

## Task-Based Language Teaching Criteria in Textbook for Senior High School in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*The current study focused on activities and tasks that concluded in an English textbook used in a senior high school in Indonesia based on the TBLT's criteria. This study analyzed the content of an English textbook for senior high school grade X. The subject of this study was an English textbook titled "Pathway to English." The researchers used the qualitative descriptive method, especially in the analysis content, to analyze the tasks in the textbook. The researchers conducted this study in August 2022 at the library of IAIN Palangka Raya. The researchers utilized an observation instrument and an observation assessment form suggested by Akmal. Findings indicated that the textbook matched the standards for a good task based on Akmal's instruments. It showed that eight activities were classified as "strong" tasks, and seven obtained "weak" tasks. Moreover, this book also contains the four language skills with 12 activities of the book has more than one of the language skills in each activity and fulfills the criteria. In conclusion, this study indicates that the book is compatible with the Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) criteria. However, the textbook mostly lacks the aspect of real-life activity and students' negotiation.*

**Keywords:** Task; Task-based Language Teaching; Textbook Analysis

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## INTRODUCTION

A textbook is an essential tool for learning. Both students and teachers use it as a manual instructor for studying and lesson plans (Adi & Astuti, 2019). The most often used instructional tools in language teaching, according to Richards (2001), are textbooks. This is so that books can deliver materials matched to the curriculum's standard of competence. According to Cunningsworth (1995), the textbook is the finest tool for assisting students in meeting their educational goals because it has already been developed based on their needs. Moreover, Awayed-Bishara (2015) stated that schoolbooks are a significant way that ideas and ideologies are transmitted so that they can shape learners into a desired collective memory.

The researcher is concerned about the essence of a textbook in the learning and teaching process. Therefore, the study decided to analyze the quality of textbooks used in schools using TBLT criteria. A task-based approach is an approach that places tasks as its primary pedagogical tools to organize language instruction. In addition, TBLT mandates that teachers take on different positions in the classroom—that of "facilitator" instead of "knowledge provider" (Gatbonton and Segalowitz, 2005; Shintani, 2014).

According to Foster, task-based learning is an evolving process, and mistakes are a natural part of learning (Bula-Villalobos & Murillo-Miranda, 2019). Since TBLT emphasizes content word activities, learners must perform these tasks while learning a foreign language. Doing so will increase students' confidence and fluency in the target language (Kafipour et al., 2018).

The task is the most integral unit, according to TBLT. "Task" means the activities in which students are asked to use the target language to achieve a particular outcome within a specific context (Tomlinson, 2014). As Ellis (2009) stated, a task should fulfill the following requirements to be classified as such.

- a. "Meaning" should be the main focus.
- b. There should be a "gap" of some type (i.e., a need to convey information, express an opinion, or infer meaning).

- c. Learners should mostly be forced to rely on their resources (both linguistic and nonlinguistic) to finish the exercise.
- d. The use of language is not the only correctly specified outcome.

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is also widely used in many countries (Akmal, 2013), and many researchers are interested in discussing issues related to TBLT (Benson, 2016). An extensive range of recent articles analyzing this method of language learning and instruction are indications of interest in TBLT research and practice. Along with TBLT's popularity growing, the subjects attracting researchers and practitioners have become more significant and varied (Bryfonski, 2020).

For example, Akmal (2013) focused on analyzing Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in coursebooks used by upper-intermediate students. This study aimed to analyze the differences between a modern course book and an older one. Akmal compared these two books to know which book encompassed the principles and practice of TBLT. This study concludes that the older book, published in 2003, has better tasks in the overall activities than the modern book. Another relevant research carried out by Ji and Pham (2020) focused on creating TBLT techniques that were culturally suitable so that teachers and students in China could use TBLT in English classes (Ji & Pham, 2020).

Moreover, Chou conducted a subsequent study on this topic in 2017. This study looks at how a task-based teaching approach effectively developed the metacognitive awareness of listening comprehension in intermediate Chinese English as Foreign Language (EFL) university students. According to the findings, the experimental group did better on the listening test than the control group and increased their metacognitive awareness of listening practices (Chou, 2017).

Furthermore, Coultas and Booth also conducted a study about TBLT that assesses a student's learning process in two modules from an MA in Education English Language Teaching (ELT) program. The researchers only concentrated on determining how the first module's "explanatory talk" command could be applied to the later module's "task-based learning" main idea. Based on their findings, the first module could be used for the second module in innovative ways to avoid ineffective teaching planning (Coultas & Booth, 2019).

There is also research from Chen and Wright (2017) and Liu and Ren (2021) which focused on task-based language teaching based on teachers' beliefs and practices in China. The results of Chen and Wright (2017) generally showed positive perceptions about TBLT principles, demonstrating strong institutional acceptance of interactive instruction. Yet, there was a noticeable difference in how activities were used across beliefs and practices, particularly with lower-level students. In addition, most teachers showed a fundamental lack of confidence in employing tasks as anything other than a communicative "add-on" to conventional form-focused instruction (Chen & Wright, 2017). Meanwhile, Liu and Ren (2021) found that Chinese EFL teachers used an inferior strategy variation. These results imply that the influence of traditional Chinese values on adopting TBLT has been overstated (Liu & Ren, 2021).

Previous researchers only focused on a specific activity or task inside a particular topic. The researcher used descriptive analysis, especially document analysis, as her research design was the same as Akmal's study. However, the tasks the researchers assessed led to the novelty of the current study.

## METHODS

This study used a qualitative research design, particularly for document or content analysis. This qualitative study aimed to define and evaluate the quality of the resources offered in the English textbook "Pathway to English" using the standards of task-based language teaching (TBLT). The researcher gathered the data from the English textbook by evaluating the book's content using task-based language teaching (TBLT) form, interpreting the information obtained during the evaluation procedure, and reporting or accumulating the content of the textbook's compatibility score.

The researcher utilized an observation instrument and an observation assessment form suggested by Akmal (2013). The checklist form is divided into four outlines, namely:

- a. Authenticity or real life; demonstrates how the tasks in the textbook correspond to actual activities.
- b. The outcome and pedagogic purpose are different; this identifies the textbooks' tasks with distinct results and educational purposes.
- c. Involve any of four language skills; this shows whether the activity requires the use of additional language abilities or not; and
- d. Allows for more negotiation in meaning rather than grammar; students' responses to the assignments or tasks in the textbook are evaluated to see if they can think outside the box or follow the instructions.

The activities and tasks must carry out the four points before getting a high score and are identified as "strong" tasks. In contrast, the tasks will be deemed "weak" if they only satisfy one or two criteria.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tables 1 to 5 are presented in order to see the content of the textbook:

Table 1. The analysis table of chapter 01

Criteria	Real-life activity	Outcome and pedagogic purposes are different	Involve any of four language skills	Allows for more negotiation	Tasks category
Activities	Chapter 01 of Pathway to English				
Speaking (p.5-14)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Strong
Writing (p.14-18)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Strong
Grammar (p.18-27)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Strong

As observed in table 1, the speaking activity in chapter 01 is considered a "strong" task. The focus of this speaking activity invites students to be able to respond to things related to personal information. Furthermore, the outcome and educational purposes are different, the outcome is an identification card, and the pedagogic is to know how to share personal information. Other language skills also appear in this activity. For example, in activities 2 to 5, there is a listening activity included in this activity. Therefore, the procedure of permitting negotiation and interaction for learners is effortless. Students were often given a checklist or cloze-type questions, as seen in activity 12. The student was forced to do the exercise prescribed in the textbook. They have little room to convey meaning or use their language skills. It is almost like a spelling exercise, particularly when the student is asked to listen to the recording in activity number 5 and then pronounce it with the correct intonation. By questioning their classmates about their personal details in activity 11, students are attempting to create a spirited atmosphere. However, it only involves a minor amount of private language use.

Then, the writing activity also got the category of a "strong" task. The difference from the previous exercise is that this activity allows more student negotiation. In contrast, the outcome and pedagogic purposes are the same, to train the ability to write things related to personal information. The topic's connection to daily life also helps learners pick up the targeted language skills more quickly. The activity also seems to involve speaking, such as in activity 22. Although in this activity, students are asked to fill in the cloze-type questions or matching activity, some tasks allow students to interact more in a group, such as in activity 20.

The next part is grammar activity which also only meets three categories of Akmal's requirements. First, this part has activities related to real-life activities in sharing personal information. Second, this activity has a different outcome and academic purposes. The outcome is a letter, and the educational goal is to incorporate grammar points of to be and to have. Third, it also involves listening skills, such as in activity 29, speaking skills, as shown in activity 30, and reading activity, as shown in activity 32. But, in contrast, this activity does not meet the last categories. This activity limited students' interaction in developing their

language skills by simply following the instructions in the book. Students are presented with cloze or essay-type questions whose answers can be found in the textbook, such as in activity 26.

Table 2. The analysis table of chapter 02

Criteria	Real-life activity	Outcome and pedagogic purposes are different	Involve any of four language skills	Allows for more negotiation	Tasks category
Activities	Chapter 02 of Pathway to English				
Speaking (p.31-39)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Weak
Writing (p.40-41)	No	No	Yes	No	Weak
Grammar (p.43-47)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strong

As observed before, the speaking activity in chapter 02 only meets the two categories. Therefore, this activity is considered a weak task. However, the focus of this activity makes students capable of giving a compliment or praise. Furthermore, the outcome and educational purposes are different, the outcome is a video recording, and the educational aim is to know how to give a compliment or praise. Other language skills also appear in this activity. For example, in activities 2 to 5, there is a listening activity included in this activity.

As a result, there is little process involved in facilitating negotiation and interaction for learners. Students were often provided cloze-type questions or practiced the textbook dialogue, as seen in activity 12 (See appendix 2). The textbook-recommended exercise was made required reading for the students. As a result, they have very little room to exhibit their language skills and meaning. Almost all of the speaking activities require the repetition of words or sentences. But, activity 9 becomes alive with role-playing as students work in pairs. However, the use of language skills is still limited.

The writing activity in this chapter only constitutes one of the criteria above. It is indeed a weak task. The language abilities students thought they had obtained from previous lessons or other sources are not developed in this exercise. If they have any chance, it might be to create a K-W-L table. It doesn't result in anything tangible and isn't a real-world activity. Indeed, this activity involves other language skills, such as reading.

Nevertheless, the development and academic aim are the same. The learner must demonstrate their understanding of the idea presented in the book. This relatively brief activity might serve as a pre-task for the next one (grammar).

To some extent, the grammar activity indicated more attentiveness to the task requirements. The researcher will consider this part a "strong" task. Through the use of reading sections to create a thought pattern, grammar is organically presented in this activity. Students are asked to pay attention to the text in the textbook and generate their laws based on the book's example. Grammar is not the point of entry. Grammar has been neatly integrated into the intellectual process to allow students to explore and use any pre-existing language skills. Because they are so engaged in reading the content, they are unaware they are practicing their abilities. Therefore, the pedagogic goal and result are distinct at this moment. The result is the creation of a video recording when giving a compliment. The pedagogical aim is to practice students' language skills, and they must be able to understand and apply present-tense and past-tense grammatical concepts.

Table 3. The analysis table of chapter 03

Criteria	Real-life activity	Outcome and pedagogic purposes are different	Involve any of four language skills	Allows for more negotiation	Tasks category
Activities	Chapter 03 of Pathway to English				
Listening (p.62-65)	No	No	No	No	Weak
Speaking (p.54-57)	No	No	Yes	No	Weak
Writing (p.58-59)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Strong

In the first section that the researcher discusses, listening is rated as a "weak" task. In this activity, learners tend to listen and repeat the recording. Both the academic goal and the outcome are identical. Additionally, the negotiation, interaction, and development of language abilities in actual situations are all completely regulated.

Similar to the previous activity in the same chapter, it can be said that this activity is considered a "weak" task. The activity does not produce a tangible outcome. Moreover, the outcome and pedagogical purpose are the same: congratulating someone. Although this part involves other not only a single skill but also reading, the negotiation and interaction of the students are limited. The sole exception is that students are requested to congratulate other random students (activity 6).

Then, in the writing activity, researchers found that the negotiation process was better than what they previously observed in the speaking activity. Here, learners have more chances to express meaning and explore their ideas. But, of course, the activity involves speaking skills as well. The topic, in addition, is something to do with everyday life, and it is constructive to ease the learners to catch the targeted language skills. The outcome is to write a congratulatory card. Likewise, the former activity's congratulatory expressions may be used for educational purposes.

Table 4. The analysis table of chapter 04

Criteria	Real-life activity	Outcome and pedagogic purposes are different	Involve any of four language skills	Allows for more negotiation	Tasks category
Activities	Chapter 04 of Pathway to English				
Speaking (p.63-71)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Strong
Writing (p.71-76)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strong

In this chapter, the speaking section has specific task characteristics and could be viewed as having "strong" task-qualifying content. This section offers students a discussion with their friends and teacher in activity 6 that is appropriate for everyday life. It would trigger learner motivation to collaborate more closely with classmates to find the answers to the questions. This part involves not only speaking activity but also listening activity. It is also noticeable that the academic purpose and the outcome are different. The actual result expected in this section is a video recording, whereas the pedagogical aim is practicing the expression of plans or intentions mentioned earlier.

Researchers will find plenty of evidence that this exercise has "strong" aspects of the task in the writing part, which is visible in the final quarter of this chapter. First, this section's concrete outcome is to write a message outlining intentions or plans. In contrast, the educational goals are a specific vocabulary and the ability to create a message indicating intents or plans. Given that the subject is relevant to the students, this is additionally a real-life task. Others benefit is that students would have sufficient time to share their ideas and perspectives, enabling them to negotiate more meaning rather than just concentrating on grammar points.

Table 5. The analysis table of chapter 05

Criteria	Real-life activity	Outcome and pedagogic purposes are different	Involve any of four language skills	Allows for more negotiation	Tasks category
Activities	Chapter 05 of Pathway to English				
Writing (p.81-84)	No	No	Yes	No	Weak
Grammar (p.85-102)	No	No	No	No	Weak
Speaking (p.103-104)	No	No	No	Yes	Weak
Writing (p.105-108)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strong



In chapter 05, the writing activity also involves listening and reading, as shown in activity seven on page 84. Furthermore, the activity in this part does not offer a real-life activity. Anyhow, both the pedagogical aim and the outcome are the same: vocabulary and identifying the text structure and the language elements used in descriptive text. The negotiation and interaction of the students are also limited. However, this part is relatively short; as mentioned in the table above, this activity could be considered "weak."

Once more, the grammar exercise does not meet each need outlined previously for the task. It is considered a "weak" task. This part has the same outcome and pedagogical purpose: to understand and apply *to be and to have, relating verbs, opinion and fact adjectives, compound adjectives, degree of comparison, prepositions of place, adverbial phrases, and participle phrases* grammatical elements. This task also lacks related language ability. Therefore, preparation for permitting negotiation and interaction for learners is exceptionally constrained. Learners were regularly given closed-sort questions, as seen in activity 13. The learners were forced to work out as endorsed within the course reading. There is a tiny room for them to the precise meaning and language ability.

Then, according to researchers in the speaking activity, the negotiation process is higher than what they had previously seen in grammatical practice. Working in pairs, students have additional opportunities to develop their views and communicate their meaning here. But, it is considered a "weak" task because it does not meet the other three criteria. The academic purpose and the outcome are the same: to know how the expressions in asking and describing a place. This part also only involves a speaking activity. The negotiation and interaction of the students are also limited.

As the last part to be assessed in this research, writing contains specific characteristics of a task and could be considered to have a "strong" level of task criteria. Even though this part does not convey a real-life activity, it shows the difference between the outcome and pedagogical purpose. The outcome is a student worksheet on the differences between two big cities in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the academic purpose is possibly to use the grammar points and expressions in the previous activity. This section also involves reading activities and allowing students to interact more and negotiate with their language ability by working in pairs.

Based on the research findings, from the total 15 activities being analyzed in 5 chapters, eight activities in requirement forms were conducted as "strong" tasks. This is because they fulfilled the requirements from the rubric assessment. Then, seven activities obtain "weak" assignments, as shown in the findings. Moreover, it can be concluded that eight activities in the first semester of the textbook "Pathway to English" for the first grade of Senior High School fulfilled the requirements of the rubric assessment from Akmal (2013). Furthermore, the textbook "Pathway to English" contains four language skills. Consequently, the students could improve their language skills when doing the activities and tasks in the textbook. However, the book mostly lacks the aspects of "real-life activity" and "allows for more negotiation," with only a few criteria in the activities and tasks.

The assessment of this book will be used to support the use of TBLT in English teaching and learning practice. As in Akmal's research (2013), which analyzed the content of two books, the textbook's content is examined more deeply in this study to show the suitability of the contents of a textbook with the TBLT criteria.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the textbook "Pathway to English" for the first grade of Senior high school is compatible with the Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) criteria presented in Akmal's requirement (2013). Most of the content fulfilled the need for the curriculum's core competence and basic competence.

Overall, the book is suitable to be used by teachers and students in the Indonesian context. However, since the "strong" task score obtained by the content in the "Pathway to English" book does not fully meet the criteria of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), teachers should not stick to this book as teaching material. The teacher can add other sources to complement the textbook, especially in the criteria of real-life activity and allowing students to negotiate and interact more.

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