LANGUAGE AND GENDER AT EARLY EDUCATION

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This presentation attempts to:

• **explain** how language and gender have a strong impact in preventing gender disparities, and how these two fields should be introduced to children at early years.
• provide an **introduction** to responsive gender language, variety of practical ideas, suggestions and explanations of activities for parents and teachers to use at home or in the classroom.
• include some **practical guides** to select and analyze gender responsive learning and teaching materials.
ECCE Transforms Life
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• ECCE is the process of play-based learning through language development.
• Learning forms proper behavior and competency.
• The use of language involves nurturing the mind and instilling values that enable a child to distinguish right from wrong.
• It includes developing language skills pertaining to a specific field and also aims at achieving overall development.
Context
Context of Language and Gender

• Most communities around the world are patriarchal.
• Girls experience a dilemma and discrimination in terms of language in two ways:
  ✓ **First**, how they learn to speak (if not taught), and
  ✓ **Second**, how they treat language.
• In certain ways, language could be used by children who dominate, where in a patriarchal society boys are the dominant, to suppress the weaker, in this case girls.
Some vocabularies distinguish people through masculine and feminine terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminine (passive)</th>
<th>Masculine (active)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibu kota (Mother of City)</td>
<td>Dewa perang (God of War)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenek moyang (Grand-grandmother)</td>
<td>Raja hutan (King of the Jungle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewi malam (Moon)</td>
<td>Raja siang (Sun)</td>
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</tbody>
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• Feminine terms seem to represent peace, passivity, quietness, and patience; masculine terms have the impression of controlling, aggression and strength.
• Similar to Bahasa Indonesia, feminine and masculine terms also occur in English. For example, pronoun 'he' can refer to both men and women, but 'she' cannot.
Euphemism is an effort to smooth 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, a teacher may teach a child to say "May I wash my hands?" when a child wants to go to the toilet. In Bahasa Indonesia, there is also an 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 expressions in two languages have a different meaning from their literal meaning. However, everyone understands the main purpose of the sentences. This may cause some confusion for young learners.

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 for nurse is 'she' and for everybody -> 'he'. Another example is a lot of working professions that end with the word 'man' regardless if it is a female or male working. For example, 'policeman', 'mailman', 'weatherman', and so on.
My mother is washing clothes
My little sister is laughing
My father is working
Uncle Jaya is praying
My aunt is cooking
I am (boy) studying

Source: Iwu Dwisetyani (2012)
Progressive Gender Roles in Children’s Learning Materials

Dental Care

Check teeth for abnormalities once in six months

Source:
Iwu Dwisetyani (2012)
Gender Identity Development
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 Children Develop Gender Identity

- 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.
- 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 their children cope with gender identity development?

✓ 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.
Gender stereotypes and norms can influence both students’ 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 students’ 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 those surrounding them, including at 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
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 problem 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.
ECCE teachers are analyzing gender stereotypes in learning materials
How do children’s books portray girls?

A female character in a girls’ story book is always in caring for vulnerable roles with some of the following messages:

- If you wish hard enough, your dreams will always come true
- If you work hard, you will get what you want
- Beauty means happiness
- Happiness means a long-awaited prince or a hero to bring rescue

The girls are not empowered to be happy or to achieve what they want by themselves
How do children’s books portray boys?

Books show men (boys) to be:
- strong and vibrant and generally get themselves into trouble;
- involved in fights and wars and winning the fights;
- participating in action and leadership.

However, the results are generally a good one. The boys are empowered to achieve what they want by themselves.
Current and Future Strategies
### Strategies Taken So Far in Carrying Out Gender Responsive Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys are encouraged to stay at school.</td>
<td>Girls are encouraged to enter higher education.</td>
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</table>
What's Next?

• Meeting the boys’ needs effectively requires dialog, collective talent and expertise of all partners in the educational process, including the government, educators, parents, and community members.
• It is important to have classes that respond to the interests, needs, and learning styles of all students to make them critical readers and writers.
• There have to be lessons relevant to real-life contexts.
• The learning takes literacy tasks that have clear and immediate objectives.
## Paying Attention to Gender Differences (1/2)

### In terms of ACHIEVEMENTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>take longer time in learning.</td>
<td>take shorter time in learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read less.</td>
<td>generally read more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand descriptive texts.</td>
<td>understand narratives and expository texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do well in receiving information and literacy tasks dealing with professions.</td>
<td>do well in analyzing information.</td>
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</table>
## Paying Attention to Gender Differences (2/2)

### In terms of ATTITUDES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
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<tr>
<td>do not really like reading.</td>
<td>love reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consider reading not to be an activity.</td>
<td>see reading as a fun activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read things that they consider important.</td>
<td>read things that they consider fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>claim themselves as non-readers.</td>
<td>read diligently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show less enthusiasm.</td>
<td>show enthusiasm.</td>
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</table>
## THREE Areas of Responsive Gender Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS</strong></th>
<th>Schools focus on effective teaching activities that can improve male and female students’ learning outcomes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td>Schools create a comfortable and supportive atmosphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP</strong></td>
<td>Schools work closely with students, parents, and the community to improve the quality of education of for both male and female students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Terima Kasih
Thank You

Further information, please visit:
http://paud.kemdikbud.go.id/
http://anggunpaud.kemdikbud.go.id/