

## Chapter 4

### Findings

#### Gender ideologies in Thai children's books for boys and books for girls.

The first research question aims to find out what the gender ideologies are portrayed in Thai contemporary children's books for boys and girls and whether or not they are different. From the analysis of verbal and visual language in eight Thai contemporary children's books, it is found that boys and girls are portrayed to be different in terms of five main components; setting and space, mannerisms, social relations, activities and interests, and ways of learning. There are some similarities but they are not as significant as the differences.

**Table 1: Setting and Space in Which Main Characters are Found**

| Setting and Space | Books for Boys                       |                      |                 |                |                      | Books for Girls  |                    |                                    |  |  |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
|                   | The Wonderful Present from the Fairy | The Blooming Flowers | The Little Lion | The Magic Book | Pum Finds a Treasure | The Magic Toffee | The Gift of Flower | Little Nid! Good and Not Stubborn. |  |  |
| Indoor            | +                                    | -                    | -               | ++             | ++                   | +                | ++                 | ++                                 |  |  |
| Outdoor           | ++                                   | ++                   | ++              | -              | -                    | +                | +                  | +                                  |  |  |
| Domestic Space    | +                                    | +                    | +               | +              | +                    | +                | ++                 | +                                  |  |  |
| Public Space      | ++                                   | +                    | ++              | -              | +                    | +                | +                  | ++                                 |  |  |
| Fantasy Space     | +                                    | -                    | -               | ++             | -                    | -                | -                  | -                                  |  |  |

N/A

Not applicable

+

Sometimes found

-

Not found

++

Often found

### 1. Setting and Space

The protagonists in the books for boys and girls appear both indoors and outdoors. However, male characters have much more activities in outdoor settings. On the contrary, female characters spend their time mostly in the indoor setting. Even when the females appear in public space, it is an indoor setting, for example, the school, the library and the department store. For example, Pum in *Pum finds a Treasure*, always stays indoors. She first appears in the house and then in the library and finally back in her house again. Though she goes outside, her activities are in an indoor setting. Remarkably, the females spend their activities in the domestic space more than the males, which can reflect the home-oriented characteristic of Thai females. Some female characters have activities in the domestic space only, for example, Namtan the female character of *The Gift of Flower* is restricted to her house all through the story except for one scene in the field. On the contrary, the male characters in these books take adventures in both the domestic and public space. In addition, male characters are allowed to travel in fantasy space which is filled with mystery and adventure. For example, Little boy in *The Wonderful Present from the Fairy* appears in the woods where the fairy lives. Tong from the *Magic Book* stories appears in the fantasy space of his dream. There, he fights with his own spirit. The public spaces in books for boys are created to be adventurous, for instance, woods and caves while public spaces for girls are secure because they are places they feel familiar with. The school, neighborhood and shop are examples.

Visually, the use of oblique lines and diagonal angles are used more in books for boys than books for girls. That is because the oblique lines and diagonal angles effectively reflect the adventurousness and aggressiveness of the male characters. Furthermore, many times the males appear in the air which suggests adventurous feelings and uncertainty whereas the female characters always appear on the ground which creates stability and security.

Table 2 : Mannerism of Main Characters

| Mannerism   | Books for Boys                        |                     |                 |                | Books for Girls      |                  |                    |                                      |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
|             | The Wonderful Present from the Fairy. | The Blooming Flower | The Little Lion | The Magic Book | Pum finds a Treasure | The Magic Toffee | The Gift of Flower | Little Nid!<br>Good and Not Stubborn |
| Active      | ++                                    | +                   | +               | ++             | -                    | -                | +                  | -                                    |
| Adventurous | ++                                    | -                   | ++              | ++             | -                    | -                | -                  | -                                    |
| Aggressive  | +                                     | -                   | ++              | ++             | -                    | -                | -                  | +                                    |
| Expressive  | +                                     | N/A                 | N/A             | ++             | ++                   | +                | ++                 | ++                                   |
| Independent | ++                                    | +                   | ++              | +              | -                    | +                | +                  | -                                    |
| Lively      | +                                     | -                   | +               | +              | ++                   | ++               | +                  | +                                    |
| Obedient    | +                                     | N/A                 | N/A             | -              | ++                   | +                | ++                 | +                                    |
| Proper      | +                                     | +                   | N/A             | -              | ++                   | ++               | ++                 | +                                    |



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## 2. Main characters

### 2.1 Main Character

The mannerisms have been classified into eight significant features to show the similarities and differences of gender ideologies in books for boys and books for girls. First, the active quality, which is considered from sentence structures can describe protagonist's actions. Surprisingly, the male characters have a role as the subject of an active verb in a sentence. They tend to do the activities themselves while female characters often are the objects of sentences. Other characters, especially parents always do things for the female characters. They are therefore the receivers of an action. Second, the adventurous characteristic is portrayed prominently to show difference between male and female characters. Male protagonists are very adventurous while the females are not at all adventurous. Males love and prefer to take the adventurous activities, for instance, wandering about alone in the public space. For example, Tong from the story *The Wonderful Present from the Fairy*, wanders about in the woods alone twice. Furthermore, he spends his life in the town where risky events occur. While females do not have adventurous times, they spend their lives traditionally. For instance, Namtan in *The Gift of Flower* stays in her home throughout the story. Third, the male characters are more aggressive than the female characters both physically and verbally. For example, males are engaged in more aggressive acts like kicking, destroying property, attacking others and speaking loudly. Verbally, verbs of action, which portray the aggressiveness, for instance, fight, roar, stretch his claw, destroy, tear, and torture are used to describe the activities of male characters rather than the female characters. Fourth, the expressive quality is used to distinguish males from females. Males express their rebellion, anger and disobedience while females express their tenderness towards others. Fifth, the quality of independence is used differently to describe male and female characters. Obviously, males have independent roles, they can manage their own lives. It is not strange for readers to see the male characters appear alone in the public spaces while the female characters frequently appear with other characters and also rely on others for help. Sixth, the lively characteristic appears as a quality of both male and female characters. That is probably because children's characters normally have lively characteristics while words describing action, strength and independence are applied with male protagonists only. However, from the outcome of the analysis, it is found that the females are livelier than males. The word choices

which describe beauty, happiness and enjoyment are used to describe the female characters. This shows that the female characters are livelier than males. Seventh, The quality of obedience is displayed in both males and females. However, the females show more respect to adults. They obey the adults unconditionally. The females are afraid to be ignored so they follow the adult's orders. For example, Noonid in *Little Nid ! Good and Not Stubborn* is afraid of being ignored by her parents. She follows the teacher's advice to be an obedient girl. On the contrary, the males who are independent sometimes rebel against the adults' power. It is obviously seen in Tong's character of *The Magic Book* stories. Tong shows his rebellious behavior towards his mother aggressively, for instance, showing his anger or sticking out his tongue. Last, the female characters are more obedient than the male characters. They behave, speak and dress more properly than males.

## 2.2 Supporting Characters

Remarkably, the supporting characters also show the gender stereotype. Specifically, female characters are dependent and passive. They are very passive characters which cannot help themselves and cry easily when they face a problem. Even the fairy character in *The Wonderful Present from the Fairy* cannot help herself and cries when she is in a trouble. Moreover, the role of mother appears in all books. Mothers are responsible for nurturing tasks. They appear as the real homemakers who take care of their family, do chores, provide conveniences for their family. Mothers stay close to the children while fathers appear as observers who have a little responsibility in family matters. In contrast, some male characters exist to show strength, leadership, aggressiveness and independence, for instance the role of kings and soldiers, which have qualities similar to male protagonists.

Table 3 :Social Relationship

| Social relation | Books for Boys                       |                     |                 |                | Books for Girls        |                  |                    |                                    |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
|                 | The wonderful Present from the Fairy | The Blooming Flower | The Little Lion | The Magic Book | Pum finds the Treasure | The Magic Toffee | The Gift of Flower | Liittle Nid! Good and Not Stubborn |
| Inter-personal  | +                                    | ++                  | +               | ++             | ++                     | +                | +                  | ++                                 |
| Multi-Personal  | +                                    | -                   | +               | -              | +                      | ++               | ++                 | +                                  |

N/A

Not applicable

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Sometimes found

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Not found

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Often found

### 3 Social Relation

By directly looking at the protagonists' direct speech, we see that the female characters are allowed to have much more dialogues than male characters. They have conversations both at interpersonal and multi-personal level with their parents, friends and strangers. Verbs of communication, for instance, talk, explain, speak, tell and express, mostly are used by the female characters. On the other hand, the males also relate to many people in the community but they do not have real conversations. They do not have direct speech with verbs of communication. Notably, both males and females have real conversations with their parents, especially mothers. That effectively reflects the close relationship between parents and children, which is considered a significant social relationship that is portrayed in books for boys and girls.

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Table 4 :Ways of Learning

| Ways of Learning | Books for Boys                       |                     |                 |                | Books for Girls        |                  |                    |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                  | The wonderful Present from the Fairy | The Blooming Flower | The Little Lion | The Magic Book | Pum finds the Treasure | The Magic Toffee | The Gift of Flower | Little Nid!<br>Good and Not Stubborn |
| By Themselves    | +                                    | +                   | +               | +              | -                      | -                | +                  | -                                    |
| Through Others   | -                                    | -                   | -               | +              | +                      | +                | +                  | +                                    |

N/A

Not applicable

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Sometimes found

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Not found

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Often found

#### 4. Ways of learning

In books for boys, it is discovered that males are very independent characters who can deal with their problems themselves. They experience and manage to solve problems themselves. The success of the male character is the result of their confidence, independence and intelligence. For example, Tong deals with his conflict of being unable to read with his own determination. He then becomes a boy who can read fluently. In contrast, the females are mostly dependent characters. They do not have adequate power and confidence to deal with their problems alone. They always have the advice of other characters, which brings them out of the problem. For example, Pum is a very diligent girl and loves reading but she still learns about the resourcefulness of the library from her mother.

Furthermore, the lessons that male protagonists learn are more complicated than the lessons of females. For example, males learn to be a part of the community, to be responsible for their mistakes and to pay gratitude to others while females learn superficial lessons, for instance, to know the resourcefulness of the library, to be a nice girl, to be clean and to have self-confidence. The ways to get through the problems are different. Male protagonists learn some lessons through adventures and risky events, for instance, Tong in *The Magic Books*, has to learn how to read through a bad dream in which he has a fight with an



antagonist. Or Little Boy in *The Wonderful Present from Fairy*, has to take an adventurous action in the town, dealing with the problem of a dragon. In contrast, female characters learn lessons in simple ways, for example, parents' or teacher's advice and others' hints for the solution.

### 5. Activities and Interests

As illustrated in table 1, males have activities in both the domestic and public space. However, the male protagonists prefer to stay outdoors while the females restrict their lifestyle to indoor places. Moreover, the males are interested in activities which show their maleness, for instance, playing games, playing toys, and hunting. On the contrary, females are interested in dolls and pets which show their kindness.

#### Stereotypes as Gender Ideologies

The gender ideologies, which are portrayed in Thai contemporary children's books for boys and girls, are gender stereotypes. Males are different from females because they possess different gender stereotypical expectations. Males are perceived as active, adventurous, aggressive, independent characters, while females are perceived as passive, not at all adventurous, not at all aggressive, expressive of tender feeling, dependent and obedient. Apart from knowing that the gender ideologies, which are portrayed in Thai contemporary children's books for boys and girls, are gender stereotypes, we have learnt that these qualities are portrayed through the use of verbal and visual language. This can answer another research question of how these gender ideologies are constructed.

Verbally, different word choices are used to describe males and females. Verbs of action appear throughout the stories in the books of boys, for example, fight, run, find out, jump, hunt, and roar. Moreover, the males act as the subject of the sentences. They are the agents or doers who do things themselves. They are adventure-oriented and prefer to do activities outdoors or in public space. They also relate to many people in the community but have little conversation with these people. Interestingly, the role of the fathers in the stories can portray the stereotype and perception of the responsibilities of fathers in the society. Fathers have little participation in family. In these books, they rarely appear in the domestic scene with their children. Raising children is solely mother's responsibility.

Verbally, the females are described differently from the males. The words, which reflect warmth, expressiveness, passivity are applied to describe the female characters. The verbs of communication appear throughout stories in the books of girls, for example, tell, speak, ask, explain, and advise. They relate to many people in the community and have verbal communication with them. Moreover, the females act as the object of the sentences. They are receivers of the action. They are home-oriented, preferring to do activities in an indoor domestic space. Interestingly, the role of the mothers in the stories can portray the stereotypes and perceptions of the responsibilities of mothers in the society. Raising and taking care of children are totally mothers' responsibilities. They do chores and take care of their children and husbands. They stay close to their children and have an intimate relationship.

Visually, oblique lines and diagonal angles are used to reflect the adventurous quality of male characters. The disordered lines can imply the aggressive characteristics of males. In contrast, straight lines and static angles are used to reflect the passive quality of the female characters. The ordered lines which are painted can imply the security and stability in the world of the female characters.

### **Languages and Gender Biases**

Having found that gender ideologies exist through the use of the verbal and visual language used, it is necessary to reply to the last research question of how languages contribute to the gender biases. The use of stereotypes in Thai children's books is one way of reinforcing stereotypes that still exist in the society. Children learn through the children's books to believe in the gender stereotypes, which are social expectations towards their manners. The differences in verbal and visual language usage in children books show gender bias in Thai community. The word choices, adjectives, verbs and the sentence structures imply the submissive characteristic of females so readers may believe that females are submissive. That leads to the problem of gender bias when women in society are treated differently from men. Women are looked down upon and believed that they do not have adequate power. Women will be perceived as followers who cannot be good leaders. Some jobs are limited for males only. While some jobs totally become the responsibility of women, for instance, doing chores, taking care of the children and serving others. While males are represented repeatedly as leaders. Males get involved in violent or dangerous situations. Therefore, male stereotypes relate to aggressive, dominant and violent characteristics.



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