

# Integration of Gender, Disability, and Social Inclusion Principles in Merdeka Curriculum English Textbooks

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explain how the interaction between images and texts constructs meanings related to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) in English textbooks for Senior High School/Islamic Senior High school (SMA/MA) of the Merdeka Curriculum, for instance Life Today and Train of Thoughts. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was applied by combining quantitative and qualitative data. The data of GEDSI-oriented are analyzed by using Visual Grammar theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (2020). The findings reveal that the English textbooks partially reflect GEDSI principles. While the visual representations demonstrate some awareness of gender and disability inclusion. They predominantly reproduce traditional gender roles, such as female character are still more strongly associated with domestic and caregiving roles, while male characters are positioned lie outside the home, and present disability as marginal rather than integral to the narratives. As a result, although the textbooks include certain inclusive elements, their multimodal design provides only limited opportunities for senior high school students to develop a critical understanding of GEDSI-related issues.

**Keywords:** *Gender; Disability; Social Inclusion; English Textbook; Merdeka Curriculum*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English in Indonesia is positioned as a foreign language (EFL), and English textbooks are a primary pedagogical resource for implementing the English curriculum in schools. Textbooks provide a basis for planning and enacting classroom activities and serve as a key source for EFL learners to develop their linguistic knowledge and communicative skills. Beyond their instructional function, textbooks are also socio-cultural artifacts that encode dominant ideologies and collective memories, influencing learners' values and worldviews, including beliefs about gender, disability, and social inclusion that are often realized through visual representations. Consequently, textbook writers and teachers need to critically select and interpret textbook content, as textbooks are never fully neutral but may reproduce or challenge social inequalities.

In contemporary EFL materials, information is delivered not only through written text but also through a range of non-textual modes such as photographs, cartoons, diagrams, and other graphics, which jointly construct meaning with verbal language. Carefully designed images can support comprehension of complex linguistic concepts, visualize abstract ideas, stimulate curiosity, aid memory, and, when inclusive and unbiased, foster critical thinking and more expansive, equitable perspectives on social realities. For these reasons, images in textbooks are expected to be visually engaging, accurate, and culturally diverse, while avoiding the reinforcement of stereotypes related to gender, disability, and other markers of social difference. EFL textbooks, therefore, can be conceptualized as multimodal discourse in which verbal and visual modes interact to shape learners' interpretations.

The present study examines how multimodal resources in Indonesian EFL textbooks, specifically images and accompanying texts, contribute to the construction and circulation of Gender, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) perspectives. The analysis focuses on two nationally endorsed Grade XII EFL textbooks for the Merdeka Curriculum, Life Today (SMA/MA XII) and Train of Thoughts (SMA/MA XII advanced level), published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2022, which are currently used as official learning materials in senior high schools. Senior high school is a crucial period for identity formation and for learners' understanding of social norms; thus, the way GEDSI values are embedded in textbooks has significant implications for how students perceive social equality, diversity, and their own potential role as future agents of change.

Textbooks play a powerful role in shaping meaning because they present particular ways of seeing the world that are often taken as factual or normative by teachers and students. Previous multimodal studies of EFL textbooks have shown that visual-verbal interactions can either reproduce or challenge social inequalities by repeatedly depicting, for example, women in domestic roles and men in leadership positions, or by marginalizing or normalizing persons with disabilities and minority groups. When GEDSI-oriented representations are systematically integrated, textbooks can become inclusive learning tools that promote social justice by legitimizing diverse genders, abilities, and social backgrounds and by encouraging learners to question discriminatory norms. From this perspective, officially adopted textbooks should be designed so that the meanings constructed through text-image interaction affirm equality and respect for difference.

Within the GEDSI framework, gender is understood as socially constructed roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with sex, encompassing not only women and men but also non-binary and transgender identities, while disability refers to physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that often lead to discriminatory treatment in

families, schools, and wider society. Social inclusion, meanwhile, emphasizes the right of all individuals, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized, such as older adults, children, persons with disabilities, the poor, and Indigenous communities in accessing resources, services, and opportunities, and to participate fully and without discrimination in social life. Integrating GEDSI principles into textbook meaning-making is therefore essential for reducing bias and stereotypes, fostering learners' empathy and critical awareness, and ensuring that vulnerable and minority groups are visibly and positively represented in educational materials. In the context of the Indonesian curriculum, such integration supports the broader goal of creating inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students.

This study adopts Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) theory of visual grammar as the main analytical framework for examining how meanings related to gender, disability, and social inclusion are constructed through the interaction of visual and verbal modes in the selected EFL textbooks. Visual grammar, grounded in systemic functional linguistics, posits that images, like language, realize ideational, interpersonal, and compositional meanings, and that multimodal discourse emerges from the interplay among these modes. By applying this framework, the study seeks to uncover patterns in how GEDSI values are encoded in the textbooks' multimodal designs and to evaluate the extent to which these designs align with the principles of equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion promoted in current educational policy. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework employed for data analysis in this study.

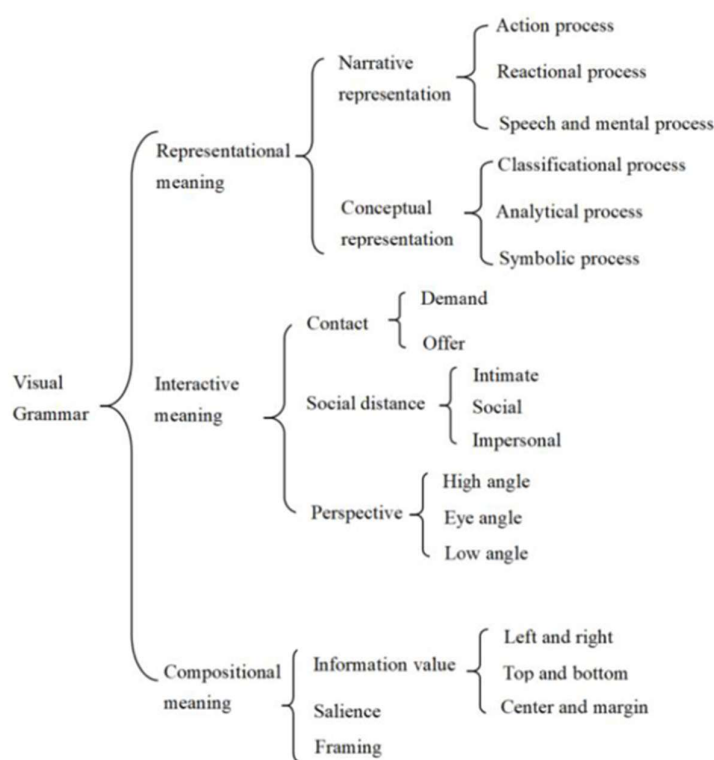


Figure 1. Visual Grammar Theoretical Framework (Lai, 2018)

Visual grammar theory proposes that images do not simply depict reality but actively shape how people understand it. Each visual element may represent people, actions, or objects and is linked to a narrative or message that constructs meaning for viewers. Visual grammar focuses on the organization of image elements, including gaze, social distance, and the placement of elements in the frame, and Kress and van Leeuwen distinguish three main dimensions: representational, interactive, and compositional meaning.

*Representational meaning* examines how images depict objects, people, and actions in the real world. It includes narrative representations, which show actions or interactions, and conceptual representations, which depict concepts or relations without explicit action, such as portraits or symbols.

*Interactive meaning* concerns how images communicate with viewers. Gaze, camera angle, and distance shape the viewer–subject relationship and convey power, involvement, or intimacy. Direct gaze creates a “demand” for engagement, while indirect gaze offers information; social distance signals familiarity or detachment; and high or low angles position the viewer or subject as more or less powerful.

*Compositional meaning* addresses how visual elements are arranged to form overall meaning. In Kress and van Leeuwen's model, left–right placement often realizes given–new information, top–bottom placement encodes ideal–real, and visual connectedness (for example, through lines or framing) indicates how strongly elements are related.

Furthermore, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, the analysis of images in a text involves the following steps. Visual grammar analysis begins by identifying what and who is represented and deciding whether the image realizes narrative or conceptual processes. The next step is to examine interactive meaning by analyzing gaze, distance, and angle to see how the image positions viewers and invites engagement or observation. A third step is to analyse compositional meaning, including given–new, ideal–real, and visual connections. Finally, the analyst synthesizes these findings to interpret the overall meaning of the image and to consider how visuals, together with written text, construct particular messages for viewers.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative analysis first provides an overview of the patterns under investigation, and qualitative analysis then elaborates and refines this initial picture. The research design is illustrated in Figure 2.

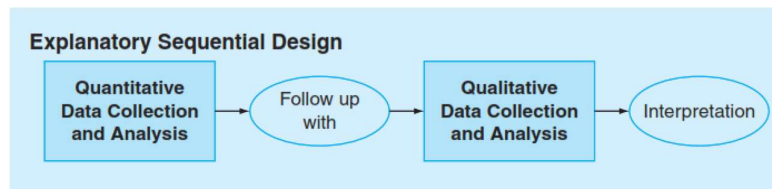


Figure 2. Explanatory Sequential Design

The initial step involved gathering and classifying images found in the textbooks, followed by conducting a qualitative analysis of the classified images (Creswell, 2012). The research objects consist of two Merdeka Curriculum English textbooks for Grade XII of Senior High schools, published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia in 2022. The study was conducted at Universitas Sintuwu Maroso, Poso, Central Sulawesi.

Quantitative data collection entailed compiling all relevant images from the textbooks and grouping them into categories based on the three dimensions of visual grammar. The frequency and distribution of images within each category and subdimension were then analyzed statistically. The quantitative data processing procedure is illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Step One: Quantitative Data Processing Procedure

The second step is to analyze the qualitative data using the Miles and Huberman procedures (Miles et al., 2014), as illustrated in Figure 4.

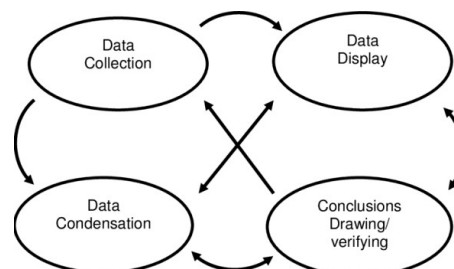


Figure 4. Step Two: Qualitative Data Processing Procedure

The third step is to triangulate all results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses and interpret them using a visual grammar perspective to answer the research questions.

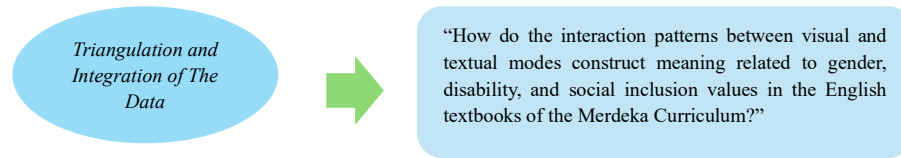


Figure 5. Step Three: Data Triangulation and Integration to Achieve the Research Objectives

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on how visual–textual interaction constructs GEDSI-related meanings in the Merdeka Curriculum English textbooks. The analysis addresses the research question: “How do interaction patterns between visual and textual modes construct meanings related to gender, disability, and social inclusion values in the English textbooks of the Merdeka Curriculum?”.

#### 3.1 Gender Principles and Values in Textbook Illustrations

This category examines how visual and textual modes interact to construct meanings related to gender principles and values. Images are classified as follows: those showing only male characters (M), only female characters (F), and both male and female characters in the same frame (MF).

##### 3.1.1 Life Today textbook

Table 1 summarizes the images meeting these criteria in English: Life Today for Grade XII SMA/MA. Nineteen images were identified across four units of the textbook.

Table 1. Gender-Related Image Data from Textbook 1, Life Today

Unit	Page Number	Total Data per Unit	Number of Male Characters in M	Number of Female Characters in FM	Number of Male Characters in MF	Number of Female Characters in MF
Unit 1	2, 9	2	0	0	3	2
Unit 2	56, 57, 68, 84	4	2	0	5	6
Unit 3	97, 98, 101, 122, 125, 128, 132	7	2	1	5	3
Unit 4	147, 148, 149, 150, 174, 190	6	1	0	1	5
Total		19	5	1	14	16

##### 3.1.2 Train of Thoughts textbook

Table 2 summarizes the relevant images in Train of Thoughts textbook for Grade XII Senior High School/Islamic Senior High School (Advanced Level). Twenty-one images were identified across five units.

Table 2. Gender-Related Image Data from Textbook 2, Train of Thoughts

Unit	Page Number	Total Data per Unit	Number of Male Characters in M	Number of Female Characters in FM	Number of Male Characters in MF	Number of Female Characters in MF
Unit 1	1, 2, 18, 21, 23	5	8	1	0	0
Unit 2	41, 43, 44, 61, 70	5	0	3	5	5
Unit 3	107, 117	2	2	0	0	0
Unit 4	139, 140, 152, 153, 163, 164, 167	4	4	0	0	0
Unit 5	212	1	2	0	0	0
Total		17	16	4	5	0

#### 3.2 Disability Aspects in Textbook Illustration

The second category focuses on how visual and textual modes construct meanings related to disability principles and values. Images selected for this category depict characters with disabilities.

Table 3. Disability-Related Image Data from Book 1, *Life Today*

Unit	Page Number	Total Data per Unit
Unit 1	31	1
Unit 2	-	0
Unit 3	-	0
Unit 4	-	0
Total		1

Table 3 presents the disability-related images in *Life Today* textbook for Grade XII SMA/MA; only one such image was found.

Table 4. Disability-Related Image Data from Book 2, *Train of Thoughts*

Unit	Page Number	Total Data per Unit
Unit 1	-	0
Unit 2	-	0
Unit 3	-	0
Unit 4	139, 140	2
Unit 5	-	0
Total		2

Table 4 summarizes disability-related images in *Train of Thoughts* for Grade XII SMA/MA (Advanced Level), with a total of six images distributed across five units.

### 3.3 Social Inclusion Aspects in Textbook Illustrations

The third data category aims to identify the interaction patterns between visual and textual modes in constructing meanings related to social inclusion principles and values. The criteria for selecting images in this category include: a) images depicting social diversity, such as representations of various minority groups (ethnic minorities, the elderly, children, persons with disabilities, low-income communities, Indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups); and b) images and narratives depicting social issues, such as refugee or migrant groups experiencing difficulties adapting to new environments, or depictions of discrimination or bullying within school learning environments.

Table 5. Social Inclusion Data from Book 1, *Life Today*

Unit	Page Number	Total Data per Unit
Unit 1	31	2
Unit 2	-	0
Unit 3	-	0
Unit 4	163	1
Total		3

Table 5 presents a recapitulation of image data that meet the criteria of this study, taken from the first textbook, *Bahasa Inggris Life Today* for Grade XII SMA/MA. A total of 3 images were identified, distributed across 4 units of the book.

Table 6. Image Data from Book 2, *Train of Thoughts*

Unit	Page Number	Total Data per Unit
Unit 1	1, 3	2
Unit 2	47, 65, 70	3
Unit 3	104, 119, 123, 134	4
Unit 4	139, 140, 141, 163, 164	5
Unit 5	201	1
Total		15

Table 6 presents a recapitulation of image data taken from the second textbook, *Bahasa Inggris Train of Thoughts* for Grade XII SMA/MA (Advanced Level). A total of 15 images were used as data, distributed across 5 units of the book.

### 3.4 Interaction Patterns Between Visual and Textual Modes in Constructing Meanings About Gender Principles

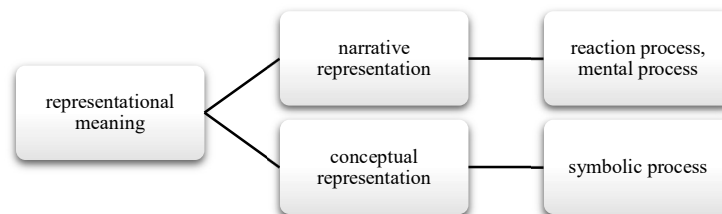
The data that had been collected and categorized were then analyzed using the Framework of Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020). Based on the research team's analysis, two interaction patterns between images and textual modes emerged from the two textbooks.



Figure 6. Data B1.1

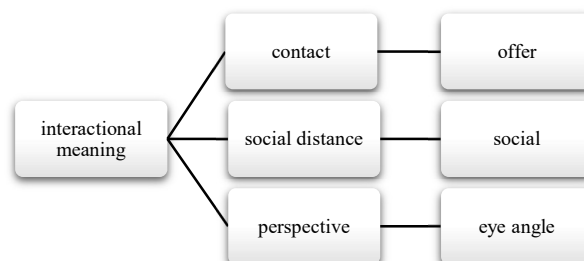
The selected sample features a family consisting of a father, mother, and daughter engaged in daily activities. Representational meaning is constructed through the use of the three character elements who performing actions that generate a narrative, for instance: the daughter is depicted as focused on studying, embodying a mental process; the mother shows a supportive and involved expression, participating in the child's learning activity, indicative of both reaction and mental processes; and the father is engaged in a separate activity, not directly involved in the learning process, which represents an action process with less interpersonal engagement.

Moreover, conceptual representation is evident through the visual classification of the family as a social category (all three members within a single frame), while their distinct roles are highlighted via the classification process. Symbolic meaning is reinforced by the inclusion of specific objects: a laptop, books, and visual cues denoting studying (for learning), as well as mobile phones symbolizing both entertainment (father) and learning support (mother). Thus, the identified representational meaning pattern is in pattern 1:  
Pattern 1:



Interactive meaning in this sample is constructed through contact, social distance, and perspective. There is no direct eye contact between the characters and the viewer; the image thus functions as an “offer” of information. The social distance is medium, positioning the viewer as an observer rather than a participant. The eye-level angle suggests a neutral relationship, with no dominance or subordination between viewer and represented participants. Thus, the identified interactive meaning pattern is in pattern 2.

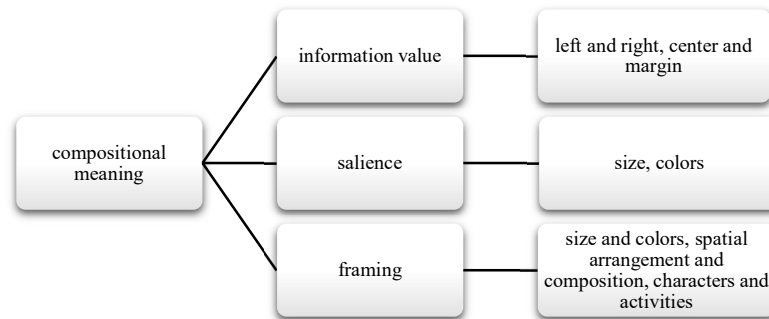
Pattern 2:



The next layer of meaning concerns how the visual elements are arranged in the data, or the compositional meaning. Positioning the father on the left side of the image (left = given) signals information that is already familiar, namely that the father is more often engaged in serious activities outside the home than inside it. By contrast, placing the mother and daughter on the right side (right = new) indicates the new information emphasized in the image, that is, the child's education being closely accompanied by the mother. The mother and daughter are also depicted larger than the father, suggesting that the primary meanings foregrounded by this composition are the child's main role as a student and the mother's main role as the person responsible for supervising the learning process, while the father is positioned only as a marginal element (center and margin).

From the perspective of salience, the mother and daughter have greater visual prominence than the father because they are placed closer to the viewer (size) and the child's clothing is rendered in more striking colors. This meaning is further reinforced through framing, namely the use of clear panel borders, color, and character size to guide the viewer's attention to the central participants in the image, as well as the arrangement of distance, composition, and activity that keeps the mother and daughter visually and interactively close while the father is separated in terms of both space and action. Through these compositional choices, viewers are led to understand that the mother and daughter are more actively involved in learning, whereas the father remains relatively passive in this context. Hence, the identified compositional meaning is in pattern 3.

Pattern 3:



### 3.5 Patterns of Interaction Between Images and Texts in Constructing Meanings of Disability

The second sample illustrates how visual and verbal modes interact to construct meanings related to disability principles and values. This sample is drawn from the textbook *Life Today*.

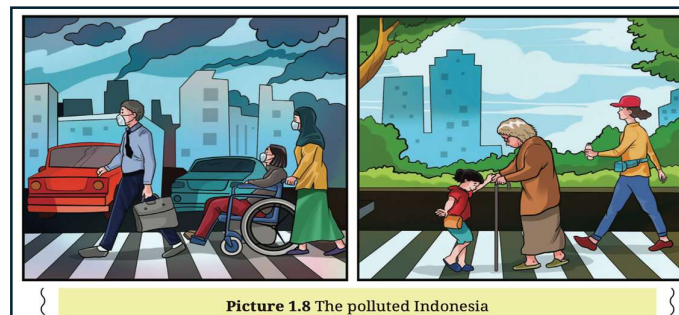
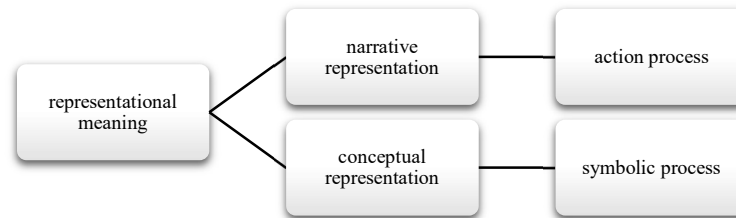


Figure 2. Data B1.2 (left) dan Data B1.3 (right)

Figure 7 with the image labelled "Picture 1.8 The Polluted Indonesia" consists of two separate panels that together illustrate the surrounding environment and the social interactions among the characters depicted. In the left panel, the urban air appears polluted, indicated by the background of tall buildings emitting smoke that likely symbolizes factory activity. Three characters are shown crossing a zebra crossing: a man walking with a briefcase, signifying an office worker; a woman seated in a wheelchair; and another woman pushing the wheelchair, with all three characters wearing masks to signal poor air quality. In contrast, the right panel presents a cleaner setting with a blue, cloudy sky and buildings in the background that are not associated with factory emissions, where three characters, such as a boy assisting an elderly woman with a bent posture and greyish-white hair across the zebra crossing, and a younger woman who appears to be exercising, they are depicted without masks.

The representational meaning in these panels (Data B1.2 and B1.3) is constructed through the visual elements of the wheelchair, the woman pushing it, and the urban context. These elements create a narrative representation in which an action process is realized: helping a person with a disability carry out everyday activities such as crossing the street, which conveys a sense of the disabled character’s dependence on others. At the same time, a conceptual representation is formed by the symbolic presence of the disabled character, signaling awareness of diverse physical conditions in city life. However, the absence of visual elements such as ramps or specific traffic signs suggests that the urban environment is not yet fully inclusive for persons with disabilities, indicating a gap between social awareness and accessible infrastructure. Hence, the identified representational meaning pattern is in pattern 4.

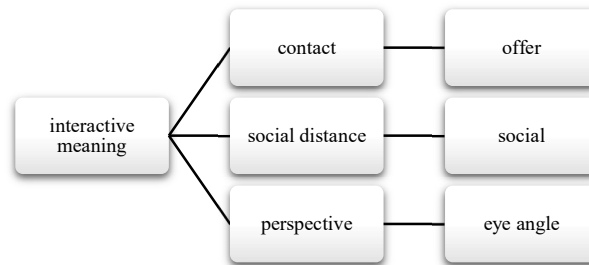
Pattern 4:



Interactive meaning is constructed through gaze, angle, and social distance. In Figure 7, none of the characters look directly at the viewer; they gaze forward, indicating that they do not demand the viewer’s attention but are merely offered for observation. From the viewer’s perspective, the eye-level angle and medium social distance create an impersonal, neutral viewpoint, with no sense of dominance, subordination, or emotional closeness between characters and viewer.

Thus, the identified interactional meaning pattern is: viewers are positioned as neutral observers who are offered information about disability and social interaction in everyday urban settings, as in pattern 5.

Pattern 5:



The compositional meaning is analyzed by interpreting Data B1.2 and B1.3 in Figure 7, which are presented in two parallel panels under the shared caption “The Polluted Indonesia,” creating a visual impression of a “before” and “after” scenario. This meaning is constructed through the deliberate arrangement of visual elements, such as urban setting, character activities, and dominant colors in Data B1.2. Data B1.2 conveys the information value of a polluted, disability-unfriendly city on the left, suggesting a “past” urban condition, while Data B1.3 on the right represents a “future” city with cleaner air. Taken together, the interaction between Data B1.2 and B1.3 indicates a transition in Indonesia from a pollution-ridden urban environment to a more sustainable cityscape.

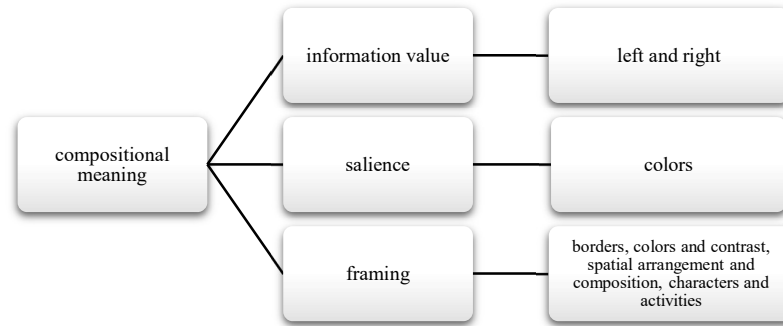
In terms of salience, the main focus is created through strong color contrasts: grey tones for smoke and pollution in Data B1.2 versus bright blue skies, white clouds, and green plants in Data B1.3, signaling change in urban conditions. Although Data B1.2 foregrounds a dependent disabled character, the compositional emphasis remains on the shift from a polluted to a sustainable city, as the most striking change lies in the contrasting colors of the sky rather than in any development from dependence to independence for the disabled character. This is reinforced by the fact that the disabled character appears only in Data B1.2, highlighting how disability is visually linked to the polluted past rather than the envisioned future.

Framing also contributes to meaning-making. Data B1.2 and B1.3 are placed side by side, separated by a panel border yet unified by the same label, signaling that they belong to one comparative sequence. The left panel (Data B1.2) depicts a polluted city with a smoggy sky, masked pedestrians, and an overall gloomy atmosphere, while the right panel (Data B1.3) depicts a greener, cleaner city associated with a healthier and more comfortable environment. The clear framing between the two panels guides viewers to explicitly compare the two situations. Additional framing through color and contrast further differentiates the scenes: dark, dull hues in Data B1.2 emphasize pollution, whereas bright, natural colors in Data B1.3 reinforce the idea of a healthier, more sustainable future city.

Framing through distance and composition shapes the perception of space and affect. Data B1.2 presents denser visual elements, such as buildings, vehicles, and people, that create an impression of crowding, discomfort, hurried

movement, and dependence. The disabled character and the masked figures signify the constraints imposed by polluted air. In contrast, Data B1.3 shows more dispersed visual elements, with buildings and character positions arranged to suggest wider, freer space and more relaxed social interaction, signaling a more positive social climate. Finally, framing through differences in characters and activities underscores a shift in social relations: Data B1.2 highlights dependence and limitation through the masked figures and the wheelchair user being pushed, whereas Data B1.3 emphasizes social solidarity and a friendlier environment across age groups by depicting a child helping an elderly woman and another person walking leisurely. Overall, these framing strategies construct a compositional pattern that suggests Indonesia can move “from pollution to inclusion” through environmental and social reform. Thus, the identified compositional meaning pattern is in pattern 6.

Pattern 6:



Based on the analysis using the Framework of Visual Grammar, three patterns are identified in Figure 7 (Data B1.1 and B1.2), consisting of two newly emerging patterns and one recurring pattern.

### 3.6 Pattern of interaction between visual and verbal modes in constructing meanings about the principles and values of social inclusion

The third sample is a dataset that illustrates how images and written text interact to construct meanings related to the principles and values of social inclusion, taken from the textbook Train of Thoughts.

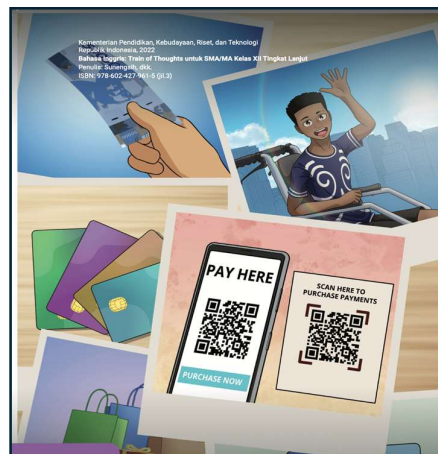
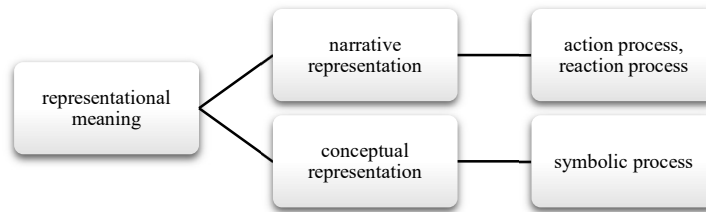


Figure 3. Data B2.2

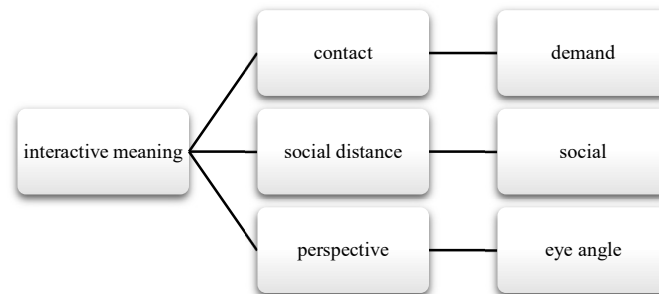
In Figure 8, Data B2.2 depicts a young disabled character seated in a wheelchair and looking directly toward the viewer, thereby establishing a visual–textual interaction that makes the image suitable for analysis through the Framework of Visual Grammar. The representational meaning is realized through three key visual elements, such as the wheelchair, the character’s facial expression and body posture, and the urban background. Together, these elements construct a narrative representation in which an action process is visible in the character’s active engagement with the viewer, shown by the raised hand and smiling face as if greeting the audience, while a reactional process is implied through the character’s gaze and friendly smile, signaling a desire to interact. At the same time, the image conveys a conceptual representation of an autonomous individual, indicated by the single disabled character in the wheelchair as a symbolic process that highlights empowerment and independence, reinforced by an expression that suggests the young person is confident and agentive. Accordingly, the representational meaning pattern identified in this data set can be summarized as in Pattern 7.

Pattern 7:



The interactive meaning is constructed through the use of gaze, angle, and social distance as realized by the positioning of visual elements in the image. In Figure 8, the character looks directly at the viewer, signaling a “demand” image in which the represented participant calls for the viewer’s attention. From the viewer’s perspective—indicated by the eye-level angle and the medium social distance between the character and the reader—the interaction can be interpreted as a social relationship, suggesting interpersonal engagement rather than intimacy or detachment. The eye-level viewpoint, where the character’s pupils are horizontally aligned with the viewer’s eyes, implies an equal power relation and a neutral, balanced stance between the character and the audience. Accordingly, the identified pattern of interactive meaning in this data set can be summarized as in Pattern 8.

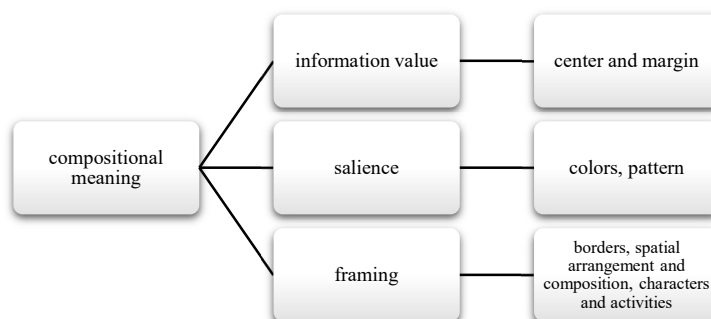
Pattern 8:



The compositional meaning is interpreted by examining the information and visually prominent elements in the data. In Data B2.2, the disabled character is framed in a separate photograph positioned at the top of the layout, creating the impression that this character belongs to a distinct memory or to a broader narrative that is not directly tied only to Unit 4’s specific theme, “Future Payment” (see Figure 8), which is further supported by other visuals such as credit cards and shopping bags. Centrally placed are the QR code and the accompanying texts “Pay Here” and “Scan Here to Purchase Payments,” indicating that the main information value lies in digital payment, while the character is not the central focus but located at the upper margin or periphery, suggesting that Unit 4 is about digital finance rather than disability or social inclusion, and that the character merely supports, rather than constitutes, the core message. In terms of salience, the primary focus is achieved through a gradient of bright blue for the sky and darker blue for the character’s clothing, while the patterned shirt and dark skin tone index an ethnic background that can be associated with an Indigenous group from outside Java, possibly an Asmat community in Papua.

With respect to framing, Data B2.2 does not employ a strong, explicit border around the character’s photograph. Although the character’s image is technically framed, the border is faint, partially cropped at the corners, and far less prominent than other visual elements such as the QR code and payment cards, and the wheelchair is not fully visible within the frame. This weak framing suggests that the border functions more as a decorative supplement than as a device for constructing strong meaning. Instead, “spatial arrangement and composition” provide the key framing effect, as the disabled character is placed in a marginal position relative to the main elements of the image. Additionally, framing through the character and their activity conveys positive social engagement and personal agency, portraying an independent and empowered individual; however, the activity bears no direct connection to the core theme of Unit 4, so it does not form a fully integrated meaning with the other visual elements in Data B2.2. Accordingly, the compositional meaning pattern identified in Data B2.2 can be summarized as in Pattern 9.

Pattern 9:



### 3.7 Analysis of GEDSI integration in Merdeka Curriculum textbooks

The analysis indicates that the textbooks tend to reproduce traditional gender roles by depicting female characters, such as mothers and daughters, as actively engaged in learning activities at home, while father as male character is shown as spatially and functionally separate from the learning process as seen in Figure 6 Data B1.1. At the representational level, this pattern suggests a conventional division of roles in which female characters are more closely associated with children's education and domestic spaces, whereas male characters are constructed as less visible in caregiving and pedagogical roles. For conceptual meaning, fathers are categorized as figures whose primary activities lie outside the home, while mothers are framed as the main companions in children's learning. From an interactional perspective, the images function as "offer" visuals with no direct gaze to the viewer, so the message remains largely informative rather than inviting readers to critically engage with or challenge these gendered role allocations. The social distance used is neutral, keeping readers as observers rather than participants. Then for compositional meaning, the larger size, color contrast, and more central positioning of mothers and children, compared with fathers, reinforce the idea that educational responsibility resides mainly with mothers. Taken together, these patterns show that the Merdeka Curriculum textbook analyzed has not yet fully integrated the principle of gender equality in line with GEDSI expectations.

In relation to disability and social inclusion, the interaction between visual and verbal modes in Train of Thoughts suggests that representations of social diversity remain marginal rather than central to the main narrative. The representational, interactional, and compositional patterns in Figure 8 Data B2.2 show a young wheelchair user portrayed as an empowered and independent individual through a smiling facial expression, direct eye contact, and a friendly wave toward the reader. However, the compositional analysis reveals that this disabled character is not placed at the center of attention on the page; instead, more salient elements are the QR code and digital payment icons that foreground a narrative about financial technology, with inclusion only appearing as a supporting element. As a result, the principle of awareness of social diversity is present but not foregrounded, because minority groups are not given a primary role in constructing the overall meaning of the unit. Furthermore, the principle of awareness of social injustice is not integrated in the examined materials, as there are no images or texts that explicitly address inequality, discrimination, or structural challenges faced by vulnerable groups such as refugees, migrant workers, or children from low-income families. Although disability is visually represented, the context emphasizes positive social participation rather than highlighting barriers or systemic obstacles that people with disabilities encounter in everyday life, which limits the potential of the textbooks to foster critical GEDSI-oriented perspectives among learners.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The findings highlight three key directions for strengthening GEDSI integration in the analyzed textbooks: positioning minority groups more centrally in texts and images, presenting issues of social injustice explicitly to foster students' critical reflection on societal inequalities, and enhancing the synergy between images and texts so that social inclusion becomes a core pedagogical message rather than a peripheral feature. In this way, the textbooks can function as more inclusive learning media that better reflect the social realities of students' environments.

The interaction between visual and verbal modes in constructing meanings about gender, disability, and social inclusion in the Merdeka Curriculum English textbooks is dominated by representational meanings, which are realized narratively through action and reaction processes and conceptually through symbolic processes. Interactive meanings are mainly realized through offer-type images, neutral social distance, and eye-level perspectives, while compositional meanings are constructed through information value (left-right and center-margin), the saliency of images, contrasts, relative size of visual elements, and strong framing that sometimes separates rather than integrates character activities. Overall, these patterns indicate that the two textbooks examined, Life Today and Train of Thoughts, have not yet fully incorporated the four GEDSI principles in their design: (1) gender equality, (2) inclusivity for persons with disabilities, (3) awareness of social diversity, and (4) awareness of social injustice.

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