

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, textbooks remain one of the most essential tools for both teaching and learning. They not only provide structured content and language input but also guide classroom interactions and curriculum implementation. As Richards (2001) asserts, textbooks play a pivotal role in EFL classrooms as they provide the primary source of language input, shape classroom interaction, and reflect curricular goals. The design and content of textbooks can greatly affect learners' linguistic competence, intercultural understanding, and development of critical thinking (Cunningsworth, 1995). Given their central role in instructional practices, a thorough examination of textbooks is essential to ensure they align with current pedagogical goals and learners' needs.

Textbooks function not only as sources of language input but also as cultural instruments that help structure learning sequences and support curriculum delivery (Tomlinson, 2012). An effective English textbook should not be limited to language instruction alone but should also include various modes of content—such as written text, images, and visual features—to enhance student engagement and understanding. The inclusion of these multimodal features plays a crucial role in enhancing comprehension and maintaining student interest, particularly in classrooms where visual learning aids can support diverse learning needs.

To analyze how multimodal elements operate within a textbook, the Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework introduced by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) offers a valuable analytical lens. This theory explores the interaction between various semiotic resources—such as images, layout, color, and typography—and written text in meaning-making processes. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, meaning is not derived solely from language but is constructed through the integration of multiple modes. Viewed through this perspective, educators and researchers can evaluate how effectively textbooks use visual and

textual elements to support deeper learning. This includes the promotion of essential 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking and digital literacy (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Satar, Hauck, & Bilki, 2023; Eryani, 2023).

Within this evolving educational landscape, the integration of 21st-century skills in EFL instruction becomes increasingly vital. Language learning has shifted beyond the memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules to focus on meaningful communication, encouraging learners to express ideas clearly, engage with diverse perspectives, and apply language in real-life contexts (Richards, 2015). Textbooks, as primary learning resources, must support these goals by fostering not only linguistic competence but also cognitive and social skills relevant to the demands of the 21st century.

To guide the analysis, this research employs a multimodal semiotic approach, which integrates three key frameworks: Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Visual Grammar*, Halliday's (1978) *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)*, and the *P21 Framework* (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007). These frameworks enable a comprehensive exploration of how meaning is constructed in the textbook and how it aligns with national and international learning goals. By focusing on the interaction of text and image across selected textbook units, this study offers insights into the pedagogical value of multimodal materials and their role in shaping future-ready learners.

Halliday's SFL is particularly valuable in this study because it provides a functional lens for analyzing how language is used to convey meaning in context. SFL views language as a social semiotic system that reflects and shapes human experience, emphasizing that linguistic choices are influenced by the social functions they serve (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Through its three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—SFL enables a detailed examination of how texts represent ideas, construct social relationships, and organize information. In the context of textbook analysis, SFL helps uncover how written texts are structured to facilitate students' comprehension, engagement, and development of critical competencies.

When combined with visual grammar, SFL provides a powerful tool for exploring how verbal and visual elements interact to construct meaning and support the integration of 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. The P21 Framework complements this analysis by providing a structured set of competencies that educational materials should promote, including the “4Cs” and media, technology, and life skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007). Together, these frameworks offer a robust basis for evaluating how textbooks contribute to holistic student development.

Several studies have applied SFL and multimodal semiotic theory to educational materials; however, most have focused on different contexts. Jauhara, Emilia, and Lukmana (2021) analyzed a junior high school textbook but did not examine how multimodal elements promote 21st-century skills. Similarly, Humaira (2019) applied these frameworks to student-created digital storytelling, and Lim (2002) used them to explore literary picture books. Unlike these studies, the present research examines a senior high school English textbook under Indonesia’s Merdeka Curriculum, using a triangulated framework to investigate how language and visuals are integrated to support 21st-century competencies. This approach extends previous applications of these theories and offers practical insights for textbook developers and educators seeking to align materials with modern educational priorities.

Despite growing interest in 21st-century education, limited research has examined how Indonesian senior high school English textbooks integrate these skills through multimodal design. Most prior studies have focused on either 21st-century skills or multimodal features, but rarely both in combination. Murtadho et al. (2024) analyzed a junior high school textbook for 21st-century skill content but did not explore the interaction between text and visuals. Fitriana and Wirza (2021) examined visual and verbal modes in a senior high school textbook but did not link them to 21st-century competencies. In a broader context, Al-Zahrani and Althubaiti (2024) found uneven representation of these skills in Saudi primary textbooks. These gaps highlight the need for further research that examines how

multimodal elements in Indonesian senior high school textbooks—especially under the Merdeka Curriculum—support the development of 21st-century skills.

This study focuses on the *Life Today* textbook for Grade 12, which represents the final stage of senior high school education in Indonesia. Grade 12 is particularly significant because students at this level are expected to demonstrate advanced English proficiency, independent thinking, and readiness for academic and professional communication. Compared to Grade 10 and 11 textbooks, which primarily emphasize foundational and guided language learning, Grade 12 materials include more cognitively complex tasks such as debates, reflective writing, digital storytelling, and media analysis. These tasks involve higher-order thinking and greater learner autonomy, making them ideal for evaluating the representation of 21st-century competencies. Previous research also indicates that Grade 12 textbooks contain more lexically and structurally complex texts (Agustina & Cahyono, 2017) and offer more authentic multimodal learning tasks than lower grades (Kusumastuti, 2020; Mustika, 2021).

Ultimately, the findings of this research aim to benefit curriculum developers, textbook authors, and English teachers by highlighting the importance of integrating multimodal resources and 21st-century competencies in EFL materials. Such insights are crucial for designing learning resources that are both educationally effective and responsive to the evolving needs of students in a rapidly changing world.

1.2. Research Questions

This study is guided by a central question that seeks to investigate how the Grade 12 English textbook *Life Today* employs multimodal resources—such as text, images, layout, and design—to represent selected 21st-century skills. In order to explore this main inquiry in greater depth, the study also considers the following sub-questions:

- (1) What types of 21st-century skills are represented in the textbook?
- (2) How frequently do they appear across various units?

1.3. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Identify the types of 21st-century skills embedded in the textbook.
2. Determine the frequency of appearance of these 21st-century skills across different units of the textbook.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This research uses a multimodal semiotic approach by combining three theoretical frameworks: Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar, and the P21 Framework for 21st-century skills. Together, this help analyze how text and visuals work in the Life Today textbook to convey meaning and support the development of modern skills students need.

Systemic Functional Linguistics, introduced by Halliday (1978), conceptualizes language as a resource for making meaning through three meta functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This framework is instrumental in examining how linguistic elements function to represent experiences, construct social relationships, and organize information within textbook texts.

Visual Grammar, developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), extends the meta functional analysis to the visual mode. It provides analytical tools to explore how images, layout, color, and design convey meaning and engage the viewer. This approach enables a systematic evaluation of the visual elements in the textbook and their pedagogical role.

The P21 Framework (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007) offers a conceptual foundation for evaluating the relevance and presence of competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and media and digital literacy. It serves as a benchmark against which the textbook's alignment with contemporary educational goals can be assessed.

Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the textbook's multimodal content and for evaluating its alignment with the skills required for effective participation in 21st-century society.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study contributes both theoretically and practically to the field of English language education. Theoretically, it enriches the body of knowledge on multimodal discourse analysis by integrating three established frameworks—SFL, Visual Grammar, and the P21 Framework—to investigate the representation of 21st-century skills in educational materials.

Practically, the study provides valuable insights for English teachers, curriculum designers, and textbook developers. It highlights how multimodal elements in textbooks can be intentionally designed to support the development of competencies essential for students' academic.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

To ensure clarity and focus in this study, the following key terms are defined:

1. **Multimodal Text:** A text that incorporates two or more semiotic modes—such as linguistic, visual, spatial, or gestural resources—to convey meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).
2. **Modes:** These are the tools or resources used to make meaning—like language, visuals, color, layout, and typography. Each mode has different strengths that contribute to how meaning is communicated (Jewitt, 2009). This study focuses on linguistic (text), visual (images), and spatial (layout) modes.
3. **Multimodal Semiotic Theory:** This theory, developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), views communication as inherently multimodal. It emphasizes how different modes interact within a text to produce meaning. The theory serves as one of the analytical lenses in this study to examine how visual and linguistic elements work together to represent 21st-century skills.

4. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL): SFL, introduced by Halliday (1978), is a theory of language that sees language as a resource for making meaning. It focuses on three metafunctions: ideational (content), interpersonal (social interaction), and textual (text organization). These metafunctions help analyze how the language in the textbook contributes to the representation of 21st-century skills.
5. P21 Framework: A model developed by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) that outlines key competencies students need, including the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity), plus digital/media skills and information literacy (P21, 2019).
6. 21st-Century Skills: This study focuses on six key skills: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, information literacy, and media literacy (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; P21, 2019). These skills are examined in relation to how they are represented through multimodal elements in the textbook.
7. Critical Thinking: involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to make informed decisions. It encourages learners to question assumptions, solve problems, and think independently. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, critical thinking plays a central role in reading comprehension, structured writing, and class discussions (Facione, 2015; Halpern, 1996; Khodamoradi, 2024).
8. Communication: Ability to express ideas clearly through oral, written, and non-verbal forms. It requires active listening, awareness of audience, and adaptability in tone and format. For language learners, communication is essential for developing fluency, comprehension, and interactive competence in both academic and real-life situations (Hargie, 2016; Littlejohn & Foss, 2019; Rotherham & Willingham, 2010).
9. Collaboration: skill of working effectively in teams, valuing diverse perspectives, and contributing to shared goals. It emphasizes cooperation, adaptability, and leadership within group settings. In EFL learning, collaborative tasks such as discussions, projects, and peer interactions

foster engagement and social language development (Johnson & Johnson, 2014; Dillenbourg, 1999; Khodamoradi, 2024).

10. Creativity: Ability to generate new ideas, innovate, and approach problems from original perspectives. It encourages flexibility, imagination, and risk-taking. In English education, creativity is nurtured through storytelling, open-ended writing, role-plays, and expressive communication (Robinson, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Allen & van der Velden, 2012).
11. Information Literacy: Abilities that enables students to locate, evaluate, and use information responsibly
12. Media Literacy: Ability to understanding and analyzing media content and messages critically.
13. English Language Textbook: In this context, the English language textbook refers specifically to Life Today—the official textbook for Grade 12 senior high school students in Indonesia, published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is used as the main data source for identifying multimodal features and 21st-century skill representations.

1.7. Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on analyzing selected units of the Life Today Grade 12 English textbook published under the Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum. The research is delimited to examining how the textbook represents 21st-century skills through multimodal elements, as informed by the theoretical frameworks of SFL, Visual Grammar, and the P21 Framework.

The study does not extend to student learning outcomes or teacher practices and does not consider regional or digital adaptations of the textbook. Furthermore, the analysis is qualitative in nature, with the primary objective being to uncover patterns and meanings embedded in the textbook's design rather than to measure effectiveness through quantitative methods.

1.8. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter I, Introduction, is the first chapter of this proposal which consists of background of the study, statements of the problems, the objectives of the study, theoretical framework, the significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the proposal. Chapter II, Review of Related Literature, is the second chapter of this proposal which consists of the review of the related and related studies. Chapter III is the third chapter of this proposal which consists of research design, the research data, the research instruments, procedure of collecting the data, and the data analysis technique. Chapter IV is the fourth chapter of this study which consists of findings and discussion. Chapter V is the fifth chapter of this study which consists of conclusion and suggestions.