TASK ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE FOURTH GRADE

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Article Info	Abstract
	This study investigates the nature and design of tasks in a fourth-grade English textbook used in Indonesian elementary schools, aiming to assess their alignment with curriculum objectives and language learning goals. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the research utilizes Littlejohn's (1998, 2011) Task Analysis Framework to examine 24 tasks across Units 1, 6, and 12 of the *My Next Word* textbook. The analysis reveals that tasks predominantly require scripted responses, emphasize form-meaning relationships, and rely on low-level cognitive operations such as repetition and recall. Interaction is mostly individual or whole-class based, with minimal peer collaboration or opportunities for spontaneous language use. Content is largely sourced from the textbook itself, focusing on controlled input and output without contextual or communicative variation. These findings highlight a strong reliance on input-driven activities with limited output demands, raising concerns about the textbook's capacity to support communicative competence and higher-order language skills. The study underscores the importance of task variety, cognitive challenge, and interactional engagement in textbook design to better support the holistic development of learners' English proficiency in primary education settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Textbooks remain one of the most foundational tools in the delivery of formal education worldwide. In the Indonesian educational context, particularly in elementary education, English textbooks are not only repositories of language content but also serve as pedagogical blueprints that shape teaching practices and learning experiences. For fourth-grade students—who are transitioning from basic language acquisition to more structured linguistic competence—these materials play a vital role in facilitating comprehension, skill-building, and curriculum alignment. As noted by Wahyuni (2023), textbooks serve as both instructional resources and learning models, offering consistency, structure, and curriculum-oriented content essential for language development at an early age. However,

despite their centrality, the quality and effectiveness of textbook tasks—especially in promoting communicative competence—remain underexplored and often unquestioned in classroom practice.

Task analysis, as a method for evaluating instructional materials, offers a systematic approach to examine whether textbook activities meet the cognitive, linguistic, and pedagogical needs of learners. Littlejohn (2011) defines a task as any proposal for learner action designed to facilitate language acquisition, emphasizing that tasks should align with specific educational objectives. In essence, task analysis examines what learners are expected to do, how they are to engage with the material, and whether those activities promote meaningful language use. This analytical approach becomes especially significant in elementary classrooms, where students are highly impressionable and reliant on materials to scaffold their linguistic growth.

In the Indonesian context, English is introduced as a foreign language in primary schools, often starting from the fourth grade. This phase, classified as Phase B in the Merdeka Curriculum (Kemendikbud, 2022), emphasizes the development of basic language competencies through integrated and engaging content. Unfortunately, many English textbooks fail to fully reflect this pedagogical expectation. Previous studies have highlighted the discrepancy between curriculum goals and actual textbook content, particularly in terms of task complexity, skill integration, and communicative emphasis (Aryani et al., 2019; Nida, 2021). These gaps suggest a pressing need for a closer examination of how tasks are designed and implemented in the textbooks widely used in elementary schools.

One significant concern is the overreliance on form-focused tasks that emphasize rote repetition and grammar drills, which may not align with communicative language teaching principles or cognitive development theory. For example, Nunan (2004) and Ellis (2003) both argue that language tasks should not only focus on linguistic forms but also promote interaction, meaning-making, and problem-solving. Yet in many textbooks, including those analysed in this study, learners are often asked to repeat dialogues, match vocabulary, or fill in blanks activities that require limited cognitive engagement and do not necessarily encourage language production. This raises the question: do these tasks truly support the language learning process as envisioned by modern pedagogical frameworks?

Another critical aspect is the cognitive demand embedded in textbook tasks. According to Bloom's taxonomy, tasks should promote higher-order thinking skills such as analysing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). However, many English textbooks for young learners remain fixated on lower-order skills such as remembering and understanding. This imbalance may hinder learners' ability to use the language flexibly in real-world contexts. Moreover, the lack of differentiation in task types and difficulty levels poses challenges for mixed-ability classrooms, where students vary in language proficiency and learning styles.

Several studies have attempted to evaluate textbook quality and task effectiveness. Haghverdi (2012), for instance, evaluated the "American English File" series using Littlejohn's framework and found that while the series had pedagogic value, it lacked balance in promoting interaction and higher-order cognitive skills. Similarly, Aryani et al. (2019) reviewed tasks in the Indonesian textbook *When English Rings a Bell* and found that most tasks were rigid and lacked learner autonomy. These findings underscore the need for textbooks that go beyond surface-level engagement and foster deeper linguistic and cognitive processing.

The present study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive task analysis of an English textbook used in the fourth grade of Indonesian elementary schools. Drawing on Littlejohn's (1998, 2011) Task Analysis Sheet, this research investigates: (1) **What are students expected to do during the task?** (2) **What is the language focus of the task?** (3) **What mental operations are involved in completing the task?** (4) **With whom are students expected to engage in the task?** (5) **What kind of input is used in the task?** (6) **What type of output is expected from the learners?**

This study's significance lies in its potential to inform educators, policymakers, and textbook developers about the quality of current materials and to advocate for more communicative, cognitively engaging, and learner-cantered tasks. The analysis does not merely critique the textbook content; rather, it seeks to offer a constructive evaluation that could contribute to better textbook design aligned with curriculum goals and learner needs.

Furthermore, this research introduces a novel perspective by focusing specifically on fourth-grade learners—an age group often overlooked in textbook evaluation studies, which typically concentrate on secondary or tertiary education. This research also serves as a foundational contribution to the limited body of literature on elementary English textbook evaluation in Indonesia using a structured task analysis framework.

In summary, this study attempts to bridge the gap between curriculum aspirations and classroom realities by offering a critical lens on textbook tasks. By analysing the extent to which these tasks promote meaningful language use, cognitive development, and communicative competence, the research aims to enhance the quality of English language instruction at the elementary level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

In English language education, textbooks are widely regarded as essential tools that support structured instruction, provide consistency in content delivery, and ensure alignment with national or institutional curricula (Tomlinson, 2011). Textbooks serve as a syllabus, a language input source, and a guide for less experienced teachers. According to Cunningsworth (1995), a good textbook functions not only as a teaching aid but also as a resource for learners' autonomous study and a framework for classroom instruction. For elementary-level English learners, particularly those in the fourth grade, textbooks are often the first structured exposure to foreign language content. Therefore, careful attention must be given to the types of tasks included in these materials to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate, cognitively stimulating, and pedagogically effective.

The importance of textbook evaluation has been well emphasized in materials development literature. Sheldon (1988) argued that evaluating textbooks is vital for ensuring that instructional materials align with the needs, values, and expectations of learners. More recent research emphasizes that evaluation is not only about identifying strengths and weaknesses, but also about understanding how materials encode educational ideologies, language learning principles, and pedagogical assumptions

(Littlejohn, 2011; Canagarajah, 1999). As such, textbook analysis is not a neutral activity it reveals embedded goals and assumptions about what language learning entails.

Task analysis is a particularly critical area in textbook evaluation. A "task," in this context, refers to any proposal in teaching materials that prompts learner action aimed at achieving language development (Littlejohn, 1998). Theoretical foundations for task-based language teaching (TBLT) argue that tasks should promote meaningful interaction, integrate language skills, and reflect real-world communication needs (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Tasks are expected to involve processes such as hypothesizing, negotiating meaning, and drawing on prior knowledge—not just mechanical repetition.

Littlejohn's (2011) Task Analysis Framework is one of the most comprehensive models available for evaluating textbook tasks. It includes three main categories: (1) what the learner is expected to do, (2) who the learner is expected to work with, and (3) what content the learner is expected to engage with (both input and output). Each of these categories contains multiple sub-elements such as turn-taking, focus on meaning or form, mental operations (e.g., recalling, transforming, comparing), and types of input/output (e.g., written, oral, visual). This model has become a widely used analytical tool to identify whether a textbook promotes meaningful and communicative language use.

Relevant Studies

Numerous studies have examined textbook quality and the effectiveness of tasks through various analytical frameworks. Aryani et al. (2019), for example, conducted a critical review of the government-issued textbook *When English Rings a Bell* using Littlejohn's framework. Their study revealed that many of the textbook tasks lacked communicative purpose and did not promote learner autonomy. Most activities were limited to controlled tasks such as matching, filling in blanks, and reading aloud, which do not foster the development of productive skills or cognitive engagement. This suggests a disconnection between textbook design and contemporary language teaching principles.

Similarly, Nida (2021) analysed a thematic English textbook for sixth-grade students through the lens of second language acquisition (SLA) principles and found that while the book incorporated game-based and consciousness-raising activities, it fell short in offering varied task types that engage different cognitive levels. Haghverdi (2012) applied Littlejohn's framework to analyse the *American English File* series and concluded that although the textbooks were generally well-structured, the balance between receptive and productive tasks, as well as between form-focused and meaning-focused activities, was uneven.

Another study by Mukundan et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of predictive and retrospective evaluations of textbooks, highlighting that an effective task should involve both form and communicative focus and address learners' individual differences. This aligns with Nunan's (1988) argument that textbook evaluations must go beyond surface-level assessment and delve into how materials guide interaction, cognitive processes, and language production.

In Indonesia, Jazadi (2008) critically discussed the political and ideological underpinnings of English textbooks, arguing that many state-approved books reinforce hierarchical teacher-student dynamics and promote linguistic conformity over communicative competence. This suggests that textbook evaluation is not only a pedagogical concern but also a socio-political one.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Littlejohn's (1998, 2011) Task Analysis Framework as its central analytical model. The framework was selected due to its ability to deconstruct tasks into observable, pedagogically relevant categories that reflect the instructional purpose and cognitive engagement level. Specifically, the framework examines: (1) **Learner activity**: Whether the task requires repetition, transformation, creation, or negotiation. (2) **Interactional structure**: Whether learners work individually, in pairs, or groups. (3) **Input and output**: The nature (linguistic, visual, metalinguistic), source (teacher, learner, materials), and form (oral, written) of the materials.

The use of this framework enables the researcher to objectively determine how well the textbook tasks align with curricular goals, cognitive development stages of fourth graders, and principles of communicative language teaching.

This framework is supported by principles from Ellis (2003), who emphasized that tasks should involve learner-cantered communication with a focus on meaning and negotiation. The framework also resonates with Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, which stresses the need for activities that engage higher-order thinking skills such as applying, analysing, and evaluating critical for effective language development even at the primary school level.

In sum, the combination of Littlejohn's model and related SLA theories provides a comprehensive foundation for evaluating the pedagogical soundness of textbook tasks in terms of their design, function, and educational alignment. Through this lens, the present study aims to identify not only whether tasks are suitable but also whether they are meaningful and developmentally appropriate for young English learners in the Indonesian context.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a **descriptive qualitative research design**, which is appropriate for examining the content and structure of tasks in educational materials without manipulating variables or quantifying results. Qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of the characteristics, processes, and meanings embedded in learning materials (Creswell & Puth, 2018). The approach is particularly suitable for uncovering patterns in how language tasks are designed in elementary-level textbooks and for interpreting how these tasks support—or fail to support—language learning goals.

The study is specifically categorized as **document analysis**, as it involves the systematic review and interpretation of textbook content (Bowen, 2009). The primary focus was on describing the nature of

tasks presented in an English textbook used in fourth-grade elementary school, analysing their pedagogical and cognitive characteristics using an established analytical framework.

Research Site and Source of Data

The research was conducted at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, Indonesia. However, the primary object of analysis was the **English textbook titled "My Next Word"**, which is used in Grade 4 classrooms in Indonesian elementary schools. This textbook was chosen because it is widely adopted in schools and reflects the instructional materials aligned with the national curriculum.

The study analysed tasks from three selected units—Unit 1, Unit 6, and Unit 12—of the textbook. These units were chosen purposively to represent the beginning, middle, and end of the textbook and to reflect the progression of learning complexity. A total of **24 tasks** were examined from these units, representing a sufficient sample to identify patterns and variations across the textbook.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through **document analysis techniques**, focusing on both visual and textual components of the textbook. This technique involves coding and categorizing materials in a systematic manner to uncover meaningful patterns and themes (Bowen, 2009). The researcher extracted all relevant tasks from the three selected units and recorded them for analysis using a **Task Analysis Sheet (TAS)** based on Littlejohn's (2011) framework. Each task was examined in terms of learner roles, cognitive demands, input/output forms, interaction patterns, and language focus.

To ensure a reliable and thorough review, the researcher conducted repeated readings of each task and engaged in **investigator triangulation**, whereby two independent reviewers (a research assistant and a supervisor) checked the consistency of the coding and interpretation. This process helped to minimize bias and increase the trustworthiness of the data.

Instrument and Analytical Framework

The primary analytical tool used in this study was the **Task Analysis Framework developed by Littlejohn (2011)**. This framework was selected because it offers a comprehensive categorization of task features in three main areas: (1) **What the learner is expected to do**, including turn-taking (e.g., initiating, scripted response), focus (on form, meaning, or both), and mental operations (e.g., repetition, substitution, hypothesis-making). (2) **With whom the learner is expected to do it**, including interaction patterns (e.g., individually, in pairs, or in groups). (3) **With what content**, including types and sources of input/output (e.g., written/oral texts, images, songs) and their nature (e.g., linguistic, metalinguistic, personal, fictional).

For each of the 24 tasks analysed, the researcher completed the TAS by checking the presence or absence of each sub-feature, which was then summarized to identify dominant patterns across the tasks. The analytic process was both **descriptive and interpretative**, allowing for both quantitative frequency counts and qualitative interpretations of task design.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis involved several stages: (1) **Task Identification**: All tasks in Units 1, 6, and 12 were identified and numbered. (2) **Task Coding**: Each task was examined using the TAS, and task elements were marked accordingly. (3) **Descriptive Summarization**: Task elements were tallied to show frequency and distribution across tasks. (4) **Interpretation**: The patterns revealed in the descriptive summary were then interpreted in relation to language learning principles, curriculum goals, and cognitive appropriateness for Grade 4 students.

This method of combining **checklist-based coding** with narrative interpretation is supported by prior studies using Littlejohn's model (Aryani et al., 2019; Haghverdi, 2012). It enables researchers to assess both surface and deep features of textbook tasks, going beyond mere content description to consider pedagogical implications.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To enhance the **credibility and dependability** of the study, several measures were taken. As mentioned earlier, investigator triangulation was used during data analysis. Moreover, the process and coding sheets were reviewed regularly by the academic supervisor to ensure consistency and alignment with research objectives. All interpretations were grounded in the framework and supported by examples from the textbook.

Although the study did not involve human participants, ethical consideration was maintained by acknowledging all data sources and adhering to academic standards for data interpretation and reporting.

FINDINGS

Overview of the Tasks Analysed

This study analysed a total of **24 tasks** extracted from three selected units of the English textbook *"My Next Word"* for fourth-grade elementary students. The units were **Unit 1**, **Unit 6**, and **Unit 12**, purposively chosen to represent the beginning, middle, and end of the textbook. Each unit contains 8 tasks, providing a balanced view of how task design progresses throughout the textbook.

The tasks span across various language skills, with an emphasis on **listening and speaking** in the earlier units, and **reading and writing** in the latter. While the tasks vary slightly in format, the majority adopt a **controlled practice approach** rather than open-ended or communicative tasks. The table below summarizes the distribution of tasks by unit and targeted skill.

Table 1. Overview of Analysed Tasks by Unit

Unit	Task Numbers	Skills Targeted	Total Tasks
1	Task 1–8	Listening, Speaking	8
6	Task 9–16	Speaking, Writing	8

12	Task 17–24	Reading, Writing	8

This initial overview indicates a **predominance of oral activities**, particularly in early units, aligning with the developmental level of fourth-grade learners. However, a deeper analysis reveals important patterns and limitations in task design.

Learner Role and Interaction Patterns

A major dimension analysed was the **role of the learner and the type of interaction** expected in each task. Using Littlejohn's (2011) framework, tasks were examined for how learners are required to respond whether through repetition, scripted responses, or open-ended production and whether they work alone or collaboratively.

Out of 24 tasks:

- **14 tasks (58%)** required **scripted responses**, where learners simply repeat or say predetermined sentences.
- **7 tasks (29%)** were focused on **drills or repetition**.
- Only **3 tasks (13%)** allowed for **open or creative language production**.

Table 2. Learner Turn-Taking and Interaction Type

Turn-Taking Type	Frequency	Percentage
Scripted Response	14	58%
Repetition/Drill	7	29%
Open Production	3	13%

Most tasks required **individual responses**, with little opportunity for pair or group interaction. For instance, in **Task 3**, learners are instructed to "repeat after the teacher," reinforcing oral memorization:

"Repeat the sentences after your teacher: 'This is a cat. That is a dog.'"

Only a few tasks, such as **Task 19**, encourage learners to create original responses:

"Write a short story based on the picture. Use at least 5 different verbs."

This data suggests a limited emphasis on **interactive or collaborative learning**, which is a key aspect of communicative language teaching (Nunan, 2004).

Cognitive Demands and Mental Operations

The second category of analysis involved the **mental operations** required in each task. Following Littlejohn's model, tasks were coded for operations such as **recall**, **substitution**, **comparison**, **creative thinking**, or **hypothesis formation**.

Recall was the most dominant cognitive activity, required in **16 tasks (67%)**, especially in vocabulary drills and grammar repetition. **Substitution** activities were present in 4 tasks, while **creative output** and **problem-solving** appeared only twice.

Table 3. Mental Operations Required in Tasks

Operation Type	Frequency	Example Task
Recall	16	Task 2, 5, 10
Substitution	4	Task 6, 13
Creative Output	2	Task 19, 23
Reasoning/Problem Solving	2	Task 12, 22

For example, **Task 12** asked students to choose the correct response from multiple options after reading a dialogue:

"What will you say if someone gives you a gift?"
a) You're welcome.
b) Thank you.
c) I'm sorry.

Although this requires some reasoning, most tasks are **low in cognitive challenge**, rarely prompting students to engage in analysis, evaluation, or creation—higher levels in Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Language Focus

Another important aspect was the **focus of each task**, whether on **form (grammar, structure)**, **meaning (communicative intent)**, or **both**. The analysis shows:

- 15 tasks (63%) focused only on linguistic form
- 2 tasks (8%) focused solely on meaning
- 7 tasks (29%) integrated both form and meaning

Table 4. Focus of the Task

Focus	Frequency	Percentage
Form Only	15	63%
Meaning Only	2	8%
Form and meaning	7	29%

For example, **Task 7** instructed students to "complete the sentences with 'is' or 'are'," a purely grammatical exercise:

"This ___ my book. Those ___ my pencils."

In contrast, **Task 21** presents a picture and asks students to describe what they see, offering a better balance of form and meaning.

Input and Output Types

Tasks were also analysed in terms of the **types of input provided** and the **output expected from learners**. Input types included **pictures**, **written texts**, and **audio recordings**. Outputs were categorized as **oral**, **written**, or **other**.

Pictures were the most common input form, used in **12 tasks**, while **written texts** appeared in 8 tasks. On the output side, **spoken responses** dominated (14 tasks), followed by **written outputs** in 10 tasks.

Table 5. Task Input and Output Modalities

Input Type	Frequency	Output Type	Frequency
Pictures	12	Spoken	14
Written Text	8	Written	10
Audio	4	Drawing	0

For instance, **Task 4** features illustrations of classroom objects and instructs students to name them aloud:

"Look at the picture. What is this? Say it loudly."

Although multimodal input is evident, most output remains **controlled and non-interactive**, limiting opportunities for meaningful use of language.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into the nature and quality of tasks found in the English textbook *My Next Word* used in the fourth grade of Indonesian elementary schools. Using Littlejohn's (2011) Task Analysis Framework, the study systematically examined what learners are expected to do, the cognitive operations required, the focus and modality of each task, and the extent to which tasks foster communicative language learning. This section discusses the findings in relation to each research question and connects them to established theories and previous studies in language teaching and materials development.

What are students expected to do during the task?

The analysis revealed that a majority of the tasks required learners to produce **scripted or highly controlled responses**, such as repeating after the teacher or filling in blanks. While these activities may support initial language acquisition and memorization (Brown, 2007), they do little to foster learners' autonomy, creativity, or communicative competence. The lack of open-ended tasks suggests a behaviourist underpinning, where learning is seen as habit formation rather than meaning-making (Skinner, 1957).

This finding aligns with the observations of Aryani et al. (2019), who found that Indonesian English textbooks often overuse form-focused, repetition-based tasks with limited communicative value. It also echoes Tomlinson's (2011) concern that many global textbooks fail to provide opportunities for learners to engage in authentic language use. From a constructivist perspective, learners need to engage actively with content, construct meaning, and produce language for real purposes (Richards, 2006). Therefore, the dominance of scripted response tasks undermines the principles of task-based language teaching (TBLT) and learner-cantered pedagogy.

What is the language focus of the task?

The study found that **63% of the tasks focused exclusively on linguistic form**, while only a small portion integrated both form and meaning. This imbalance reflects a grammar-translation orientation, which prioritizes structure over communicative use. As Ellis (2003) argues, tasks that only require form-focused responses may promote linguistic accuracy but often do so at the expense of fluency and pragmatic competence.

Littlejohn (2011) cautioned against materials that isolate form from context, as they prevent learners from developing communicative strategies. Meaningful interaction, on the other hand, supports second language acquisition through negotiation of meaning, scaffolding, and interactional feedback (Long, 1996; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). By emphasizing grammar drills without communicative purpose, the textbook risks fostering passive learners who may struggle with real-life language use.

This finding also confirms Nida's (2021) analysis of sixth-grade English textbooks, which lacked task variation and communicative integration. Ideally, textbook tasks should balance form and function to reflect the integrated nature of language.

What mental operations are involved in completing the task?

Most tasks required **low-level cognitive operations**, such as recalling vocabulary or substituting one word for another. Tasks involving higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, or evaluation were rare. According to Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revision of Bloom's taxonomy, meaningful learning occurs when learners engage in complex processes such as reasoning, hypothesizing, or problem-solving.

This lack of cognitive challenge contradicts the goals of the **Merdeka Curriculum**, which promotes active learning, critical thinking, and learner independence (Kemendikbud, 2022). When learners are not cognitively engaged, their motivation and retention tend to decline (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As Littlejohn (1998) noted, tasks should involve learners in genuine decision-making processes not just recalling pre-learned information.

While creative output was present in two tasks (e.g., story writing based on pictures), these were exceptions rather than the norm. Textbook designers should incorporate more cognitively engaging activities to support both linguistic and intellectual development.

With whom are students expected to engage in the task?

Interaction patterns in the textbook were predominantly **individual**, with minimal pair or group work. Very few tasks required students to collaborate, discuss, or negotiate meaning with others. This contradicts one of the core tenets of communicative language teaching (CLT) that language is best learned through **social interaction** (Richards, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978).

Collaborative tasks promote not only linguistic competence but also social and emotional skills, such as cooperation and empathy (Gillies, 2007). In addition, peer interaction allows for meaningful input, modified output, and scaffolding essential for language acquisition (Swain, 2000). The limited use of interactive tasks in *My Next Word* therefore represents a missed opportunity for learners to practice authentic communication in a supportive environment.

What kind of input is used in the task?

The analysis revealed that most tasks used **visual input** (e.g., pictures) and **short written texts**, with fewer audio-based or authentic materials. While visual input is appropriate for young learners (Cameron, 2001), the lack of **multimodal and authentic input** may limit exposure to natural language patterns and varied discourse types. Reinders and White (2010) recommend incorporating real-world materials (e.g., songs, stories, dialogues) to foster both engagement and contextual understanding.

Furthermore, input should be **meaning-rich** and **contextually grounded** to help learners make connections between form and function. Littlejohn (2011) emphasized that the source and type of input affect the depth of learner processing. A heavy reliance on decontextualized visuals may not provide sufficient linguistic richness for learners to develop listening and reading comprehension skills.

What type of output is expected from the learners?

Learners were mostly required to produce **spoken or written responses** at the sentence level, often constrained by structured formats. Only a few tasks allowed learners to produce extended discourse or personalized language. According to Nunan (2004), effective language tasks should encourage learners to **use language to express personal meaning**, thereby enhancing fluency and confidence.

The limited variety in output types suggests a narrow view of language learning where accuracy is prioritized over expression. This is problematic, especially for young learners who benefit from **creative and expressive tasks**, such as storytelling, dialogues, and presentations (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2002). As Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue, opportunities to produce extended language help consolidate both grammatical knowledge and communicative competence.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to analyse the nature and pedagogical value of tasks in the English textbook *My Next Word*, which is used by fourth-grade students in Indonesian elementary schools. By applying Littlejohn's (2011) Task Analysis Framework, the study examined 24 tasks across Units 1, 6, and 12

to explore the nature of learner engagement, cognitive demand, interaction patterns, input and output forms, and the overall communicative orientation of the textbook.

The results revealed several important patterns. First, a majority of the tasks emphasized **scripted and repetitive responses**, with limited space for learners to produce original or meaningful language. Most tasks were designed for **individual completion**, lacking interactive or collaborative dimensions. Second, the **language focus** was heavily oriented toward **form** (e.g., grammar drills), with relatively few tasks integrating form and meaning in context. Third, the cognitive operations required were predominantly **low-level**, such as recall and substitution, while higher-order thinking tasks—those encouraging analysis, creation, or reasoning—were rare. Fourth, the **input** provided was mostly visual and decontextualized, and while output was often spoken or written, it tended to be brief, constrained, and lacking in personalization or creativity.

These findings suggest that while the textbook may serve basic linguistic functions—such as vocabulary reinforcement and grammar practice—it does not fully align with the principles of **communicative language teaching** (CLT) or the goals of the **Merdeka Curriculum**, which emphasize active learning, critical thinking, and learner-cantered pedagogy. This reflects a broader concern in language education: many textbooks, especially those developed for national systems, tend to prioritize control, coverage, and correctness over communication, engagement, and creativity (Tomlinson, 2011; Nunan, 2004).

The theoretical implications of this study reaffirm the importance of evaluating language materials not just by surface features—such as layout or topics—but through a deeper understanding of **task structure and cognitive engagement**. Following the perspectives of Ellis (2003), Littlejohn (2011), and Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), effective language learning tasks should promote interaction, challenge learners intellectually, and reflect real-life communicative needs. When learners are only asked to repeat or recall, their opportunity for meaningful acquisition and practical fluency is severely limited.

Practically, this study offers several recommendations for textbook developers, teachers, and curriculum designers. For textbook developers, there is a need to integrate **more open-ended, meaningful tasks** that allow learners to personalize their responses, collaborate with peers, and practice authentic communication. This includes task types such as interviews, storytelling, problem-solving, and information-gap activities. For teachers, it is essential to **adapt and supplement** textbook tasks to promote greater interaction and creativity in the classroom. Teachers should be encouraged to modify tasks or pair them with group work, role-play, or projects that increase learner agency. Finally, curriculum designers and policymakers should ensure that instructional materials are **aligned with pedagogical frameworks** and national curriculum goals, supporting the development of communicative competence from early language learning stages.

This study is limited to one textbook and a specific grade level; future research may expand this scope by analysing multiple textbooks, comparing different publishers, or examining how textbook tasks are implemented in classroom practice. Moreover, classroom-based studies that observe how learners respond to these tasks in real-time could offer more insights into task effectiveness and learner engagement.

In conclusion, this research highlights the critical need to design and evaluate language learning materials through the lens of **task richness, learner engagement, and communicative potential**. A textbook is more than a collection of exercises—it is a blueprint for learning. Ensuring that its tasks are meaningful, varied, and cognitively stimulating is essential for empowering young learners to become confident and competent users of English in the real world.

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