The Representation of Family Diversity in *The Family Book*: A Verbal and Visual Analysis

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Abstract

Picturebooks are effective media to raise children's awareness of various social problems, including family diversity. This study aims to investigate how family diversity is represented verbally and visually in a picturebook entitled *The Family Book* and elaborate on the signification of the representation. This descriptive qualitative study focuses on finding the ideational meaning by identifying the type of processes used in the clauses and images of the picturebook and the intersemiotic relation between them. The data were analyzed by employing Halliday's transitivity system, Kress and Leeuwen's visual grammar, and Royce's intersemiotic complementarity. The findings showed that for the verbal representation, the most dominant process used in the picturebook is a relational process that is used to identify something or assign a quality. For the visual representation, the predominant process used in the images is a symbolic attributive process. Through the relational and symbolical processes, the diverse identities and characteristics of families are presented and implicitly can determine the types of those families. Additionally, the intersemiotic analysis has found that the working together of the verbal and visual modes in the picturebook have created repetitions and meronymies. These results imply that family diversity in *The Family Book* is represented as normality. Family diversity as a normal thing is attempted to be explained to the readers not only to enhance their understanding of family but also to influence them to accept the variation of families in society.

Keywords: *Family diversity, Ideational meaning, Picturebook*

1. Introduction

Picturebooks are powerful and popular multimodal texts that can be used to educate children. Through the combination of the semiotic resources, picturebooks are useful to help children make meaning and have a better understanding of some abstract phenomena (Guijarro, 2016; Kachorsky, Moses, Serafini, & Hoelting, 2017). The society changes, especially in the field of family, make children, as the young generations, need to learn more about themselves as well as others' home lives. Hence, picturebooks can be solutions to facilitate the children to learn about this issue. Furthermore, it is useful to develop children's identity and perception of other people and culture (Koss, 2015; Wilson, 2014).

Bland (2013) states that picturebooks are narrative or information texts that provide an interplay between words and pictures. According to Nikolajeva and Scott (2006), the core of a picturebook is the interaction between the two kinds of texts, which are verbal and visual. It means that, as a multimodal text, both verbal and visual modes in picturebook are essential and would be incomplete without each other. From the picturebooks, children can see the reflection of the world, which will make them learn to accept themselves and respect each other, meaning that the picturebooks are essential media to facilitate the development of children's awareness of various social problems and can be an excellent solution for the children to know and understand about real life.

One crucial issue in picturebooks is family diversity. Family diversity is the variations of families that can be identified by the socio-economic characteristics (education and income level), family structure (traditional family, adoptive family), family life cycle stage (no children family, family with disability member), and family context (ethnic, religion, relationship to a community) (Ooms & Preister, 1988). The emergence of various families is increasing in this era, which is caused by several factors; such as people's

comprehensions of marriage, migrations, and economic (Furstenberg, 1999). When the children see society and realize that they have a different kind of family, it may trigger the kids to compare their own family with others' families. The children might have a negative perception of the unusual type of family. When they think that to be different is not right, the children will tend to reject their own family or exclude others' different families. Hence, it is crucial for all children to see the diversity of families represented in children's literature, such as picturebooks.

Previous studies have been done in analyzing picturebooks. Damayanti and Febrianti (2020) investigated the reading path patterns in *Tacky the Penguin* by analyzing the intersemiotic relation in the picturebook. They found that the whole picturebook is built from a page-by-page reading path which allows for a linear and non-linear reading path. Hermawan and Sukyadi (2017) investigated the ideational and interpersonal meanings of three Indonesian picturebooks. This study revealed that the narrative in the children's books are mostly about the activities done by and to children and presented as an offer to readers. Similarly, Guijarro and Sanz (2008) analyzed *Guess How Much I Love You* and focused on the compositional, interpersonal, and representational meanings. The findings show that the narrative patterns are dominant, the information is presented as an offering without any demand, and a simple plot is built by the collaboration of the simple verbal text and the attractive visual text. The other semiotic analysis by Yoanita and Primasanti (2018) revealed that all of the stories from the selected picturebooks highlight the developments of person-oriented qualities and environment-oriented qualities to promote character education. Additionally, some content analysis studies also have been done to examine the representation of disability in children's books (Sugiarto, 2020; Koss, 2015). Sugiarto (2020) found that children with disabilities are presented as weak, dependent, not productive, and objects of curiosity and violence, and vehicle for the growth of the other characters in the story. Koss (2015) found that most contemporary picturebooks do not depict the multiethnic world and represent the stereotypes toward diversities. Furthermore, Hakim (2020) investigated the representation of Chinese Indonesians in fourteen Indonesian picturebooks. The results show that various stereotypes and binary opposition of the Chinese Indonesians and the indigenous Indonesians are found in the picturebooks. Lastly, Daly (2017) investigated the representation of diversity and found that picturebooks mostly provide the phenomena of diversity in ethnicity and family rather than in disability and languages area.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which is proposed by Halliday (1994) can be used as the foundation in analyzing the verbal and visual texts in the picturebooks. Halliday believes that language is structured in order to make three main kinds of meanings: ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. Ideational meaning is the meaning of phenomena, things and ideas, goings-on, and the circumstance. This kind of meaning is realized by the transitivity system through the participants, processes, and circumstances. Interpersonal meaning is the meaning that expresses the speaker's attitudes and is realized in the lexicogrammar through the mood system. Lastly, the textual meanings are realized through the pattern of theme and cohesion to create relevance to the context of the text. Kress and Leeuween (2006) applied this concept to visual design. They believe that pictures also convey these three meanings. In visual grammar, those three strands of meaning are called representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. The representational meaning can be realized through the participants, processes realized by the use of vector in the picture, and the circumstance. The vectors in images serve like verbs in verbal language and give the participants in the picture a role of either actor, reacter, sayer, or phenomena (Hermawan & Sukyadi, 2017). Meanwhile, interactive meanings are realized through the gaze, shot, and the angle of the picture. At the same time, the compositional meaning is realized through the compositional layout elements such as position and frame (Kress & Leuuwen, 2006). Furthermore, as well as the visual grammar theory, Royce (1998) also applies SFL theory to the concept of intersemiotic complementarity. According to Royce (1998), intersemiotic complementarity is a framework that illustrates the ways verbal and visual modes cooperate in making a coherent message in page-based multimodal text and proposes that these modes semantically complement each other to convey meaning. There are diverse ways used to identify the three strands of meanings between the text and image. According to Royce (1998), in analyzing the ideational metafunction, the represented participants or entities that appear in the visual have to be identified. While in analyzing the interpersonal metafunction, the focus is on the represented and interactive

participants. Meanwhile, in analyzing the textual metafunction, the critical point is considering the coherent structural elements or composition.

2. Objectives

Using the transitivity system as a part of SFL, along with Kress and Leeuwen's visual grammar and Royce's intersemiotic complementarity, the paper reports how family diversity is represented verbally and visually in *The Family Book*. Moreover, this paper also elaborates the signification of the representation. The investigation in this paper is limited to the ideational meaning conveyed through the semiotic resources in the picturebook. The combination of the transitivity system, visual grammar, and ideational intersemiotic complementarity in this paper may serve as an attempt to offer a new alternative in investigating the ideational meaning in picturebooks.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method as the research design, in which the data was taken from a picturebook. According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative method can rely on texts and images. Moreover, describing a phenomenon and its characteristic is the aim of descriptive research (Nassaji, 2015).

For the investigation, a children's picturebook entitled *The Family Book* by Parr (2010) has been selected to be analyzed. *The Family Book* was published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers in New York. It uses bold and simple colored images along with clauses to convey the messages. The data were in forms of verbal and visual taken from 29 pages of *The Family Book*. The verbal data were in the form of the clauses that tell the narrative of the picturebook. Meanwhile, the visual data are in the form of images.

The first step in investigating the data of this study was analyzing the ideational meaning of the verbal texts. The collected verbal data were broken down into clauses. The clauses then were analyzed using the transitivity system from Systemic Functional Linguistics, which is proposed by Halliday (1994) to find the participants, process types, and circumstances. Meanwhile, the representational meaning of the visual data was analyzed using visual grammar theory proposed by Kress and Leeuwen (2006). The visual analysis was presented in the table. The first step of the visual analysis was describing the image, such as the object, background, and situation. The second step was identifying the participant, process, and circumstance in the visual data. The last analysis step was analyzing the intersemiotic relation between the verbal and visual texts using Royce's intersemiotic complementarity (1998), which involves two principal stages presented in the tables, which are;

- The first stage was done in the first table to identify the visual elements in connection with the depicted participants (Identification), process (Activity), context (Circumstance), and participants' characteristics (Attributes), based on the previous visual grammar analysis. After that, the Visual Message Elements (VMEs) were identified from those visual elements.

- The second stage was that the identified VMEs are grouped into lexical inventories collated with the verbal items in the second table (ideational intersemiotic relation table). Then, the semantic relationship was interpreted between each VME and the verbal item by classifying the relation of Repetition, Antonymy, Synonymy, Meronymy, Hiponymy, and Collocation, labeled as 'R', 'A', 'S', 'M', 'H', and 'C.'

The data that had been analyzed then formed a conclusion on how *The Family Book* by Todd Parr (2010) constructs the representation of family diversity. Finally, the representation of family diversity was interpreted by the researcher to find out the signification.

4. Results

4.1 Findings of the Verbal Text Analysis

The findings of the verbal analysis showed that the clauses in *The Family Book* contain five types of processes. Those processes are relational attributive, mental, material, behavioral, and existential. Generally, the transitivity analyses of the verbal texts indicate that family diversity that is depicted in the picturebook is mostly constructed and realized through the use of three dominant processes; relational

process (41.40%), material process (24.14%), and mental process (20.70%). The table 1 summarizes this finding.

Table 1 Number of each process type in *The Family Book*

Processes		Total	
		f	%
Relational	Attributive	12	41.40
	Identifying	-	-
Mental		6	20.70
Material		7	24.14
Behavioral		3	10.34
Existential		1	3.45
Total		**29**	**100%**

The relational process, as the predominant process used in *The Family Book,* is used to characterize and identify an entity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This process is classified into two types; attributive and identifying. Based on the analyzed text, attributive processes are used more frequently than the identifying process. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) state that relational attributive process is about classifying something and assigning a quality. In the context of *The Family Book*, these processes are used to assign various qualities or characteristics of families. One of the relational clauses in this picturebook is realized through this clauses: "*Your family is special no matter what kind it is*". The process in this clause is attributive intensive, where the participant carries the attribute. The attribute in attributive intensive is quality or epithet ascribed to the carrier (Eggins, 2004). The quality which is assigned to "your family" as the carrier is special, which means unique or different from others. Additionally, the relational attributive processes in the picturebook also involve the state of having, which is realized through the verb "have". It is proven in the clause *"Some families have a stepmom or stepdad and stepsisters or stepbrothers"*. The carrier in this relative clause is "some families," while the attribute is "a stepmom or stepdad and stepsisters or stepbrothers". This clause implicitly represents the blended family which is a family that involves the members from two separated families (Derman & Edwards, 2010). This process of having is used to explain the different possessions of families. Therefore, it can be inferred that through the relational clauses, which represent the qualities and the possessions of the families, the type of the families that are being told can be classified.

The second dominant process in the picture book is a material process. This process indicates that the participant does something or undertakes an action (Eggins, 2004). The activities depicted in *The Family Book* are the actions done by a certain type of family and the activities that indicate the preferences of families. The material clauses which depict activities of certain types of families can be seen in the clauses *"Some families adopt children"* and *"Some families share a house with other families"*. "Some families" as the actors in these clauses are depicted as the entity who do the actions of adopting children and sharing a house. Adopting is the activity done by an adoptive family (Derman & Edwards, 2010) while sharing a house with other families is the activity done by a joint family (Sharma, 2013). Moreover, the activities which indicate the preferences of families are realized in this material clause *"Some families eat different things"*. The actor in this clause is "some families", and the material process is realized through the verb "eat". The goal in this process is "different things". Eating is an activity which is done by all kinds of families, but the goal in this clause as the entity to which the action is directed indicates that some families have different preferences of foods. The activity and the goal in this clause indicate that some families as the actor have different preferences of foods. Hence, the material processes in the picturebook are used to explain the actions that make a family belongs to a certain kind of family type and show the preferences of families according to the object to which their activity is directed.

Additionally, mental processes as the processes of feeling, thinking, or perceiving (Gerot & Wignell, 1994) are also used in the picturebook to represent family diversity. Halliday (1994) states that this

process encodes the meaning of thinking or feeling. In the picturebook, the mental processes are mainly realized through the word "like" which means find something pleasant, attractive, or satisfactory (Oxford learner's dictionaries, 2020). It can be seen in the clause "*Some families like to be clean"*. "Some families" has a role as the sensor, and the word "like" is the mental-affective process that relates to the feeling of the sensor. While "to be clean" has a role as the attribute rather than a phenomenon. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the phenomenon may not be only a thing but also an act or a fact. They further say that an act is a formation of a process, while a fact may be notion, idea, or possibility (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). "To be clean" is not a thing, an act, or a fact, but it is a quality which is realized by an adjective. It can be inferred that the mental processes in the picturebook are used to depict various preferences which are preferred by some families according to their consciousness, which is in line with Hermawan and Sukyadi (2017) who state that mental process is related with the human consciousness that allows the main characters as the sensor to think, identify, or feel about the phenomenon. Hence, the mental processes in the picturebook facilitate the readers to see that the diversities which occur in families are not only in terms of the things that can be seen such as family arrangement but also in terms of the things that they feel or think. Furthermore, the examples of preferences or things that tend to be chosen or liked by some families in *The Family Book* are simple, so the readers are more comfortable to comprehend it.

4.2 Findings of the Visual Text Analysis

In conveying the representational meaning, *The Family Book* uses both narrative (40.63%) and conceptual (59.38%) processes. The dominant type of conceptual process found in this picturebook is symbolical processes (34.38%). This process aims to establish the participant's identity. The table 2 summarizes this finding.

Table 2 Number of processes types in images of *The Family Book*

| Processes		Total	
		f	
Conceptual	Symbolic Attributive	9	28.13
	Symbolic Suggestive	2	6.25
	Analytical	8	25.00
Narrative	Action	8	25.00
	Reactional	3	9.38
	Speech	2	6.25
Total		**32**	**100%**

The conceptual process is the process that represents the participants in terms of class, structure, or meaning (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The symbolic process, as a part of the conceptual process, is used to establish the meaning or identity of an entity. This process can be either symbolic attributive or symbolic suggestive. Based on the visual analysis, *The Family Book* mostly uses symbolic attributive processes to establish the gender and roles of the carriers through their clothes and accessories as the symbolic attributes. It can be seen in Figure 1.
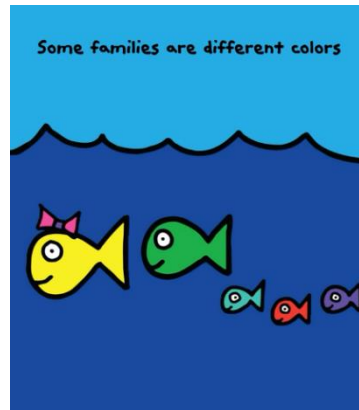
Figure 1 Symbolic attributive image
(Reprint from Parr, 2010, p. 7)

The symbolic attributive process in the picture above is realized by the yellow fish as the carrier and the pink ribbon it wears as the symbolic attributive. This symbolic attributive is made salient by the conspicuous color, which is pink. The pink ribbon as an accessory worn by the yellow fish identifies that the big yellow fish is a female and has a role as the mother in this fish family.

Furthermore, the symbolic attributive processes also build the carriers' identity in terms of their preferences by using several symbolic attributes such as hill to represent some families that prefer to live far away, soap bubbles to represent families who love the cleanliness, and mud to represent families who prefer to be messy. One of them is exemplified in the pictures below.
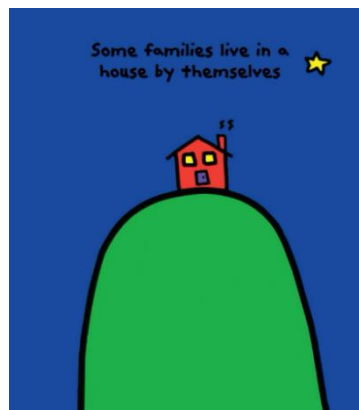
Figure 2 Symbolic attributive image
(Reprint from Parr, 2010, p. 28)

In Figure 2, the carrier is the red house, and the symbolic attribute is the hill. As the symbolic attribute, the hill is made salient by its exaggerated size. It symbolizes the red house as a house that is located in a remote area and far from the others' houses. Therefore, the family in the red house as the carrier is given the identity of a family living far away in a house alone. This type of this family, living alone/apart together (LAT) family, is preferred by some families to avoid daily problems that happen from living together with other families (Few-Demo & Demo, 2016).

The conceptual process as the predominant process used in *The Family Book* indicates that the findings of the visual analysis in the present study are different from the previous studies (Hermawan & Sukyadi, 2017; Guijarro & Sanz, 2008), which found that there is a predominance of narrative patterns in the children picturebooks. Through the visual texts, *The Family Book* represents diversity in families by showing the meaning or identity of the participants rather than presenting unfolding actions and events.

4.3 Findings of the Intersemiotic Complementarity Analysis

The intersemiotic analyses found that the collaboration of the verbal and visual modes in the picturebook creates repetition, meronymy, synonymy, and antonymy relations. The results of the intersemiotic analyses are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Number of the intersemiotic complementarity relations in *The Family Book*

Intersemiotic Relations	Total	
	f	*%*
Repetition	33	53.23
Meronymy	15	24.19
Synonymy	13	20.97
Antonymy	1	1.61
Total	**62**	**100%**

The table shows that verbal and visual modes in *The Family Book* mostly complement each other by the relations of repetition and meronymy. According to Royce (1998), the repetition is an intersemiotic sense relation that has an identical experiential meaning. It appears when the visual message element (VME) of the visual text is in line with the verbal element of the text. The repetition relations in the picturebook occur in the parts that tell about the structures or arrangements of families, physical appearances of families, habits, and preferences of families. Meanwhile, meronymy is a part-whole relation (Royce, 1998). In the picturebook, this relation is used to explain the parts or figures that form a family. The following table shows the repetition and meronymy relations found in *The Family Book*.
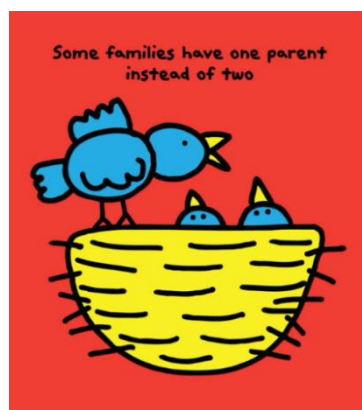
Figure 3 Repetition and meronymy relations between the verbal and visual modes
(Reprint from Parr, 2010, p. 19)

Table 4 Ideational intersemiotic of repetition and meronymy relations in *The Family Book*

Text Sources	Message Elements	
VMEs	Two blue nestlings, a bluebird (Children, single parent)	A bluebird (Single-parent)
Text page 19	Some families (M)	One parent instead of two (R)

The image depicts a half-round bird nest with two blue nestlings inside it and a bluebird on the edge of the nest. The nestlings look at the bigger bluebird that seems like their parent. The single bird is standing on the edge of the nest and opening both of its wings and beak. Through the intersemiotic analysis, it is found that the image and the clause in Figure 3 complement each other by the relations of meronymy and repetition. The images of the two nestlings and a bird represent a family consists of two children and

one parent. Children and parent are the figures that form a family. Thus, the images of two nestlings and one bluebird have meronymy relation with "some families". In addition, the repetition relation is formed by the image of a bluebird which depicts a single parent and the verbal text "one parent instead of two". The verbal and visual modes on this page clearly tell about a single-parent family. It is a family that can be either the father or the mother who is singly responsible for raising the children (Derman & Edwards, 2010). Regarding the meronymy relation, it facilitates the readers to know about the parts of family and have a better understanding of the different structures that families may have. Meanwhile, the repetition relation is used to emphasize the topic of the family, which is being discussed. This relation also makes the readers easier to understand about a single-parent family or the other type of families, which is being discussed in the picturebook because the visual mode on the page presents the similar message as the verbal mode. Hence, both modes strengthen each other's message.

5. Discussion

According to the findings above, it is evident that the verbal and visual modes in *The Family Book* similarly represent family diversity. Most verbal and visual processes in the picturebook aim to assign qualities and establish the identity of families, meaning that family diversity in *The Family Book* is represented as various qualities that families may have. The qualities represented in the book are mostly in terms of characteristics, preferences, and arrangements. Those different qualities, which are considered as abnormal, are presented in *The Family Book* as everyday things and illustrated by the attractive pictures. There is no negative stereotype or stigma used to depict the diverse families in the picturebook. This strategy allows the readers to have the same point of view about all kinds of families without discriminating a specific type of family. These findings disagree with Koss' (2015) study, which found that picturebooks represent stereotypes toward diversity and provide negative images of it. *The Family Book* attempts to convey messages to the readers that diversity is a common thing and to be different is okay. This statement is in line with Walsh (2012), who states that the diversity and complexity of contemporary families are considered as the new normal. Moreover, it can be concluded that family diversity that is represented as a normal thing in *The Family Book* is attempted to be explained to the readers not only to enhance their understanding of family but also to influence them. Thus, readers can get new perspectives about family and accept different kinds of families in this world.

6. Conclusion

Through the dominant processes used in the verbal data, which are the clauses, it can be inferred that *The Family Book* represents family diversity by highlighting the different characteristics, different activities, and different preferences that can determine families into specific types. Consequently, by reading this picturebook, the readers will get a better understanding of various things that serve the diversities among families. Furthermore, it is evident that through the visual modes, which are the pictures, *The Family Book* represents diversity in families by showing the meaning or identity of the participants rather than presenting the unfolding actions and events. Meanwhile, the repetition and meronymy relations as the frequently used relations in the picturebook make the readers more comfortable to understand about a particular type of family as the verbal and visual modes present the similar messages and help the readers to grasp a better understanding of the different structures that families may have. Thus, it can be inferred that the verbal and visual modes in this picturebook work together and complement each other.

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