

## **A Study on Gender Representation in Children's Picture Books in the Early 2000s**

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### **Abstract**

This study was to examine the characteristics of 68 picture books published in Korea in the early 2000s. The characteristics of picture books were to be analyzed by a feminist approach, focusing on the texts and pictures of books recommended by 4 lists <Good Book Lists>. The results were as follows: 1. Translated foreign books in the subjects accounted for two times more than that of Korean books. 2. In the aspects of authors, most of them were in their 30s-40s, and there were two times more men authors than women authors. 3. The main characters, girls and boys, maintained a balanced percentage but not for adults. Men appeared twice more than women, and the highest percentage of animals and things was gender-neutral. 4. The attitudes of girls and women were negative and dependent and girls' clothes were mostly skirts. Boys and men's attitudes appeared positive, independent, aggressive or troublesome. Some grandmothers were represented as side-stream characters, and women's social conditions or contributions seldom appeared. 5. Men, as fathers, were participating in child-rearing with several types of play, but not in households. 6. In the perspectives of feminism, girls and boys of the subjects had equal rights as human beings, participated in physical activities equally, and they behaved independently and wisely. However, the subtle unfairness to women remained in many pages of picture books.

**[Key Words]** gender, feminism, picture book, children's literature, young children, early childhood education

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## ***INTRODUCCION***

This study is to examine characteristics of picture books published in Korea in the early 2000s. The texts and pictures of picture books, recommended by 4 lists <Good Book Lists>, are to be analyzed by a feminist approach. The purpose of this study is to update the previous study reported in 2001. It analyzed the feminist perspectives of picture books used in classes of kindergartens in 2000. But most of the subjects were published long before 2000, and showed severe gender stereotyped perspectives. Therefore, that is the reason why this study tries to examine the feminist perspectives of good books published very recently. As it is, there is an expectation of getting enhanced results in feminist perspectives from recent materials, and this is expected to be a standpoint to measure other works published in the early 2000s, whether with gender-stereotyped concepts or with non-sexist perspectives.

On March 2, 2005, a revised civil law to rescind the session of the Head of Family System was passed at the National Assembly (<http://www.no-hoju.or.kr>). According to the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, Korean people are equal under the Constitution which recognizes that they should not be treated unequally by gender, religion, or social status (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development, 2004). A series of some provisions, such as the Educational Basic Law (1997) for Educational Advancement for Gender Equality, the Employment for Gender Equality Act (1988), the Gender Discrimination Prohibition Act (1999), etc., have been made as legal actions (<http://nlawyer.naver.com>). Therefore, the Korean legal system is trying to create a Gender Equal Society.

However, the gender-discriminations to women still remain in daily lives (Lee, 2003; Nam, 2004). The feminism movement in Korean society which has been pushing for gender equality is continuing with two types of movements (Yoon, 2002). One is "liberal feminism" which is a movement for law-making to remove gender discriminations, campaigns to get equal wages, a movement to revise laws for equal rights between men and women, and an endeavor to liberate women from suppression and subordination. The other is "radical feminism" or "cultural feminism" which denies any comparisons with men, being interested in "care, concern, and connection" on the basis of women's values.

The gender of a human being is a critical factor in leading his/her own life