

# Artikel Bu Nurl Chojimah

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## GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDONESIAN METAPHORS

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**Abstract:** Despite constant efforts undertaken by gender activists, NGOs, and authority to establish gender equality, gender inequality remains pervasive. The pervasiveness of the inequality happens in the domain of education, politics, and working chance. In addition, the inequality is traceable from metaphors commonly used by language users. This short writing is aimed at describing Indonesian metaphors representing gender inequality. In short, metaphor can be understood as a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Gender inequality in Indonesian is realized through conceptual metaphor, which embraces structural and orientational metaphors, and novel metaphor. WANITA ITU MILIK PRIA or FEMALE IS MALE'S POSSESSION and WANITA SELALU DI BELAKANG or FEMALE IS BACK are respectively structural and orientational metaphors representing gender inequality.

**Keywords:** gender inequality, metaphor, structural metaphor, orientational metaphor

### INTRODUCTION

In a very clear statement, the Qur'an says that male and female in the sight of Allah are equal. "O mankind, We have created you from a male and female, and made you into tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you, with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa. Verily, Allah is All-knower, Well-Acquainted. (49:13). The verse confirms that female and male are equal. The point of difference between them is their righteous. Gender equality is also clearly stated in Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Right* by United Nations. It states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance (United Nations, 1948).

Despite the clear statements by the Qur'an and the article of United Nation, in the society, the superiority of men over women is manifest in many domains of life, including in

the social relation. From the social relation, it can be seen that male and female are culturally treated differently. Culturally, male is considered to be more superior than female. The superiority of male over female is traceable in among other things is in the language or discourses commonly read by students at school. *Ibu memasak nasi di dapur, dan ayah membaca koran* is one case in point. The short sentence suggests that woman is associated with domestic activities, and man is associated with public domain. In addition, statistic demonstrates that male is superior over female in many ways. Data in the Ministry of Woman Empowerment and Child Protection demonstrate that in 2011-2015 the number of female aged 15 years and up who are still studying is less than the number of male. In addition, the number of female aged 15 years and up who do not complete their study is 21.15% while the number of male is 15.51%.

In addition to the statistical data, the inequality in a society is traceable from its language. Language is a guide to a social reality (Saphir and Whorf in Cooper, 1973).

To these writers, language is the medium for the expression of their society. It suggests that if we would like to study the social condition of a society, we can use the language existing in the society as the means. Metaphor is one of linguistic evidence suggesting gender inequality.

### **METAPHOR**

In a simple definition, metaphor can be understood as one thing represented in other thing. As such, the meaning is not a literal meaning, but rather metaphorical meaning. In such a figurative language, the thing talked about is called *target*, and it is commonly an abstract, complex, or not-easy-to-understand concept. By contrast, *source* is the concrete and the real representation of the target, and it is commonly experience-based. *Gender equality is the stepping stone to attain the social welfare* is an example of a metaphoric expression. The target of it is *gender equality*, and the source is *the stepping stone*. Realizing the concept of gender equality in that way, the speaker or writer makes it more real, less controversial, and easy-to-understand. Besides, the use of non-literal meaning in such expression might make the language more attractive and memorable. The other characteristic of metaphor is that source and target are blended. Croft & Cruse mention that the use of figurative language such as metaphor might attract the addressees' attention, simplify a complex concept, and convey a new concept (2004: 193).

Metaphors pervade in our life. It appears **in** daily conversation, in advertisements, in political speeches, and many others. Metaphors are novel creations, easily comprehended, and abundantly available in popular culture, the daily press, on TV and so on (Croft & Cruse, 2004: 204).

John & Lakoff (1983), however, view that metaphor is not about language since language is merely a means to realize metaphorical thoughts. The metaphor exists in human's thought; it shapes how we view and behave. It suggests that the metaphors we release in communication is driven by metaphorical thoughts. It is the thought which is metaphorical, instead of the language. The conceptual metaphor is realised in capital letters.

In their further explanation, Johnson & Lakoff mention that conceptual metaphor consists of structural metaphor and orientational metaphor. Structural metaphor structuring one concept in terms of another such as ARGUMENT IS A WAR. In this metaphor, the structure of argument is structured in the concept of war. It means that some parts of argument is understood as a war. This conceptual metaphor is realized in a number of linguistic expressions such as *his argument counter attacks her opinion, we need a certain strategy in order to win this debate*. In an argument, we can attack and counter attack our rival's opinion as what happens in a war. In addition, strategy is called for in a war, and so is argumentation.

Oriental metaphor is the one realizing a whole system of concept using spatial orientation such as front-back, up-down, right-left, and others. FRONT IS MORE is one case in point. Such a spatial orientation is based on physical experience. People commonly experience that front position is commonly occupied by those having high social status. *Laki-laki selalu di depan* is an example of the linguistic expression drawn from the conceptual metaphor FRONT IS MORE.

Conceptual metaphor has been widely studied by scholars. Rajandran (2017) studied metaphors of enlightenment in Bhagavad-gītā. His study revealed that enlightenment is conceptualized in ENLIGHTENMENT IS A JOURNEY, KNOWLEDGE IS SIGHT, KNOWLEDGE IS TASTE and KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT.

Lendik et al (2017) studied metaphors in health by using conceptual metaphor theory. Their research revealed that universal metaphors are dominant in representing embodied experiences while culturally specific metaphors are important as vehicles of expression derived from their environment and folk beliefs.

### **GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDONESIAN METAPHORS**

Gender inequality is realized in both conceptual and novel metaphors, and some of them are presented in this paper.

#### **1. WANITA ITU MILIK PRIA**

In this metaphor, we have two concepts, namely *wanita* (female) and

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*milik pria* (male's possession). Many actions that we do toward female is structured by the concept of *milik pria*. Marrying a bride, a groom has to hand a brideprice, without which the groom and bride cannot be legally married. If a wife is not happy with the marriage, she cannot divorce her husband; in Muslim society, it is the husband who have the right to divorce.

On the basis of those facts, the concept of WANITA or FEMALE is metaphorically structured with MILIK PRIA or MALE'S POSSESSION. This metaphorical concept is linguistically realised in a number of expressions such as *wanita dijajah pria sejak dulu, istri itu titipan, godaan pria terletak pada harta, tahta, dan wanita*, and others.

*Wanita dijajah pria* means that female is conceived as a territory whose owner is weak in many ways. Due to the limitations, the owner is controllable, so the territory can be colonialized. This linguistic expression radiates powerlessness on the part of the owner of territory (female), and unequal power between the owner and the colonializer.

*Istri itu titipan suami* is another example of the linguistic metaphor rooted in the WANITA ITU MILIK PRIA METAPHOR. In the data, female is depicted as *titipan* or entrustment. *Titipan* or entrustment is the thing being put into somebody's care. The characteristic of an entrustment is that it needs protection and care; it is dependent much on the kindness and generosity of others. As such, the attribution of *titipan* or entrustment towards female radiates powerlessness and inferiority.

*Godaan pria terletak pada harta, tahta, dan wanita* or male tends to be tempted to wealth, power, and female. It suggests that male has a great desire to possess female. Possessing female symbolizes success, and it results in pride.

### 2. WANITA ITU "KANCA WINGKING"

In this metaphorical concept, we are encountered with two different things, namely *wanita* (female) and *winking* or *belakang* or back. This conceptual metaphor is based on physical basis suggesting that female spends most of her time in kitchen, part of a house which is necessarily at the back. Besides, it is based on the fact that Javanese women do not stand parallel with their husbands, but rather they are one-step behind.

On the basis of this, the concept of FEMALE is structured as *KANCA WINGKING*. This conceptual metaphor is eventually realized in a number of linguistic expressions such as (a) *di belakang suami yang hebat, pasti ada wanita yang hebat pula*, (b) *wanita bisa di depan*.

### 3. Wanita terbentuk dari tulang rusuk laki-laki

Different from two metaphors presented earlier, this metaphor is not rooted in thought. In other words, it is not a conceptual metaphor. It is a novel metaphor, that is the one intended for the purpose of communication. This metaphor suggests that female is dependent much on male. The existence of male is the prerequisite of the existence of female. In other words, female will never exist unless male exists.

## DISCUSSION

Data presented earlier demonstrate the concept of female through WANITA ITU MILIK PRIA, WANITA ITU "KANCA WINGKING", and *wanita terbentuk dari tulang rusuk laki-laki*. Metaphors presented earlier prove that gender inequality exist in Indonesian society. In those metaphors, we can see how female is treated and how the concept of patriarchy are put forward. Female is treated as a weak creature which is controllable and dependent on other's care, and whose role is a decorating ornament. Those attributes suggest that Indonesian



society foregrounds the role of male and backgrounds that of female. In other words, those metaphors confirm that the concept of patriarchy is still tightly held by the Indonesian society.

In addition, Johnson and Lakoff (1980) confirm that metaphor is not merely a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish, but rather it is the reflection of our thought. To these writers, metaphors are not merely in language, but are in thought and action. Metaphors are rooted in thought. As such metaphoric expressions as presented earlier are rooted in thought. The metaphoric expressions are driven by experiences. As such, metaphors presented in this writing are experience-based as well. As such, the metaphors suggest that the language users think that gender inequality exists in their thought.

In line with the idea, Sapir and Whorf in Cooper (1973) hypothesized that language is a guide to a social reality. It means that language is the representation of the social condition of the society. The belief, the attitude, the political affiliation, and other social conditions of the society are reflected in the language they use. As such, as one of social conditions, the existence of gender inequality can be detected in the language. The metaphors presented earlier suggest that gender inequality manifests in Indonesian society. Woman is considered to be a weak, controllable, and dependent creature.

Viewed from critical discourse analysis, language is ideological, in the sense that the language radiates the ideology of the language producers (Fairclough, 1995). Critical discourse analysts believe that no language is neutral. Our belief, attitude, values, and interests necessarily are detectable through our language. The dictions or lexical choices in the metaphors discussed in this writing suggest the belief and the attitude of the language users. Besides, critical discourse analysis believes that language may affect and be affected by the social condition of the society.

The attribution of *milik pria*, *kanca wingking*, and *terbentuk dari tulang rusuk pria* is driven by the ideology, attitude, and the belief of the language users. They believe in patriarchy concept so they view that female

as a belonging of male, a supporter of male, and an inferior.

#### **CLOSING REMARKS**

In sum, gender inequality in Indonesia is traceable in, among other things, Indonesian metaphors. Gender inequality is found in both conceptual and novel metaphors.

On the basis of the findings and analysis, it can be concluded that metaphor is a language phenomenon which can radiate the real condition of a society. Gender inequality is a real issue in society across countries, and it is linguistically realized in metaphors.

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