home and they are responsible for feminine activities, i.e., domestic chores as can be seen in Appendices D, H and K. In Appendix D (Primary

3), p. 9 we are introduced to Sara's mother by way of the text: "Sara's mother is in the kitchen…" In Appendix H (Primary 6), p. 38, we are introduced to Mrs. Nathan who is depicted in her kitchen ordering a packet of almonds, a box of raisins, a packet of cherries and a box of dates from Adam Grocery in a telephone conversation exercise for students to participate in. In Appendix K, we can see that the two female students, the pupils of Year 6 *Cemerlang* are relegated to doing the domestic chore of preparing food to take to the orphanage although a male student is seen helping the female students out in the illustration. While a male student is seen helping in a domestic chore, the picture illustration and the text still depict females in the lead role of domesticity where preparing food is still one of the main responsibilities of females. What is depicted in the textbooks are further supported by a study done by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development study that reports that women performed 75% of the housework such as childcare, cooking and cleaning which in this day and age should be the responsibility of both parents (National Council Of Women's Organisation Malaysia [NCWO] and Women's Aid Organisation [WAO], 2005).

When females are not portrayed as performing domestic chores, they are depicted as subordinate to males as in caring services such as a nurse in the service of helping the doctor as can be seen in Appendix B (Primary 3), p.75 or in stereotypical professions for women as nurse (see Appendix C Primary 3, p.78 & Appendix G Primary 6, p.6), teacher (see Appendix E Primary 3, p. 83 & Appendix G Primary 6, p.6), florist, cashier (see Appendix B primary 3, p.75) and secretary (see Appendix G Primary 6, p.6).

Males in the two texts analysed are depicted to interact in the wider community, earning, possessing more and are involved in decision-making. Compare the depictions of females above to males in Appendix E, p. 83 (Primary 3) with regard to the poem " Teach me , please" where out of the 13 characters portrayed, only 1 is a female. The depiction of the lone female character in the illustration is that of a teacher as the first stanza of the poem goes, "A teacher has much to do, to take charge of children, to teach and to reach, all the nation's children". In this poem and the illustration that goes along with it, a teacher can be seen as a stereotypical profession for females because of the caring and nurturing characteristics that the profession demands. This does not augur well for males as males can be seen not to have these special characteristics that females have. In the second stanza, a teacher's task is noble and the task of the teacher is "to make the nation's champions, contribute to the country, bringing much glory". As the poem indicates via, illustrations, the "champions" are all males who "contribute to the country, bringing much glory". As illustrated, these "champions" include architects/engineers, chairmen, writers/scholars, scientists, doctors, soldiers and athletes. The illustrations in this Appendix as well as in the appendices discussed in this section seem to confirm a male bias especially in foregrounding the experiences of males over females in the portrayal/representations of characters in social, occupational and political activities. Despite the 2004 statistics showing that "Malaysia has 7.4 million women of working age, of whom 3.45 million are working." (Wong Sulong, 2004 as cited in Bahiyah Dato' Hj. Abdul Hamid, 2006), the textbook writers all of whom are women, still depict women stereotypically. In the primary Year 3 textbook, they chose to depict the women they wrote about only from those who are not working, i.e., from " the 3.45 million not

working, 2.86 million are housewives" (Wong Sulong, 2004 as cited in Bahiyah Dato' Hj. Abdul Hamid, 2006).

In the Appendices discussed, it can be seen that males are the true pillars of society, the nation builders and what males do are considered integral to the development of the country. What is usually depicted in the two textbooks analysed seem to concur with Bahiyah Dato' Hj. Abdul Hamid (2006) in that women are largely under-represented in almost all sectors and all levels of decision-making including those in the government. Currently in Malaysia, there are three women ministers for the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development; the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. In the Malaysian Parliament, out of 197 members of the House of Representatives, only 22 are women and in the House of Senate, out of 57 members, 19 are women. Women are also less visible in commissions, tribunals, local government bodies; statutory bodies and so on for men predominate in these domains. From the table above, only a total of 230 women out of 2,002 local councilors are women.

When activities are illustrated, it is quite clear that males dominate participating actively in activities. Pictorial representations of females participating in activities do not figure well in both texts.

C. Bias in the depiction of personality characteristics that run along stereotyped masculine and feminine traits

Generally, the findings show the following:
i) Females are negatively portrayed as dependent/subservient, males are more positively portrayed, e.g., as problem solvers/independent leaders;
ii) Males are portrayed as powerful and females powerless which do not reflect the changing social statues of females in the society today.

The above (findings (i) and (ii)) are evident in Appendix F (Primary 3) and Appendix J (Primary 6). In Appendix F, p. 20, the illustration by way of a picture (without the utterances of characters) depicts 2 male and 2 female school students interacting with one another in what is assumed the computer lab. The male students are seen actively handling equipment, i.e., each is seen using the computer and the printer while the two female students act to assist the male students with one girl showing the boy at the computer her notes and the other girl passively standing by the boy at the computer. This illustration depicts male students as competent users of ICT hardware as well as ICT literate and female students as dependent upon male students in managing ICT and not ICT literate as compared to the male students. This also serves to depict males as powerful and females as powerless especially in the ICT domain.

In Appendix J, p. 60, the dependent/subservient personality characteristics of female students are blatantly highlighted via CDA especially through the verbal output/utterances of the characters present guided by the illustration/picture supplied. In the illustration on p. 60 of the primary 6 text, the picture depicts 3 male students and 2

female students (Jing-Li and Hariko) discussing what they should do for their science project. This picture illustrates a small group decision-making exercise with regards to the topic of a science project where a male student is seen taking the lead in the discussion steering on the discussion from start to finish; he plays the role of the chair. The other two male students are seen contributing significantly to the discussion by way of coming up with the main ideas of the science project of which the male leader seems to agree to on behalf of the group. After taking on the suggestion of a male student that the science project be a talk about insects in the Malaysian forest, a female student then offers to ask the science teacher for help on behalf of the group and the other female student steps in to offer to collect pictures on insects in the Malaysian rain forest. The male student leader then thanks them by uttering the following: "Thanks for offering to help, Jing-Li and Hariko". It is blatant in this appendix that males are represented as problem solvers/independent leaders and females are negatively portrayed as dependent/subservient; they are not competent to come up with solutions and can only be marginal players in decision-making. The power distinction between male students and female students in decision-making is also made transparent in this appendix.

Besides the above, the texts analysed also yield the findings that:
(iii) Males are depicted as active, involved in the outdoors while females are passive and are nearly always involved in indoor activities.

Appendices D, H and K discussed earlier have already depicted females as involved in indoor activities, responsible for domestic chores and overwhelmingly in both the textbooks analysed, the place in which they are most favorably depicted is in the kitchen. Thus, females can be seen in the illustrations to be confined indoors. When compared to males, especially in Appendix A, p.63 (Primary 3) as well as Appendix I (Primary 6), p. 8 we see that males are depicted in a variety of activities more than those depicted for females and the activities that males participate in are not confined to indoor activities only, males are involved in many outdoor activities far more than females. Invariably, males are depicted as active especially when they are involved in fun, outdoor activities such as kite flying, skateboarding and gymnastics (Appendix A, p.63 (Primary 3)) and top spinning, cycling, archery, bowling. What is disconcerting here is that many of these outdoor activities can also be participated in by females for these activities are generally not segregated along gender lines. Thus, it is unfair to knowingly and blatantly segregate activities along gender lines as can be seen from the Appendices above.

In the Year 3 text, males can be seen interacting actively in football and scouts. Activities for females are not mentioned at all in this text even though all the writers of the text are women. In the Year 6 text, males are seen to be active in scouts, badminton, hockey, squash, softball, archery, kite flying and S*epak Takraw*[2] (see Appendix A and Appendix I) as opposed to females being active in only one activity, i.e., netball. In this text, gender neutral activities include chess and *Congkak*[3]. The findings of this study with regard to this aspect do not augur well for females as they are seen to live up to the stereotype of passivity, lacking energy and shunning physical activities. This may be why females in general may have been left behind in making names for themselves in sporting events.

The stereotype perception of women in sports is that they are not up to par with their male counterparts.

Conclusion

Wood (1997, p.161) maintains that language is not neutral; it reflects cultural values and is a powerful influence on our perceptions. With regard to sexism, Fromkin and Rodman (1993, p.306) assert that "language reflects sexism in the society. Language itself is not sexist, just as it is not obscene; but it can connote sexist attitudes as well as attitudes about social taboos and racism". The two primary school texts analysed have illustrated that there are linguistic features used in the texts that convey sexism. Specifically, there is a masculine bias where the language used often reinforces males as the standard and foregrounds males. It is evident that, as portrayed in the two school texts analysed, textbook writers and illustrators do not deviate much from the traditional patriarchal notion of placing importance to males and masculinity. Males are projected as successful and powerful in the social domain and occupy higher positions in society.

Females are still portrayed as playing the supporting role to males. In the family sphere, females are linked to family roles of nurturer, in support of males as the bread winner. They are mostly depicted as mothers and wife in the personal sphere of the family. In the public sphere, females are depicted in the service of males as in being nurses. In these depictions, the view of the second-place status of females is still deeply rooted in Malaysian society.

Due to these types of exposure in school textbooks, the judgments made of females will still hinge on biological terms rather than on their credibility, ability and qualification despite women all over the world being empowered economically, politically, as well as educationally. Today, in Malaysia and all across the world, women have become the driving force of economic growth, they are increasingly filling important ministerial, managerial and entrepreneurial positions and contributing to society by taking bigger roles in the public spheres for the benefit of not just women but for a better world for all. Sadly, what is crucial of the changing roles of females and their realistic contributions to the society are not well represented in the school texts analysed.

Nilsen (1994, p.365) states that "sexism will not disappear from our language until it is erased from our minds." In view of this, the move to eliminate linguistic sexism and sex - role stereotyping must not just involve a linguistic reform so that equality of gender is reflected in the language that we speak and read but most importantly, there should be small yet significant steps towards change through awareness activities against masculine bias in all spheres and activities in our society. In short concurring with Nilsen (Nilsen, 1994, p.365), sexism being a problem that "begins in people's assumptions and expectations, it's a problem that will be solved only when a great many people have given it a great deal of thought".

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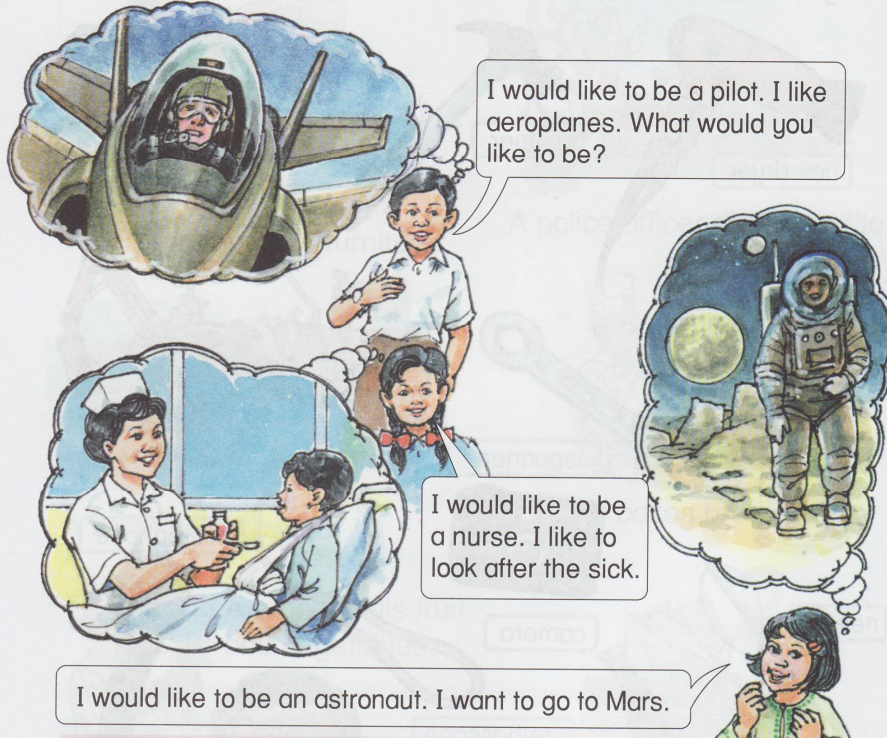
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Appendix A
Lee Bee Yoke, A., Manjindarjit Kaur & Shanti David. 2004. *English Language Primary 3.* Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Abadi Ilmu Sdn. Bhd. p.63.
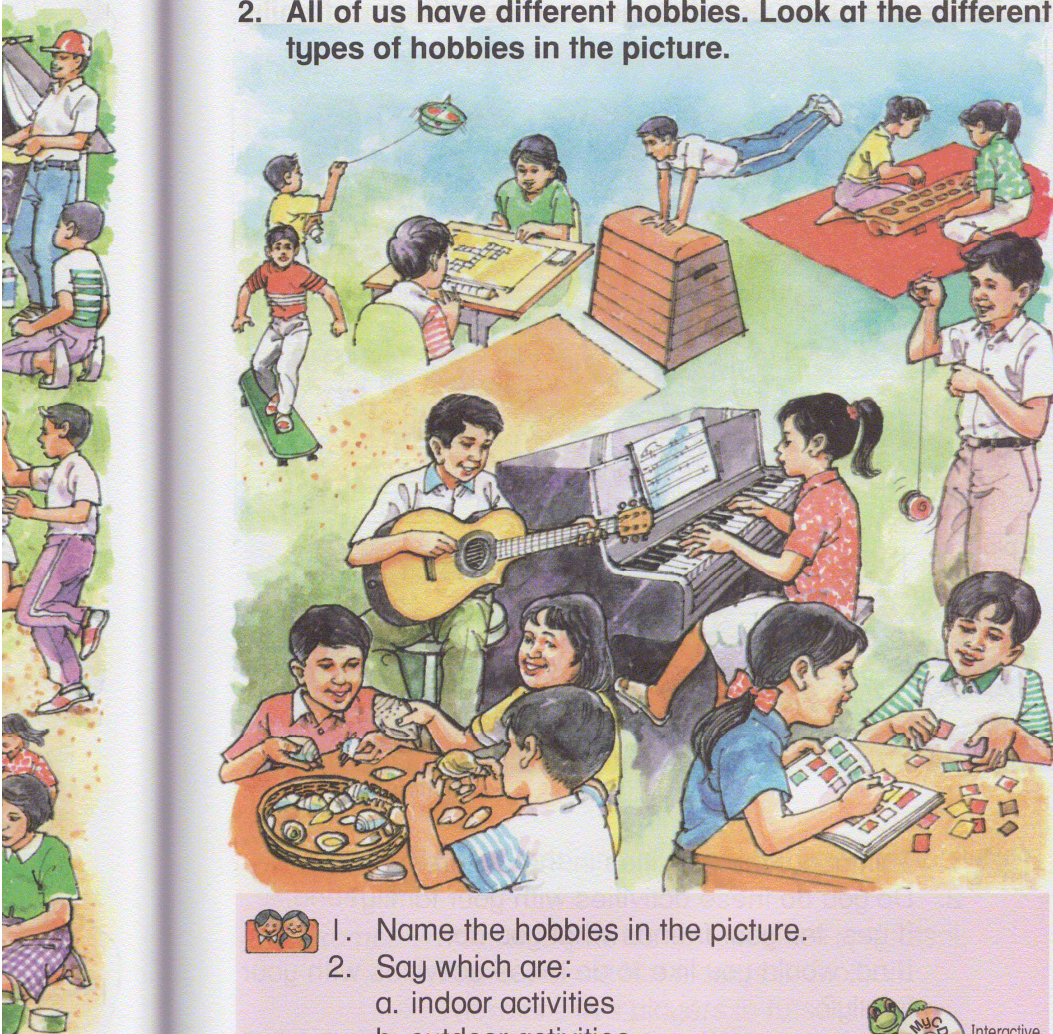
Appendix B
Lee Bee Yoke, A., Manjindarjit Kaur & Shanti David. 2004. *English Language Primary 3.* Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Abadi Ilmu Sdn. Bhd. p. 75.
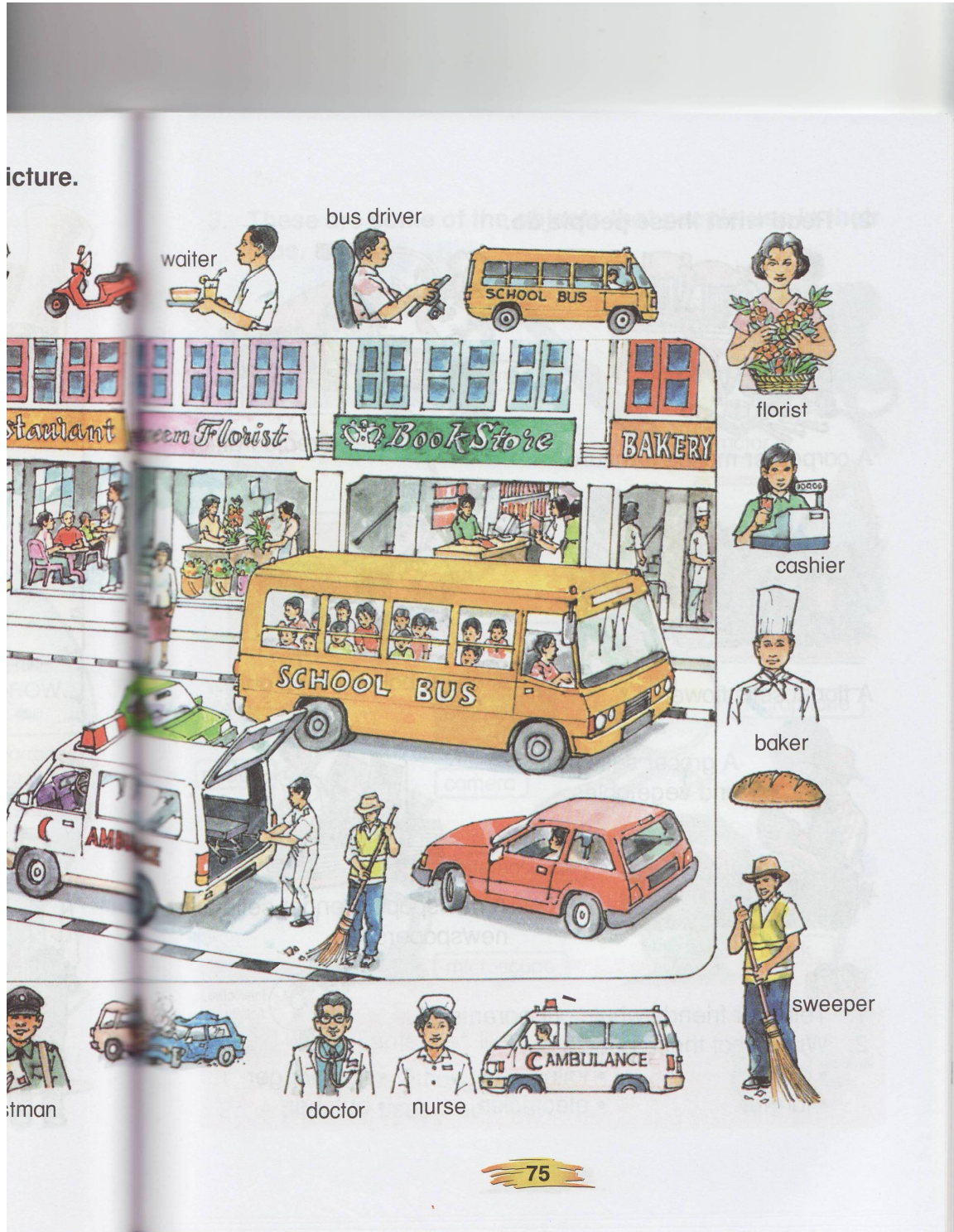
Appendix C
Lee Bee Yoke, A., Manjindarjit Kaur & Shanti David. 2004. *English Language Primary 3.* Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Abadi Ilmu Sdn. Bhd. p.78.

Appendix D
Lee Bee Yoke, A., Manjindarjit Kaur & Shanti David. 2004. *English Language Primary 3.* Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Abadi Ilmu Sdn. Bhd. p. 9.

Appendix E
Lee Bee Yoke, A., Manjindarjit Kaur & Shanti David. 2004. *English Language Primary 3.* Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Abadi Ilmu Sdn. Bhd. p. 83.

9. **Read the poem.**
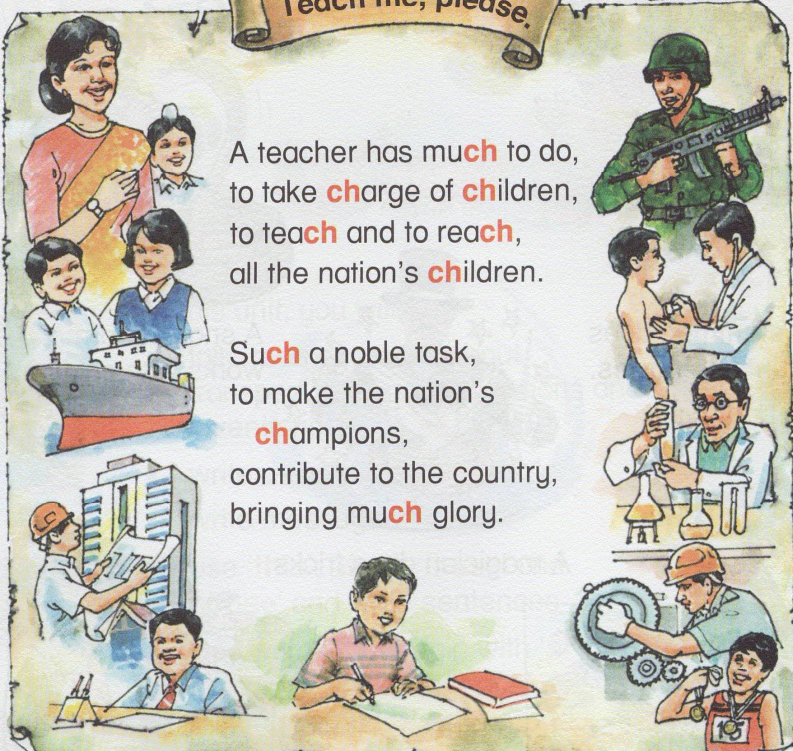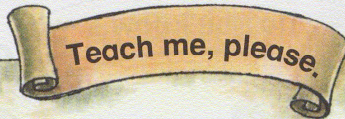
Interactive Activity

Teach me, please.

A teacher has much to do,
to take charge of children,
to teach and to reach,
all the nation's children.

Such a noble task,
to make the nation's
    champions,
contribute to the country,
bringing much glory.

Say these words:
charge   challenge   children   champions
teach   such   much   reach

• Choose a champion to challenge the children.
• Such is the munch of the chipmunks on the branch.

Find other words that sound like 'chairman' and 'teach'.

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Appendix F
Abdul Majid Mohd. Din & How Peng Ten, D. 2004. *English Language Primary 6.*
Kuala Lumpur:Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka and DTP
Enterprise Sdn. Bhd. p. 20.

• A. Now, complete the story planner below.

1. Title	What is the story called?
2. Setting	When and where does the story take place?
3. Characters	Name and describe the people in the story.
4. Plot Beginning:	How does the story begin?
Middle:	What happens in the story?
End:	How does the story end?

20
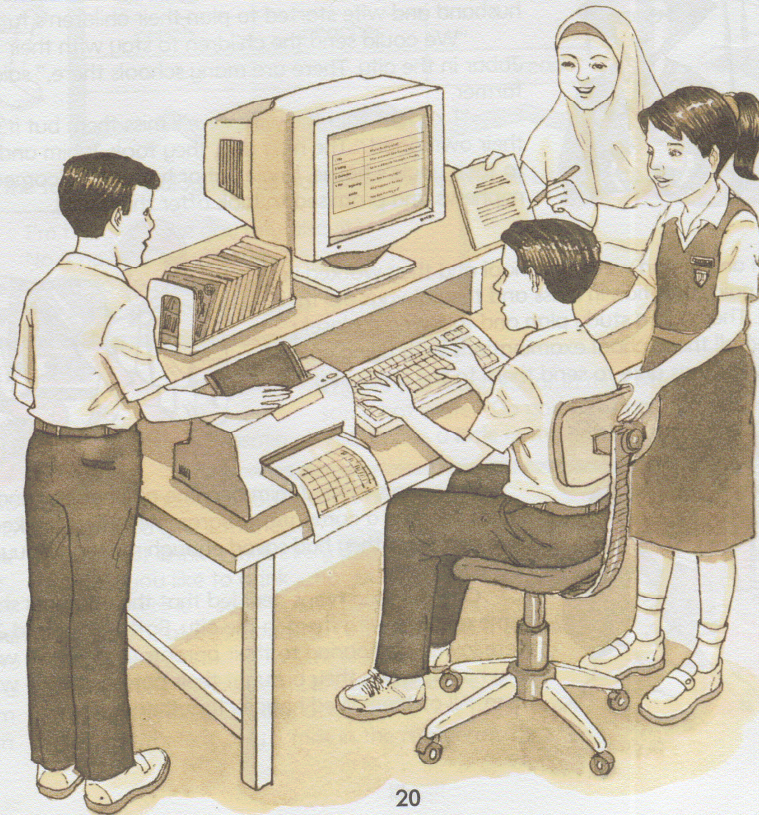
Appendix G
Abdul Majid Mohd. Din & How Peng Ten, D. 2004. *English Language Primary 6.*
Kuala Lumpur:Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka and DTP
Enterprise Sdn. Bhd. p. 6.

Appendix H

Abdul Majid Mohd. Din & How Peng Ten, D. 2004. *English Language Primary 6.*
Kuala Lumpur:Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka and DTP
Enterprise Sdn. Bhd. p. 38.

10.   Let's Do

A. Write the telephone conversation below in the correct order.

I'm sorry. We don't have any almond.
Would you like some cashew nuts?

When do you want to collect them?

Hello, Adam Grocery. Sidek speaking.

All right. Please give me a packet of
cashew nuts.

Hello, I'm Mrs. Nathan. I'd like to order a packet of
almonds, a box of raisins, a packet of cherries and a
box of dates.

This evening. I'll send my son Rajan
to collect them.

B. You have a science project to complete.
You are looking for information on the
topic, 'Food and Healthy Living.'
Study the content page of this book.
Which chapters would you choose
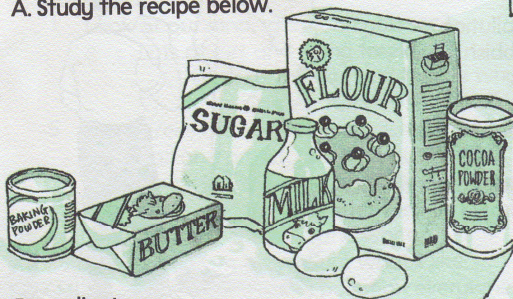to get the information?

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Appendix I
Abdul Majid Mohd. Din & How Peng Ten, D. 2004. *English Language Primary 6.*
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Enterprise Sdn. Bhd. p. 8.
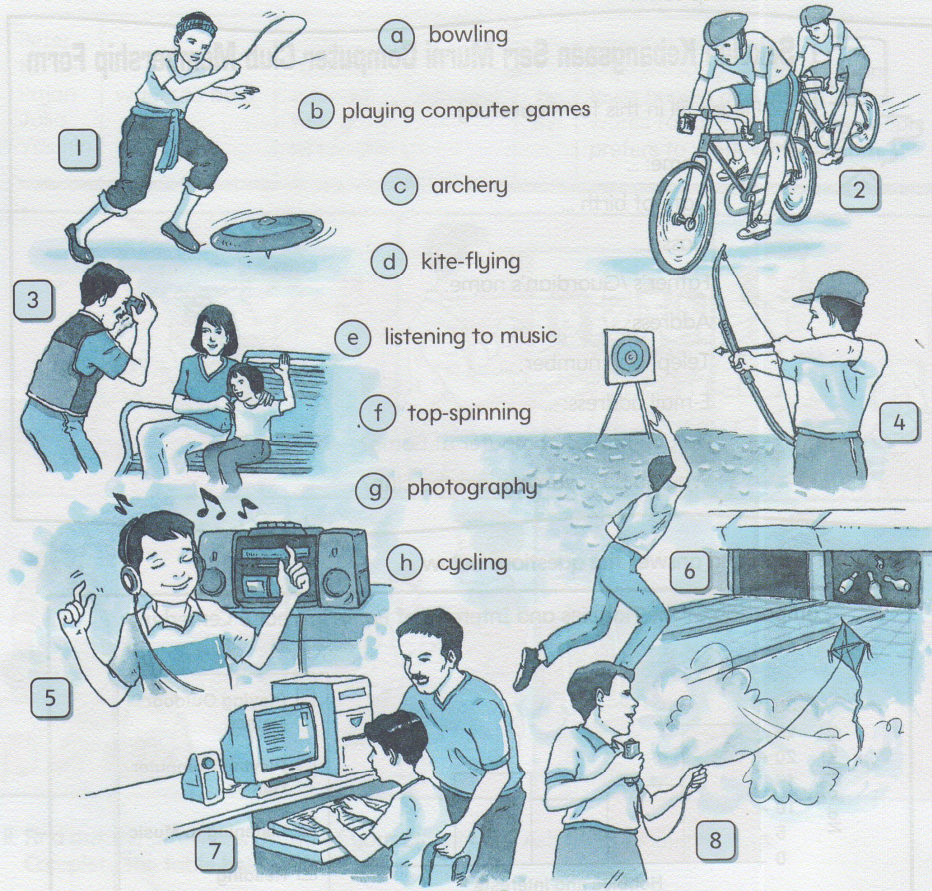
Appendix J
Abdul Majid Mohd. Din & How Peng Ten, D. 2004. *English Language Primary 6.*
Kuala Lumpur:Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka and DTP
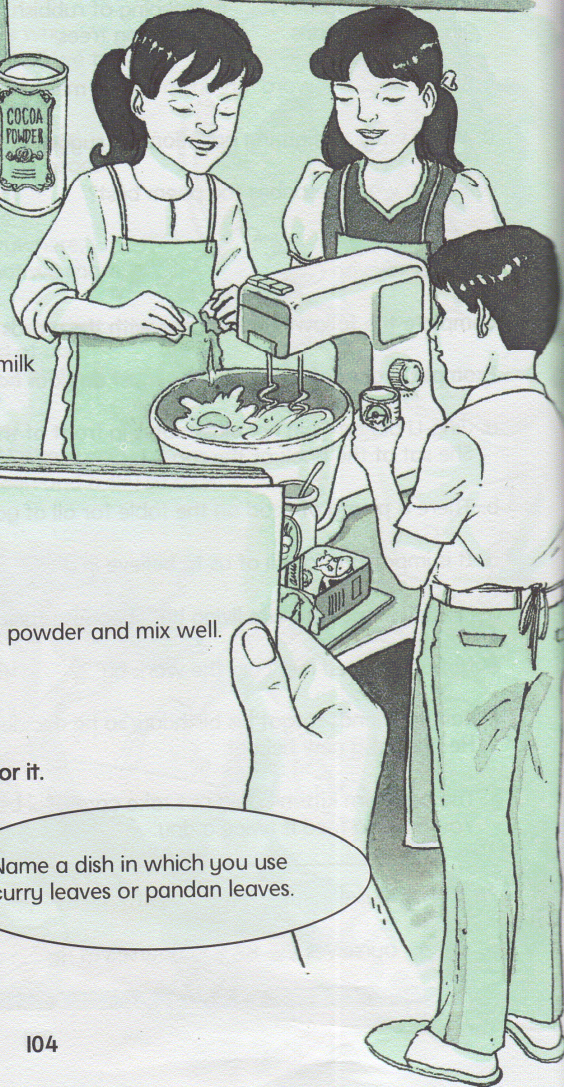Enterprise Sdn. Bhd. p. 60.

Appendix K
Abdul Majid Mohd. Din & How Peng Ten, D. 2004. *English Language Primary 6.*
Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka and DTP
Enterprise Sdn. Bhd. p. 104.

Notes

[1] For exceptions, see for e.g., Gok et.al. (2001) for Turkish data; Saedah Siraj (1990) and Sanda Kumari & Mardziah Hayati (2003) for Malaysian data focusing mainly on either elementary or secondary school textbook analysis. For elementary level textbook analysis, see Saedah Siraj (1990), Gok et al. (2001) and Jariah Mohd. Jan (2002) while Sanda Kumari & Mardziah Hayati (2003) can be referred to for secondary textbook analysis.

[2] *Sepak takraw* or "kick ball" is a traditional outdoor Malaysian ball game. This game is also played in various countries in Southeast Asia. The *sepak takraw* court is about 13.4.m x 6.1.m with a net the height of a volley ball net. This game is played by 2 teams competing with one another with a total of three players per team (Wikipedia.com). The *sepak takraw* ball is made of rattan. Players are to use only their knees, feet, chest and head to touch the ball.

[3] *Congkak* is a traditional Malaysian indoor game which is also well known in other parts of Southeast Asia. The *congkak* board is traditionally shaped like a boat. The board has 14 holes in 2 sets of sevens plus an additional store for each player. Shells, pebbles or marbles are used as pieces/seeds. Each player controls the 7 holes on their side of the board and their score is the number of pieces/seeds in their left hand store (wikipedia.com).

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