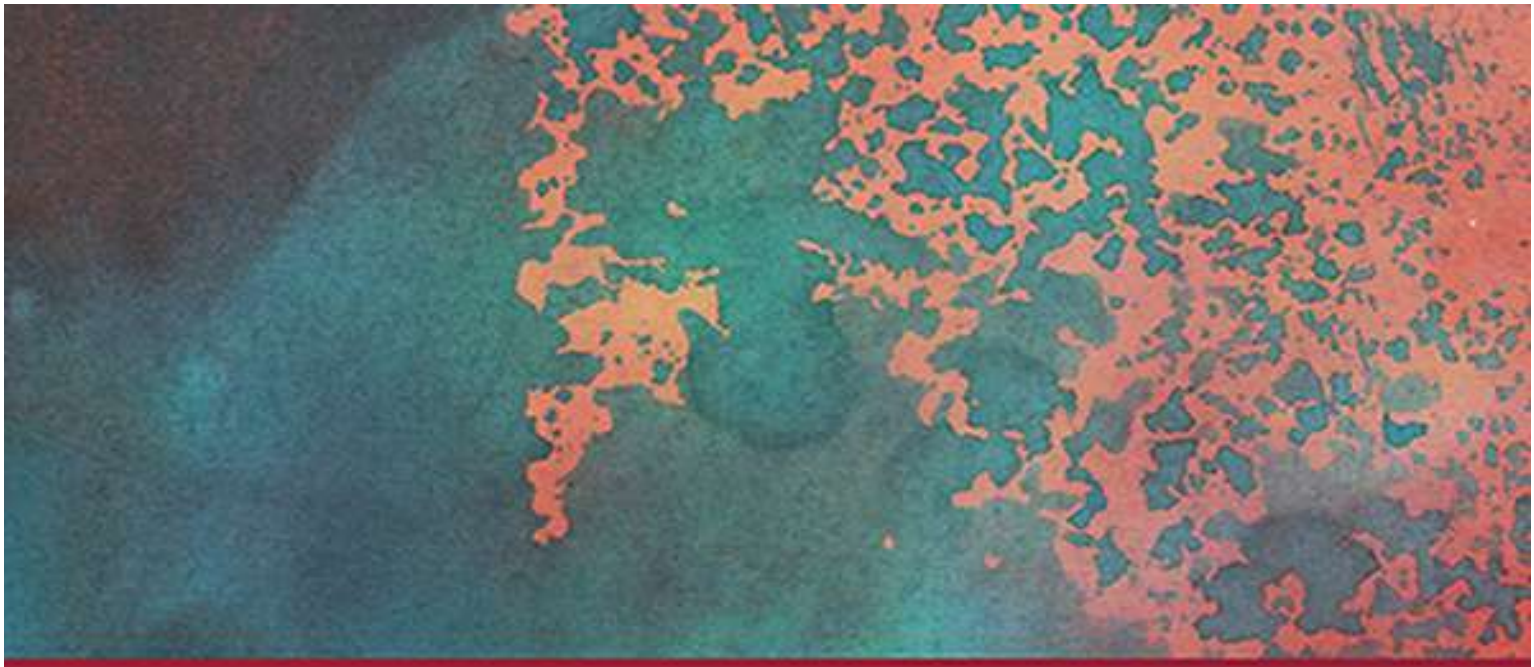

Global South Perspectives on TESOL

DECOLONIZING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

ENGAGING IN A SOUTH–NORTH INTER-EPISTEMIC DIALOGUE

Edited by
Waqar Ali Shah, Liaquat Ali Channa
and Asadullah Lashari

Decolonizing English Language Textbooks

Engaging in a South–North Inter-epistemic Dialogue

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7 Foreign language textbooks and the multimodal representation of linguistic coloniality

A corpus-assisted discourse study from Indonesia

Danang Satria Nugraha

Introduction

Educational textbooks function as powerful cultural artifacts, serving not merely as conduits of linguistic knowledge but as significant sites where societal norms, values, and power relations are implicitly encoded and perpetuated (Canagarajah, 2023; Channa et al., 2017; Lashari et al., 2023; Shah, 2023). Within the domain of foreign language teaching and learning, textbooks play a crucial role in shaping learners' perceptions of target languages, cultures, and the relationship between their own identity and that of others. Despite the advancements in postcolonial scholarship and decolonialization movements, subtle manifestations of coloniality, rooted in historical imbalances of power between the Global North and South, can regrettably persist within contemporary educational materials (cf. Pennycook, 2002; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). These enduring legacies are frequently embedded within both the textual content and the visual design, operating synergistically within a complex multimodal landscape. The interplay between linguistic elements and visual representations is critical in constructing meaning and influencing learners' understanding of diverse peoples, places, and practices. This chapter is fundamentally concerned with exploring the subtle persistence of coloniality within the multimodal landscape of contemporary foreign language textbooks widely used in Indonesia, a nation with its own history shaped by colonial encounters.

Drawing upon the understanding that textbooks are not ideologically neutral, this chapter specifically explores how textual and visual elements intersect within Indonesian foreign language textbooks to (re)produce colonial discourses. While previous research in the Indonesian context has explored various aspects of textbook content and educational discourse (e.g., Mambu & Kurniawan, 2023; Mulyani et al., 2024; Sakhiyya & Wijaya Mulya, 2023; Setyono & Widodo, 2019), there is a relative paucity of studies specifically investigating the multimodal representation of linguistic coloniality in English language materials. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach (Partington, 2004; Partington

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et al., 2013; Taylor & Marchi, 2018), critically informed by established critical and multimodal frameworks (Pennycook, 2021). This integrated methodology facilitates a nuanced analysis of the interplay among images, specific linguistic choices (including lexical patterns and grammatical structures), and accompanying pedagogical activities presented in the textbooks. By systematically analyzing these multimodal elements within a dedicated corpus, the research aims to reveal how they collectively contribute to the construction of the representation of Self and Other and potentially perpetuate colonial hierarchies and stereotypes. To some extent, this study underscores the critical importance of recognizing and challenging these embedded colonial legacies in educational materials.

In particular, this study includes examination of how language is used to "other" individuals or cultures, and how visual elements reinforce these linguistic patterns. Examples include the analysis of: (1) pronoun use and naming conventions, that is, how people from the Global North and South are referred to and addressed; (2) verb choices and voice, that is, whether certain groups consistently depicted as passive or active; and (3) depictions of space and relationships, that is, how visuals reinforce power dynamics and hierarchies.

Method

This study employed an integrated qualitative methodology combining corpus-assisted discourse analysis and critical multimodal analysis to investigate the representation of linguistic coloniality in Indonesian foreign language textbooks. A specialized corpus of ten English textbooks published by the Indonesian Government[1] was compiled for the study, containing 243,191-word tokens and 11,117-word types. Selection of the textbooks for corpus compilation was guided by three key criteria: (1) their widespread adoption in Indonesian education institutions, (2) their official government mandate for national curriculum implementation, and (3) their publication by the state ministerial body, thus ensuring the corpus's validity and representativeness of materials commonly used. Linguistic analysis was performed using AntConc 4.3.1 (Anthony, 2024), which facilitated systematic procedures like generating word lists and frequency profiles, alongside detailed qualitative examination of concordance lines to explore the contextual usage of relevant lexical and grammatical features. Concurrently, Pennycook's (2021) critical applied linguistics was employed to interrogate how language functions as a site of power, ideology, and colonial legacy in educational discourse. Complementarily, van Leeuwen's (2021) multimodal framework facilitated the analysis of visual grammar, such as gaze, posture, color, and spatial composition, to reveal how images and layout collaboratively encode authority, normalize social roles, and reinforce hierarchical subject positions within textbook representations. The qualitative interpretation integrated insights from both linguistic and multimodal analyses, applying a discourse analytical lens to understand how these semiotic resources collectively construct and perpetuate colonial representations of Self and Other.

Findings

Lexical choices

Pronoun usage

An analysis of pronoun usage across Indonesian foreign language textbooks revealed a notable pattern that subtly reinforces sociolinguistic hierarchies and collective positioning. The most frequently occurring pronoun in the corpus was "*we*", appearing over 3,100 times, followed by "*you*", "*I*", and "*it*", as listed in Table 7.1. The prevalence of "we" suggests a didactic discourse that heavily relies on collectivist framing, positioning the speaker and the learner within a shared in-group. Such usage may reflect the national pedagogical ethos rooted in communal learning, yet it also performs a discursive function by implicitly constructing an inclusive identity among textbook users, for example, learners and educators, against a potential "Other". The heavy emphasis on first-person plural forms positions knowledge and language learning as communal endeavors, minimizing individual subjectivities. However, this inclusion is not ideologically neutral; it constructs a collective voice that is typically aligned with institutional authority, where learners are invited into a homogenized learning community without space for resistance or differentiation.

In contrast, the pronouns "*they*" and "*them*", which appeared with significantly lower frequencies, warrant critical attention. Although their quantitative presence was lesser, their qualitative placement might encode exclusionary discourse. Within postcolonial and critical discourse traditions, the third-person plural often serves to distance, categorize, or generalize others, particularly when used to reference non-local or culturally different groups (cf. Ali et al.,

Table 7.1 Pronoun usage

Pronoun	*Frequency*	*Pronoun*	*Frequency*
we	3138	us	170
you	1676	who	165
I	1176	which	108
it	946	him	72
our	906	its	41
my	742	yourself	25
your	737	myself	18
that	701	ourselves	12
she	615	herself	11
they	487	whose	11
her	413	himself	8
he	399	themselves	6
them	257	whom	5
their	250	itself	5
his	220	yours	4
me	185	mine	1

2024; Göttsche, 2012; Lombardi-Diop, 2020). A close reading of the textbook examples could uncover whether "*they*" refers to people from other national or cultural contexts, particularly those from the Global South or minority communities, and whether such representations are accompanied by implicit value judgements. Similarly, the singular gendered pronouns "*he*" and "*she*" exhibit asymmetries, with "*he*" occurring more frequently, potentially pointing to subtle gender bias in role depiction, narrative voice, or agentive positioning.

Moreover, the prominence of the second-person pronoun "*you*" (1,676 instances) points to the pedagogical structure of these textbooks, which emphasize direct address and interactive models of instructions, such as role play and guided dialogues. While this can enhance learner engagement, it also centers the teacher's voice as an authoritative guide, reinforcing institutional hierarchies. The high frequency of "*I*" further supports this structure, often found in first-person modeling statements that exemplify grammatically correct speech. While these may ostensibly aim to personalize learning, they also serve to naturalize particular ways of speaking, feeling, or behaving as universal or appropriate, without interrogating their cultural specificity. Collectively, the patterns of pronoun use in these textbooks do not simply facilitate language learning; they construct a normative vision of the learner, speaker, and communicative context. Within the broader framework of linguistic coloniality, these pronouns function not only as grammatical necessities but also as ideological tools that shape subjectivity and belonging (cf. Lima & De Moura, 2025; Yeung & Gray, 2024).

Besides, the analysis revealed a telling distribution that resonated with the concerns of linguistic coloniality as articulated in this study. Pronouns, as seemingly neutral grammatical elements, are in fact deeply ideological markers of identity, agency, and relational positioning. In this examined corpus, the predominance of *subjective pronouns* (8,437 tokens), such as "*we*", "*you*", and "*I*", suggests a pedagogical orientation that emphasizes interpersonal engagement and self-expression, ostensibly aligned with communicative language teaching. However, a deeper interrogation, informed by the decolonial perspective adopted in this study, raises questions about whose voices are being foregrounded and whose are marginalized. The high frequency of "*we*" (3,138 tokens) and "*you*" (1,676 tokens) invites scrutiny into the constructed interlocutors within the text. Are these pronouns inclusive, extending to diverse sociocultural subjects, or do they implicitly assume a normative subject modeled on Western communicative norms? Moreover, the relatively lower frequencies of *objective pronouns* (3,719 tokens) and *possessive adjectives* (3.309 tokens) may reflect pedagogical choices that limit deeper discussions of ownership, attribution, and socio-relational dynamics. By all means, these dimensions are central to identity formation and power representation.

From a coloniality lens, what is not said or what is said less becomes as important as what is made frequent (e.g., Aiseng, 2025; Baquerizo et al., 2022; González, 2023). The marked underrepresentation of *reflexive pronouns*

(85 tokens) and *possessive pronouns* (225 tokens) may indicate a constrained portrayal of subjectivity, agency, and introspection. Reflexive forms such as "*myself*" or "*themselves*" allow the speaker to reflect upon their own actions and positions, a capacity that is critical for developing metalinguistic and intercultural awareness. Their scarcity may suggest a preference for presenting learners as passive recipients of external knowledge, rather than as active agents capable of critical self-engagement. Furthermore, the modest frequency of *relative/interrogative pronouns* (990 tokens) such as "*who*", "*which*", or "*whose*" limits opportunities for inquiry, categorization, and questioning. These discursive functions are vital for unpacking power, identity, and difference in pedagogical discourse. When considered in conjunction with naming practices, this grammatical landscape reveals a subtler dimension of linguistic coloniality: The implicit hierarchization of discourse roles, where Global South learners are positioned as language consumers rather than contributors to intercultural dialogue.

The lexical choices in this examined corpus, especially in pronoun deployment, thus mirror a larger representational pattern that sustains colonial discourses. As Fairclough (2013a, 2013b) and Canagarajah (2023) have noted, language education is never neutral; rather, it often reproduces hegemonic epistemologies through its micro-level textual choices. In privileging certain pronouns and grammatical functions while silencing others, the textbooks enact a subtle but persistent exclusion of alternative voices and worldviews. This finding substantiates the broader thesis of the chapter: Foreign language textbooks remain sites of multimodal colonial inscription, where both language and image collaborate to (re)produce a normative self and an exoticized or absent Other.

Naming conventions

The analysis of naming conventions in Indonesian foreign language textbooks revealed an overwhelmingly Westernized schema of address and representation, which carries significant implications for linguistic coloniality and identity information. Titles such as "*Mrs.*", "*Miss*", "*Mr.*", and "*Sir*" dominated the dataset, with "*Mrs.*" appearing most frequently (80 instances), followed by "*Mr.*" (59 tokens) and "*Miss*" (47 tokens). These honorifics, borrowed directly from English-speaking contexts, were presented as default modes of polite address, particularly within school-related dialogues and narrative templates. While such usage may reflect the conventions of English language instruction, their uncritical transplantation into the Indonesian educational context signifies more than pedagogical pragmatics; it indicates a normalization of Western social protocols and hierarchies in classroom interaction and role modeling. By consistently using titles and naming patterns familiar to the Global North, these textbooks subtly privilege Eurocentric models of formality and respectability, potentially displacing or marginalizing local equivalents such as "*Bapak*", "*Ibu*", or even honorifics rooted in Indigenous kinship systems.

Importantly, the individuals bearing these titles are often presented in institutional or authoritative roles, for example, teachers, doctors, and professionals, thus reinforcing not only the prestige of Western titles but also the social scripts associated with them. These titles are rarely paired with non-Western names or representations, suggesting a correlation between authority and Western identity. For instance, names such as "*Mr. Smith*" or "*Mrs. Brown*" appeared without contextual translation or cultural adaptation, rendering these figures as neutral or universal models. However, from a postcolonial perspective, such "neutrality" is itself a form of erasure, one that invisibilizes alternative cultural scripts and normalizes Anglo-centric subjectivities as ideal. This practice subtly reinforces a representational asymmetry where the Global North is scripted as professional, articulate, and authoritative, while the Global South is either absent or represented in passive, peripheral roles.

Notably, the restriction of localized or Indonesian names in conjunction with formal titles indicates a discursive boundary: Learners are taught to navigate English-speaking worlds through the identities and etiquettes of English-speaking agents. This raises critical questions about whose voices are legitimized in the learning process and whose worldviews are privileged. While language learning inevitably involves exposure to cultural norms, the pedagogical decision to rely almost exclusively on Western naming conventions, especially in textbooks meant for early adolescent learners, risks internalizing a hierarchy of cultural value. When textbooks continually present Western names and titles as the linguistic norm, they may condition foreignness, thereby fostering a form of linguistic and cultural inferiority complex.

In summary, the naming conventions in the examined dataset are not merely stylistic choices but are deeply embedded within broader ideological structures that sustain the symbolic power of colonial legacies. The consistent use of Western honorifics and name formats aligns with what critical discourse theorists would identify as representational dominance: The reiteration of Global North identities as central, respectable, and aspirational. For decolonial educational efforts to take root, it is essential to interrogate and reimagine these conventions so that learners encounter models of communication that reflect diverse epistemologies and social hierarchies.

Grammatical patterns

Verb choices and voice

The distribution of active verb constructions in the corpus revealed pedagogical priorities centered on subject agency and personal expression. The most frequent patterns included "*she is*", "*he is*", "*she was*", "*I was*", and "*we need*" (see Table 7.2). These combinations illustrate a discursive tendency to construct identities and experiences through first- and third-person subject pronouns in present and past tenses. The dominance of "*she is*" and "*he is*" (92 and 68 occurrences, respectively) suggests a pedagogical emphasis on attributive sentences and basic descriptive language. These are marks of early English

Table 7.2 Verb choices—active and passive constructions (30 samples)

Active				*Passive*			
Form	*N*	Form	*N*	Form	*N*	Form	*N*
she is	92	he always	13	was presented	5	was obliged	1
he is	68	he goes	12	was killed	4	was destroyed	1
she was	68	I need	12	was captured	3	was washed	1
I was	49	she takes	11	were tired	2	was involved	1
we need	31	she walked	10	was unharmed	2	was prepared	1
she has	29	she always	10	was covered	2	was occupied	1
he was	26	she goes	8	was completed	2	was murdered	1
you need	25	she wants	7	was arrested	2	was attacked	1
you always	20	you finished	7	was popularized	2	was commemorated	1
he has	19	they played	6	was renowned	2	was besieged	1
he does	19	he knows	6	was exiled	2	was scared	1
she learned	18	he plays	5	was educated	2	were determined	1
I always	18	he plants	5	was trapped	1	was awarded	1
she likes	17	she sleeps	5	were saved	1	were listened	1
she does	14	he loves	5	was arrested	1	was declared	1

acquisition phases. These constructions frequently appeared in contexts such as "*She is my sister*", "*He is reading*", or "*She is a student*", which reinforce clear, declarative subject–verb–object relationships.

The frequent use of "*I was*" and "*we need*" indicates an extension into more complex communicative functions: autobiographical recounting and collective motivational discourse. For instance, "*I was born in. . .*", "*I was tired*", or "*We need to bring a ruler*" embed temporal, affective, or procedural meanings. From a critical discourse standpoint, these constructions reinforce learner-centered communication, promoting personal narration and emotional awareness, which aligns with contemporary communicative language teaching. However, such an agency is not always neutral. In many cases, characters with English names are portrayed in actions aligned with productive activities (e.g., studying, going to school, and waking early), reflecting neoliberal educational values that emphasize discipline and individual responsibility.

Furthermore, the consistent subject–verb agreement in these structures shows that *agentive clarity* is highly valued in the textbooks. Students are taught to name the doer, state the action, and construct syntactically transparent sentences. While this is beneficial linguistically, it risks marginalizing more complex syntactic or sociolinguistic realities where subject positions are ambiguous or contested, such as in collaborative or passive agency contexts. Moreover, the lack of non-binary pronouns and the overwhelming reliance on gendered *he/she* reinforce binary gender roles without problematization.

The active constructions also showed a subtle pattern of *cultural modeling*: Those who act, do, and decide in the texts tend to follow patterns of rational behavior, time management (e.g., "*He always gets up at 5 o'clock*"), and self-direction—traits associated with Western schooling ideals (cf. Deumert,

2021; Peterson, 2022; R'boul, 2022). In turn, these agentive structures do not merely teach grammar; they model subjectivity, encouraging learners to see themselves as autonomous, self-regulating individuals participating in a global communicative order.

In contrast to the active voice, passive verb constructions within the corpus play a crucial role in shaping narratives of authority, neutrality, and depersonalized action. The most frequently observed passive structures included "*was presented*", "*was killed*", "*was captured*", "*were tired*", and "*was unharmed*". These appeared primarily in biographical, historical, and factual report texts, where the identity of the actor was unknown, backgrounded, or deliberately omitted. From a critical discourse perspective, this frequent use of the passive voice reflects a textbook ideology of objectivity, where actions are described as if they emerge autonomously, divorced from specific social or political agents.

For instance, in phrases like "*Cut Nyak Dien was captured*", or "*The soldier was killed*", the agent (who captured and killed) is erased. This pattern resonates with Foucault's (2013) notion of discourse as productive; it creates a historical truth in which violent or colonial actions are represented as *happenings* rather than *doings*. The function is doubly ideological: It both shields the powerful from scrutiny and portrays events as naturalized or inevitable. Such constructions thus play a significant role in sustaining linguistic coloniality, where the language of the curriculum neutralizes the violence or inequality inherent in many historical processes.

Additionally, constructions like "*was presented*" often appeared in academic or ceremonial contexts (e.g., "*The certificate was presented to the winner*"), further reinforcing the depersonalization and formalization of institutional actions. These instances highlight the institutional voice of the textbook, where the passive voice becomes a linguistic tool to elevate procedures, reports, and events into the realm of abstract facts. Such language patterns foster textual authority. In this respect, learners are positioned not as agents of action, but as receivers of structured, seemingly neutral knowledge.

Furthermore, the corpus rarely shows passive voice constructions that center Indigenous, female, or marginal voices as recipients of agency. Instead, passive voice is typically used in relation to subjects that align with state, military, or Western actors. For example, heroes and patriots were "honored" or "remembered", but never *honor* or *remember* others. This semantic structuring reflects a discursive hierarchy where actions flow downward from institutional powers while those affected are relegated to grammatical objects.

This overrepresentation of passive forms in report, biography, and recount genres also reflects a genre-driven ideology: these genres favor detached, impersonal narration, which aligns with a colonial model of knowledge where observation is separated from participation. In short, the use of passive voice in these textbooks is not merely grammatical; it functions ideologically to mask agency, elevate formality, and reify institutional authority, all of which warrant critical reflection in efforts to decolonize language education.

Notably, the concordance analysis of the most frequent active and passive constructions uncovered pedagogical consistency with significant discursive implications. When examined through a critical discourse lens, these patterns offer deeper insight into how agency, subject positioning, and ideological framing are subtly encoded in ostensibly neutral instructional content. The most frequent active voice phrases, that is, "*she is*", "*he is*", "*she was*", "*I was*", and "we need", highlight the prominence of subject-centered language. In the retrieved concordance lines, these phrases consistently appear in simple present or past descriptive clauses, such as "*she is a student*", "*he is in the living room*", "*I was tired*", and "*we need a pencil*". These instances are functionally didactic, offering grammar models and vocabulary within relatable contexts. However, from a discourse-ideological standpoint, they reflect an underlying normative representation of learners and speakers.

The predominance of third-person singular subjects, particularly "she" and "he", is noteworthy not just for syntactic variety but for what these roles represent. The concordance lines showed that girls (she) are often engaged in domestic or studious activities: "*she is cooking*", "*she is reading a book*", and "*she was a baby*". Boys (he), on the other hand, appeared in more active or mobile roles: "*he is eating*", "*he is going to school*", and "*he always gets up early*". These narrative distributions support traditional gender schemas, assigning women and girls to passive domesticity and men to proactive behavior. Such assignments, though subtle, function as gendered social scripts that learners internalize through repetitive exposure.

The construction "*I was*" is frequently used in biographical recall (e.g., "*I was born in . . .*"), which is common in self-introduction units. It allows learners to anchor language use in personal experience, but also standardizes how personal identity is to be narrated in English. Often these self-descriptions mimic Western autobiographical discourse norms, for example, chronological, factual, and emotionally controlled. Moreover, the repeated use of "*we need*" constructs a didactic collectivism, where learners are urged to follow norms of preparedness and responsibility, aligning well with the neoliberal educational ethos of self-management.

These active constructions, while pedagogically conventional, expose a narrow cultural imaginary—subjects are urban, compliant, and individualistic. They act within clearly defined scripts, for example, reading, studying, and greeting adults, but are rarely shown engaging in resistance, collectivism, or local cultural practices. The effect is the normalization of a universalized, Western-inflected learner identity that aligns with both colonial language ideologies and global capitalist norms.

In addition, the passive voice constructions, for example, "was presented", "was killed", "was captured", "was tired", and "was unharmed", reveal a contrasting discourse function, namely the removal or obscuring of agency, especially in recounts and report texts. Concordance analysis tells that "was killed" and "was captured" frequently occurred in historical narratives such as the stories of national heroes (e.g., *Cut Nyak Dien*, *The Battle of Surabaya*). These

forms omit the agent, as in "*He was killed in the battle*" or "*She was captured by the enemy*". While grammatically correct, such constructions semantically distance the oppressor or colonial agent from the violent act, framing events as tragic inevitabilities rather than consequences of power and domination.

In this framing, the subject, often a local or Indigenous figure, is rendered grammatically passive and narratively sacrificial, reinforcing a hero–victim binary that lacks deeper historical critique. These are not merely stylistic choices but forms of representational erasure, consistent with Spivak's (1988) argument that the subaltern is often spoken about but not allowed to speak or act with agency in dominant discourse (*see also* Didur & Heffernan, 2003). The subaltern's voice is structurally obstructed, not only by political marginalization but by the very epistemic codes of representation that deny intelligibility and autonomous subjecthood. The persistent use of passive voice across textbook narratives thus contributes to the silencing of colonial accountability, shifting focus from who acts to what happens (cf. Hamamra & Qabaha, 2021).

The phrase "was presented" often appeared in institutional or ceremonial contexts (e.g., "The certificate was presented to the winner"), conveying a sense of authority and formality. This aligns with what Fairclough (2013b) referred to as textual authority: Language that conveys power through impersonality and procedural distance. These constructions reinforce the textbook's role as an authoritative source of knowledge, where information is delivered rather than constructed or contested. Even benign passive constructions, such as "were tired" or "was unharmed", play roles in controlling narrative tempo and emotional framing. In these examples, the subject is reduced to a state rather than an actor, limiting interpretative complexity. Learners are subtly taught that meaning resides in outcomes and facts, not in human motivations or systemic critique.

Overall, the active voice constructions in these textbooks cultivate normative identities grounded in neoliberal and Western educational values, while passive voice constructions enact discursive erasure that depersonalizes violence, authority, and historical injustice. Concordance-based critical discourse analysis thus reveals how even simple grammatical patterns are entangled in deeper ideological structures, reinforcing the necessity for a decolonial approach to language pedagogy.

Patterns of agency and modality

The concordance analysis of modal verb collocations, as in Table 7.3, for example, "*can follow to*", "*should you do*", and "*can make fried*", revealed a pedagogically driven but ideologically potent framing of agency, permission, and normative behavior. While modal verbs in language education texts are ostensibly used for teaching grammatical structures and communicative functions, they also encode discursive hierarchies of obligation, possibility, and authority that merit critical scrutiny. The modal "can" appeared most frequently in the corpus, typically embedded in positive, ability-oriented statements.

Table 7.3 Modal verb collocation

Modal collocation	*Frequency*	*Modal collocation*	*Frequency*
can follow to	21	must keep their	4
can count on	17	should not be	4
should you do	13	should be a	4
can make fried	13	can see it	4
can you see	10	can be a	4
can do it	8	can use the	4
can you share	8	can erupt any	4
can be used	7	have to stop here	4
must wear a	6	have to hand in	4
should you say	6	must be very	3
can you do	6	must congratulate you	3
have to read the	6	should guess	3
have to do is	6	can go to	3
should go there	5	can understand the	3
can be in	5	can you	3
can imagine how	5	can do the	3
can find people	5	can discuss the	3
must be too	4	can do in	3
must wear the	4	can keep this	3
must not be	4	can sing	3

Collocations like "can follow to" and "can count on" suggest behavioral guidance or social reassurance. For example, "*You can count on your teacher*" or "*Students can follow this example*" frames authority figures as dependable and learners as followers or recipients of norms. These constructions reinforce a benevolent-authority discourse, where learners are given sanctioned freedom under the guise of choice, yet that freedom is tightly tethered to institutional expectations. The modal "can" thus masks institutional control as empowerment, a common feature in neoliberal educational discourse.

Similarly, "*can make fried [egg]*" appeared in practical contexts involving procedural or action-based verbs. While these phrases are pedagogically valid, focusing on everyday tasks, they still privilege productive action over critical reflection. In most instances, the agent of the action is a local learner (e.g., "*I can make fried rice*"), suggesting that local subjects are positioned within functionalist, domestic, or survival-oriented competence, while broader social, moral, or intellectual authority remains abstract or imported.

The appearance of "*should*" and "*must*", albeit less frequent than "*can*", signals more overt prescriptive force. Phrases like "should you do" often arise in rhetorical questions that implicitly guide learners toward correct behavioral responses (e.g., "*What should you do if you're late?*"). Here, modality serves a regularity function, reinforcing cultural expectations such as punctuality, politeness, or obedience. These are not just grammatical exercises; they socialize students into institutionally acceptable subject positions, often without room for negotiation or resistance.

Interestingly, "*must*" and "*have to*", typically stronger modals of obligation, appear far less often, suggesting a strategic softening or authority. This mirrors the broader pedagogical shift from direct instruction to more interactive, student-centered learning. Yet this surface-level shift does not displace the underlying ideological content: Learners are still expected to conform, but now through internalized discipline rather than external command. This transformation, from "you must do this" to "you should know what to do", is central to neoliberal governmentality, where power is exercised not through coercion but through the production of autonomous self-regulating learners.

Crucially, the agents associated with modals in the corpus are overwhelmingly Indonesian learners, who are positioned as those who *must learn*, *can try*, or *should behave*. By contrast, Global North figures are referenced more often as standards or sources of examples rather than as learners themselves. This asymmetry reinforces the symbolic authority of foreignness, where the Global South is framed as the learning subject and the Global North as the epistemic source.

Visual representations and multimodal intersections

A critical analysis, guided by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) parameters, uncovers several key findings. For instance, Figure 7.1(a) presents an idealized bedtime scene that performs significant ideological work through its visual grammar. At a surface level, it models polite expressions in English, such as "*Good night. Have a nice dream*". However, beneath the linguistic modeling lies a carefully orchestrated semiotic composition that reflects and reproduces normative discourses around family, gender, age, and morality.

The scene uses clothing as a symbolic resource to convey religious and cultural norms. The girl's hijab and pajamas integrate everyday practice with Islamic modesty codes, suggesting that these values are seamlessly woven into domestic language use. The depiction of the mother in white emphasizes maternal purity and moral authority, while the father's neat formal wear aligns him with rational authority and discipline. This reinforces the heteronormative, common Indonesian family as the normative social unit, a common trope in state-sanctioned pedagogical texts.

Posture and gaze frame the interactions as reciprocal yet hierarchical. Children respond to adult cues but do not initiate interactions; they are socialized into affective correctness and verbal politeness through mirrored behavior. The absence of direct viewer gaze removes the learner from the scene, instead positioning them as an observer of correct behavior, a technique that reinforces didacticism without inviting critical reflection.

Spatial positioning further codes power and care. The adult figure stands while the child sits or is framed slightly lower, signaling authority tempered by warmth. The family triad in the right panel is symmetric yet unequal, with adults flanking the child, and thereby visually and ideologically centering the child within a protective but prescriptive family space.

Figure 7.1 Sample of visual representations

This visual construction aligns with state pedagogies aimed at morally upright, obedient, and culturally rooted youth. It reflects what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 158) described as a "naturalized social order", where language learning is embedded within broader ideological imperatives: Gender conformity, reverence for authority, and maintenance of normative social roles. The bedtime scene is not just about practicing English; it is about internalizing a vision of how one ought to be, linguistically, socially, and culturally.

Furthermore, Figure 7.1(b) sequence presents two interactional exchanges, that is, one peer-to-peer, the other student-to-teacher, both modeling English greetings and polite responses. However, beyond the surface-level linguistic modeling lies a nuanced system of visual cues that regulate how learners are taught to interpret and perform social roles, authority, and respect through visual language.

The clothing worn by the characters performs a clear semiotic function. School uniforms are more than institutional codes; they signify collective identity and disciplined behavior, especially in postcolonial education systems where uniformity symbolizes order, equity, and national belonging. The

difference in shade and style between student and teacher attire reinforces their social distance: The teacher's darker uniform and mature styling denote both seniority and moral weight.

Posture and gaze further contribute to the encoding of power asymmetry. Between students, gestures are horizontal, mirrored, and casual, supporting an egalitarian framing of school friendship. Yet when addressing the teacher, the student shifts to a more deferential stance. The gaze between Mrs. Rita and Lina exemplifies vertical interaction, where authority is not enforced harshly but assumed as natural through subtle semiotic means. This aligns with what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) termed "naturalized power", in which roles are accepted without coercion because they are visually and culturally normalized.

The spatial positioning also helps stage this normalization. Teachers are centered and elevated, students are peripheral and slightly lower; consistent with the visual grammar of authority across educational texts. These compositional cues work silently to tell learners where they belong in the institutional order. The teacher's prominent red backdrop functions almost like a visual halo, marking her as an ideological figure of respect and correctness. Color plays a pivotal role in modulating tone and framing affect. The green-and-grey schoolyard scene feels neutral and open, suited for peer bonding. In contrast, the warm indoor scene frames learning as a culturally embedded moral exchange. Through this chromatic contrast, students are invited to understand schooling as both friendly and hierarchical, a duality common in textbook pedagogies that aim to be both engaging and disciplinary.

Furthermore, when the textual patterns are read in tandem with visual content, the pedagogical message becomes more pointed. In one illustration (Figure 7.2(b)), a student named Lina replied to the teacher's greeting: "*Good morning, Mrs. Rita. I'm fine, thank you*". Visually, Lina, in uniform, stands with arms by her side, eyes gazing up at Mrs. Rita, who stands centrally, upright, and gazes downward. The multimodal effect here is the production of respectful deference as an idealized subject position. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) theory of visual grammar explains how vertical gaze and spatial composition encode hierarchies of authority: The viewer is positioned to admire or emulate, not engage equally. The polite English greeting is not merely functional but serves to rehearse submissive interaction, affirming the teacher's role as epistemic gatekeeper. This pattern reflects what Pennycook (2017) termed the "*disciplining function of English*": language becomes not only a tool for communication but for shaping thought and conduct within narrow behavioral norms (cf. Holborow, 1996; Schultz, 2019).

Notably, it is also important to consider the pronouns and the constructions of collectivity. The corpus also showed a high frequency of inclusive pronouns like "*we*" (3,138 tokens) and "*you*" (1,676 tokens), used in sentences such as: "*We must keep our environment clean*", "*You should follow the rules*", and "*We can go to the library together*". These inclusive forms are not always as democratic as they seem. The frequent use of "*we*" aligns the learner with institutional norms and collective responsibility, while subtly excluding

dissent. The pronoun "*you*" often appears in imperative contexts, serving as a grammatical tool to instruct and discipline. Notably, "*they*" appears less frequently and often in generalized, passive constructions, which further limits the presence of alternative voices. These patterns echo what Fairclough (2013b) calls synthetic personalization, where institutional discourse creates the illusion of shared purpose while reinforcing authority.

Together, the linguistic and visual elements in these textbooks produce a coherent but constrained vision of the learner: Respectful, obedient, grammatically accurate, and emotionally contained. Learners are constructed not as knowledge producers but as knowledge recipients.

Conclusion

The present study has examined how Indonesian foreign language textbooks construct and reproduce colonial hierarchies through multimodal intersections of text and image. It revealed that modal verbs, passive constructions, and pronoun patterns work in tandem with visual cues of posture, gaze, and spatial arrangement to encode deference, institutional obedience, and Western norms of correctness. English is framed not merely as a language of communication, but as a vehicle for moral, behavioral, and epistemic discipline. However, this study is limited by its focus on state-issued textbooks and does not include analysis of teacher-mediated classroom interaction or student reception, both of which may mediate or resist textbook ideologies.

Future research should consider ethnographic approaches to explore how learners negotiate these materials in practice and extend the multimodal analysis to digital learning environments and commercial ELT materials. A comparative study involving textbooks from other Southeast Asian contexts may also help determine how coloniality is localized or challenged across different educational systems. To some extent, the insights offered have implications for textbook developers, educators, and researchers engaged in creating and utilizing more equitable and transformative language learning resources.

Note

1 Official website of the repository: https://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/. The Institutional Repository of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek Institutional Repository) is a digital information service that provides open and online access to the public regarding various information in the fields of education, culture, research, and technology produced by all work units within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in various formats.

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Corresponding authors

Corresponding author	D.S. Nugraha
Affiliation	Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

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