

Textbook Analysis of “Grow with English” For Sixth Grade: Alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Analysing the textbook is necessary to ensure its alignment with the goals that are promoted by the curriculum. This study aims to evaluate the alignment of the exercises in the Grow with English textbook for sixth-grade elementary school with the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on Listening and Speaking elements in learning outcomes of Phase C (grades V and VI). Employing a content analysis, the textbook was analysed based on a checklist rubric adapted from Akhmad et al. (2022). The research examines the textbook's content relevance, language skills coverage, cultural appropriateness, visual design, grammar and vocabulary, and methodological approaches. Findings reveal the textbook partially fulfils the Merdeka Curriculum expectations but would benefit from enhanced intercultural integration, increased authenticity in tasks, and greater emphasis on project-based and autonomous learning to foster communicative competence and character development in learners. This research contributes to textbook evaluation and supports the improvement of English language instruction in primary education.

Keywords: *Textbook Analysis, Kurikulum Merdeka, English Textbook*

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INTRODUCTION

English has become a crucial subject in the Indonesian education system in today's globalised world, especially at the elementary school level. Teaching English to young students entails fostering their interest, confidence, and engagement in addition to imparting linguistic information. The cognitive, emotional, and social development of young learners greatly affects how they take in and process language input during this formative stage (Ali Alshareef, 2024). Because of this, English language training needs to be participatory, developmentally appropriate, and adapted to the natural learning styles of kids. When it comes to English as a Foreign Language (EFL), formal education is frequently the first systematic exposure that students receive to the language, particularly in nations like Indonesia. EFL learners mostly rely on classroom resources and teaching, in contrast to second language environments where learners may come across the language in everyday situations. Teaching English to young learners requires approaches that are not only effective in language acquisition but also appropriate to their developmental stage. In the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, such as in Indonesia, students are often first exposed to English primarily through classroom instruction, making choosing teaching methods and materials even more critical.

Teaching English to sixth-grade students requires strategies that not only enhance language proficiency but also engage learners actively and meaningfully. Effective teaching strategies for young learners include vocabulary drilling, interactive warm-ups, and diverse teaching methods that cater to students' developmental needs. These strategies help maintain students' interest and improve their language skills through repetition and active

participation, which are essential for this age group's cognitive and social development (Adibah et al., 2024). Thus, Children's English learning experiences are so greatly influenced by the strategies teachers employ and the layout of textbooks, so it is critical to select approaches that are both efficient and pleasurable (Hedgcock, 2018).

A vital component of the educational system is the employment of textbooks as teaching resources in the classroom. Textbooks serve as a primary source of input and guidance for teachers and students in language learning. In Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language, students often rely heavily on textbooks to learn English due to limited exposure outside the classroom. Therefore, the quality and relevance of English textbooks are vital in helping young learners develop their language skills effectively. The teaching and learning process will be disorganised without a textbook. The teacher can effectively teach the material if an appropriate textbook guides the learning process. An English textbook is required in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom. On the other hand, the English Language Teaching (ELT) textbook is invaluable in language classes. English is taught as a foreign language, as it is in Indonesia, and it is particularly crucial. Since English is taught alongside the native languages, Indonesian pupils are likely only learn it in the classroom. As a result, students may have relied only on the English textbook for language instruction. It is clear from the explanation that the textbook and the learning activities that teachers and students do in the classroom are inextricably linked. It plays a crucial role in directing classroom activities and assisting teachers and students in achieving learning objectives.

The Indonesian government recently introduced the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, and character development through the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. As a newly launched initiative, the Merdeka Curriculum has not yet been adopted by all schools across the country, as its implementation requires time and consideration of various factors. According to Aslan, one of the key elements in successful curriculum reform is the preparedness of educators to carry out new programs or curricula (Aslan, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum introduces a new educational approach designed to replace the previous system. However, its implementation is not mandatory for all educational institutions; instead, it is offered as an optional framework. Developed to be more adaptable, this curriculum emphasises essential content while fostering students' character and competencies (Barlian, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), is a transformative initiative aimed at improving education quality through greater flexibility and student-centered approaches. It emerged in response to the need for more autonomy in both teaching and learning, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery. Through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 371/M/2021 in Laturmas, et al (2022), the curriculum structure at the elementary school level is divided into three phases, namely: Phase A (Grades 1-2); Phase B (Grades 3-4); and Phase C (Grades 5-6) (Laturmas, 2022).

Since textbooks play a significant role in supporting curriculum implementation, they must reflect the goals and competencies outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum. A textbook that does not meet these standards may hinder students' academic and character development. Evaluating textbook content, especially the exercises and skill integration, is necessary to ensure its alignment with the learning outcomes, values, and methodologies promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum. Textbooks are essential components in the teaching and learning process. Textbooks are one type of text, a book for use in an educational curriculum (Brown, 2001; Fuyudloturromaniyyah, 2015). They provide a structured framework for teachers to deliver instructional materials and help learners develop their language skills. Textbooks serve multiple purposes in the classroom. They can be used as a resource for presentation materials, a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction, a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and more, a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities, and even a syllabus reflecting learning objectives. Additionally, textbooks can support less experienced teachers who are still gaining confidence in their teaching abilities.

Textbooks are often selected without a thorough analysis, which can result in the use of materials that do not meet learners' needs and may lead to ineffective learning outcomes. The quality of a textbook is critical, and its selection should be based on careful evaluation to ensure alignment with both the curriculum and the learners' level. In English Language Teaching (ELT), the quality of textbooks plays a significant role in determining the success or failure of the learning process. Analysing English textbooks is essential to assess their effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning. This involves examining the content, structure, and activities to ensure they are relevant, up-to-date, and culturally appropriate (Weninger, 2018). Such analysis helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of the exercises of a textbook, enabling educators to make informed decisions when selecting instructional materials. Ultimately, understanding these aspects allows teachers to choose resources that better address learners' needs, leading to more effective instruction and improved learning outcomes. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this means textbooks must not only support language acquisition but also reflect the values of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, promote critical thinking, and accommodate diverse learning styles. Without rigorous analysis, textbooks may fall short in delivering the competencies and flexibility demanded by the curriculum, potentially undermining its transformative intent. Therefore, systematic textbook evaluation is a necessary step in ensuring that educational resources truly support the curriculum's objectives and foster meaningful learning experiences.

Analysing how textbooks themselves enhance comparison competencies through tasks provides an interesting indication of how they may contribute to curricula in practice (Simon & Budke, 2020). The information obtained from the analysis of the textbook is of utmost importance not only for understanding the merits and appropriateness of the current textbook but also for the effectiveness of language teaching in general (Kayaoğlu, 2011; Fuyudloturromaniyyah, 2015). Furthermore, textbook evaluator should determine their priorities and create a checklist using the previously given criteria, adding others according to their priorities, as suggested by the author (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ayu & Indrawati, 2018). Regarding Cunningsworth's assertion, the researcher favours using textbook criteria for evaluation that were adapted from (Akhmad et al., 2022) :

Content Relevance

The material should be appropriate for the learners' age, level, and sociocultural background. It should reflect real-life situations and address learners' communicative needs. In the context of the Grow with English textbook, content is evaluated based on its relevance to the sixth-grade level and alignment with the themes outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Language Skills Coverage

A comprehensive English textbook should integrate the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The Merdeka Curriculum further categorises these into three core elements: Listening-Speaking, Reading-Viewing, and Writing-Presenting. A good textbook should provide balanced and interconnected practice in all these areas.

Cultural Appropriateness

The content should promote cultural understanding and sensitivity without reinforcing stereotypes. It should present diverse perspectives and encourage learners to appreciate cultural differences while affirming their own identity. This is particularly important in the Merdeka Curriculum, which supports the development of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, a student profile rooted in national and global values.

Visual Layout and Design

An effective textbook utilises visual elements such as images, illustrations, colours, and clear formatting to support learning and maintain students' interest. A clean and attractive layout also helps learners navigate the material more efficiently.

Grammar and Vocabulary Balance

Language input should be graded appropriately and presented in context. The integration of grammar and vocabulary must support communicative competence, not just rote memorisation. Opportunities to recycle and reinforce key structures and words are essential for long-term retention.

Methodological Approach

The pedagogical approach embedded in the textbook should reflect modern language teaching methodologies. In current EFL practice, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) are widely recognised for their emphasis on interaction, real-world communication, and meaningful task completion. Textbooks should provide opportunities for learners to engage in activities that reflect these principles, encouraging participation and authentic use of language.

Several studies have addressed the evaluation of English textbooks in the Indonesian EFL context, particularly focusing on their alignment with curriculum standards and pedagogical effectiveness. Aryani et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of critically reviewing textbook tasks to ensure their alignment with communicative goals and student engagement. They found that many textbooks lack tasks that promote interaction, creativity, and real-life language use. Similarly, Fuyudloturromaniyyah (2015) highlights that textbooks should reflect scientific approaches, including observing, questioning, and experimenting, in order to support skill-based and student-centered learning as required by curriculum guidelines.

Ayu and Inderawati (2018) analysed English tasks in a junior high school textbook and found limitations in the variety and depth of language skills presented. Their findings indicate the importance of integrating all four skills, especially listening and speaking, in meaningful, contextualised ways. Furthermore, investigated an elementary textbook and emphasised that instructional materials should not only cover linguistic elements but also align with the values of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as the Pancasila Student Profile. This aligns with the rubric developed by Akhmad et al. (2022), which includes indicators for evaluating textbook quality, ranging from curriculum alignment and cultural values to skill integration and visual presentation.

Despite these advancements, there remains a lack of research focusing on sixth-grade textbooks and their capacity to promote listening and speaking skills in alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum. Previous evaluations often prioritise reading and writing components, overlooking the importance of oral communication in early language acquisition. This study aims to address this gap by examining *Grow with English* for sixth grade, analysing how well it supports integrated and curriculum-relevant tasks.

The textbook *Grow with English* for sixth-grade is one of the most widely used English textbooks in Indonesian elementary schools, published by Erlangga and designed for sixth-grade students. The textbook features a wide range of exercises and engaging activities such as games, songs, chants, colouring, role-playing, and craft exhibitions. Each unit is organised thematically and is claimed to be based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Despite its widespread use, there has been little research to examine whether the "Grow with English" textbook aligns with the principles and competencies outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum emphasises three main elements: Listening-Speaking, Reading-Viewing, and Writing-Presenting. Therefore, the writer is interested in analysing the textbook's content, especially its exercises, to determine whether it effectively reflects the learning outcomes stated in the Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the "Grow with English" textbook to determine its relevance and alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum. This research aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook exercises and provide recommendations for their improvement, particularly in terms of skill coverage and conformity to the expected learning outcomes. To address this need, the writer conducts a content analysis focusing specifically on the Listening-Speaking exercises provided in the textbook. The study is titled "Textbook Analysis of "Grow with English" For Sixth Grade: Alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum", with the "Grow with English" textbook selected as the main object of the research. This study aims to critically evaluate the *Grow with English* textbook for sixth-grade elementary students (Erlangga, 2024 edition) in light of the principles and competencies outlined in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The central focus is on the Listening and Speaking elements within Phase C (grades V&VI) of the curriculum, as these skills are fundamental for developing communicative competence, promoting learner autonomy, and fostering active participation, elements

explicitly emphasised in the *Capaian Pembelajaran* (learning outcomes) and the Pancasila Student Profile.

To conduct this evaluation, the study adopts a content analysis, employing a rubric adapted from Akhmad et al. (2022). The rubric includes criteria that reflect both pedagogical and contextual standards: (1) Content Relevance, (2) Language Skills Coverage, (3) Cultural Appropriateness, (4) Visual Layout and Design, (5) Grammar and Vocabulary, and (6) Methodological Approach. This comprehensive framework allows for a systematic and in-depth examination of the textbook's strengths and limitations. The overarching objective is not only to assess the degree to which the textbook aligns with national educational goals but also to provide practical implications for teachers, curriculum designers, and textbook developers. The findings are expected to offer constructive recommendations for improving textbook quality and ensuring that learning materials support the holistic and differentiated learning approach promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum.

METHOD

This study adopted a content analysis method as introduced by Krippendorff (2018), stating that content analysis is the use of research methods to employ accurate context and reliable conclusions from texts. Books, book chapters, essays, interviews, debates, newspaper headlines and articles, historical records, speeches, dialogues, advertisements, theatre, casual conversations, or any other instance of communicative language might be considered a text. The aim was to assess how far the sixth-grade English textbook *Grow with English*, published by Erlangga, aligns with the listening and speaking learning outcomes defined in the Merdeka Curriculum. The evaluative framework was adapted from the national curriculum and criteria established in textbook analysis research. The main data source was the *Grow with English* textbook intended for sixth-grade elementary students. The *Grow with English* was selected due to its wide distribution and its stated conformity with the Merdeka Curriculum, specifically in the exercises of 6 units focusing on the Listening-Speaking elements. As the reference standard, the official *Capaian Pembelajaran* (CP) document for Phase C (Fase C) (grades V and VI) of English, published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, served as the benchmark for curriculum alignment. To conduct this evaluation, the study employed a rubric adapted from Akhmad et al. (2022); content relevance was prioritised to ensure alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum listening and speaking elements. However, all criteria within the evaluation rubric were considered equally important, ensuring that it not only meets academic standards but also supports meaningful, engaging, and inclusive learning experiences for young learners. Moreover, Data were analysed involving narrative synthesis and thematic classification. Each unit's rubric results were described in terms of how they aligned with CP indicators and the Akhmad et al. (2022) textbook quality framework. The analysis focused on two themes: (1) analyse the exercises in the textbook using learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) correlate the exercises of speaking and listening elements with learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum. This approach provided an objective and comprehensive overview of the textbook's support for English language development in line with Merdeka Curriculum expectations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings focus on the exercises within each unit that reflect any of the checklist instrument. Through the analysis, the following six criteria were identified:

Content relevance

Across all units, specifically Listening-Speaking elements in the exercises of the textbook demonstrate strong age and level appropriateness tailored to sixth-grade students. The topics and exercises match the cognitive and developmental stage of learners, ensuring engagement and comprehension. For instance, in Unit 1, the topic about holidays is engaging and suitable, with exercises that are neither too difficult nor overly simple (e.g., page 6). In

Unit 2, the storytelling theme works well with learners' age; suitable reading and listening materials appear on pages 23-24. Unit 3, animal adventure theme is compelling, engaging students with familiar and interesting content (page 44). In Unit 4, food and shopping topics are relatable to learners' daily life experiences (pages 84, 87). In Unit 5, the Environmental awareness theme is accessible and relevant at this level (page 101). And in Unit 6, Technology-related topics align well with students' interests and understanding of digital tools (pages 120-121).

Thus, Listening-Speaking elements in the exercises of each unit reflect realistic scenarios (real-life context) that Indonesian sixth-grade learners can relate to, enhancing communicative relevance and practical language use. For instance, in Unit 1, discussions about vacations relate to real-life experiences, such as talking about holidays (page 11). In Unit 2, daily routines, sleeping habits, and home settings are described, connecting to students' lives (page 32). In Unit 3, the exercises focus on animal descriptions. These facts help students build knowledge about wildlife and nature, which is directly applicable to the real world, but still linked to the theme (fables), and the exercises are understandable (pages 46, 53). In Unit 4, shopping and food ordering replicate real communication situations (page 89). In Unit 5, Environmental actions like recycling and saving water connect with learners' behaviours (page 102). And in Unit 6, Use of technology and internet safety reflect students' daily digital experiences (page 126).

Furthermore, all the Listening-Speaking elements in the exercises of all units align with the Merdeka Curriculum competencies, addressing the Phase C learning outcomes for Grade 6, including structured language tasks and interactive communication. For instance, in Unit 1, Retelling events and asking questions connected to curriculum goals (pages 6, 9). In Unit 2, focus on identifying information and patterned sentences (pages 25, 26-28). In Unit 3, asking and answering about animals, aligned with Phase C competencies (pages 45, 47-48). In Unit 4, language functions like asking for items and responding with possession (page 87). In Unit 5, there is an emphasis on giving advice and opinions about environmental care (page 102). And in Unit 6, supports expressing opinions and describing technology functions (page 123).

Language Skills Coverage

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasises integrated language skills – listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting. The Grow with English textbook supports most of these competencies through structured activities in Units 1–6, with a strong focus on listening and speaking tasks embedded in dialogues, role-plays, and listening passages. For instance, in the aspect balance of Language skills (Listening-Speaking elements) in unit 1, Integration of listening and speaking exercises using holiday-themed tasks (page 12). In Unit 2, listening activities lead to speaking exercises enhanced by visual aids (pages 23-28). In Unit 3, listening to animal facts is followed by speaking tasks like describing or guessing animals (pages 44, 46). In Unit 4, food vocabulary and dialogues are practised in listening and oral role-play tasks (pages 87, 89). In Unit 5, listening passages on environmental topics are followed by speaking discussions (page 113). And in Unit 6, listening sections about technology usage are paired with pair work and discussions (pages 119, 123, 126).

Thus, in the aspect of integrated skills, exercises are designed to integrate multiple language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) within meaningful and contextualised activities. For instance, in Unit 1, combining listening and speaking with reading and writing related to holidays (pages 4, 10). In Unit 2, learners engage with reading and listening before producing oral descriptions (page 32). In Unit 3, reading animal texts, writing descriptions, and then speaking presentations (pages 44, 46). In Unit 4, reading, speaking, and writing are combined for activities like making shopping lists (pages 79, 82-83). Unit 5, reading environmental facts, speaking about actions, and writing short paragraphs (page 101). And in Unit 6, writing about favourite gadgets, reading tech information, and presenting opinions (pages 124, 125).

Cultural appropriateness

In the aspect of cultural sensitivity, this aspect measures whether the exercises respectfully represent diverse cultures, foster intercultural awareness, and avoid stereotypes.

It also relates to whether the content exposes students to a variety of cultural views beyond their local context, promoting inclusiveness and respect for diversity. For instance, Unit 1 is primarily localised, focusing on students' own holiday experiences and activities familiar to Indonesian learners (e.g., storytelling about vacations on pages 6 and 11). Although the content is culturally relatable and appropriate, it lacks significant exposure to broader cultural diversity or intercultural comparisons. The unit focuses on local or familiar cultural contexts without addressing or introducing learners to diverse cultural traditions or perspectives outside their immediate experience. Unit 2 focuses on storytelling related to family routines, rooms, and daily life in familiar settings (pages 23–24, 32). While it effectively connects to students' lives, it remains culturally homogeneous, featuring mostly local contexts and characters without including multicultural references or fostering intercultural awareness. In unit 3, although this unit uses animals as a central theme, which can have global relevance, the materials do not explicitly engage with cultural diversity. The focus is on fables and animal adventures (pages 44, 45, 49) without much discussion of different cultures or the cultural significance of animals in various regions. The cultural content is underrepresented, and there is minimal intercultural awareness development. Unit 4 covers shopping and food-related topics that are very practical and familiar, but the cultural scope is rather narrow or local (pages 84–89). The content uses everyday market scenarios and typical food vocabulary, but it does not explicitly introduce learners to diverse food cultures or practices beyond their immediate context. There is no engagement with cultural diversity in food traditions or global market environments. In unit 5, Activities and visuals (pages 101–111) focus on local environmental practices like recycling and saving water, without integrating global viewpoints or international environmental movements. And in unit 6, Content featuring tech devices, internet use, and digital practices (pages 119–126) stays within local or national contexts without reference to broader, culturally diverse technology environments.

In the Aspect of Student Profile Pancasila, Units consistently promote values aligned with the Pancasila profile, such as cooperation, independence, creativity, and responsibility, through group activities and personal storytelling. For instance, in Unit 1, group work and sharing personal holiday stories encourage cooperation and independence (page 6). In Unit 2, individual and pair tasks promote personal reflection and teamwork (page 32). Unit 3, teamwork and curiosity foster respect for living beings and creativity (pages 45, 49). Unit 4, collaborative dialogues and choice-based tasks build independence and cooperation (page 89). In Unit 5, environmental responsibility and cooperation are emphasised in group projects and discussions (pages 104, 111). In Unit 6, critical thinking and creativity are supported through tech interviews and opinion sharing (pages 120–121).

Visual Layout and Design

In the aspect of Visual Engagement and Support, Exercises of textbook pages include colourful, clear, and engaging visuals that aid comprehension and motivate learners across all units. For instance, in Unit 1, attractive layouts with relevant pictures supporting holiday themes (page 6). In Unit 2, characters and illustrations complement storytelling and daily life topics (page 25). In Unit 3, bright animal illustrations are used in vocabulary and comprehension tasks (pages 42, 47–48). In Unit 4, colourful images of food and market scenes aid vocabulary acquisition (pages 84–86). In Unit 5, illustrations show children engaging in environmental care activities (pages 107–108, 109). And in Unit 6, the relevance of depictions of digital devices and children using technology in daily life (pages 120–121, 122).

In the aspect of Image-Content Alignment, visuals directly reinforce lesson vocabulary and concepts, ensuring a strong connection between images and language lessons. For instance, in Unit 1, holiday images clearly relate to vocabulary and activities (page 8). In Unit 2, pictures support vocabulary for matching and labelling (pages 23–24). In Unit 3, animal images help reinforce terms like tail, claws, and fur (page 41). In Unit 4, food illustrations match the vocabulary around shopping and market situations (pages 87, 89). In Unit 5, visuals depict specific environmental actions to accompany language content (pages 105, 110). In Unit 6, images reflect vocabulary around tech devices and online activities (pages 120–121).

In the aspect of Thematic Integration, exercises systematically connect language learning with real-life themes and other subjects, fostering interdisciplinary understanding. For instance, in Unit 1, the holiday theme ties into geography and social activities (page 8). In Unit 2, integration with local folktales and literacy themes in home settings (pages 26-28). In Unit 3, the animal theme connects with environmental science (pages 45, 49). In Unit 4, food and shopping are linked with health education and basic economics (pages 82-83, 86). In Unit 5, environmental topics relate to science and civic education (page 109). In Unit 6, the technology theme aligns with science and digital literacy disciplines (page 119).

Grammar and Vocabulary

In the aspect of Functional Language Use, grammar and vocabulary are practised in meaningful contexts reflecting real-life communication demands appropriate for sixth graders. For instance, in Unit 1, the use of the past tense in dialogues and writing tasks about holidays (page 11). In Unit 2, past tense verbs are introduced to describe people, routines, and locations (page 32). In Unit 3, present simple with adjectives used to describe animals (page 41). In Unit 4, countable/uncountable nouns and the use of "some/any" in shopping interactions (pages 82-83, 87). In Unit 5, modals like "should" and "must" are employed for environmental advice (page 103). And in Unit 6, use of modals "can," action verbs like "download" and phrases "use it for..." in a tech context (pages 120-121).

In the aspect of Grade-Level Grading and Contextualization, language inputs (recordings, dialogues, written tasks) suit sixth graders' real-life contexts and experiences, focusing on age-appropriate content. For instance, in Unit 1, vocabulary and scenarios are presented around holiday experiences (pages 9, 10, 12). In Unit 2, home-related content such as bedrooms and daily routines (pages 29, 32). In Unit 3, language related to animals and fables, reflecting student interests (pages 45, 49). In Unit 4, food, shopping, and requests are appropriate for daily conversation (page 89). In Unit 5, simple yet informative vocabulary around recycling and conservation (page 113). And in Unit 6, language focuses on household/school tech use and digital experiences (pages 120-121).

Methodological Approach

The methodological approaches used in this textbook are Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL). These two approaches emphasise authentic communication and meaningful tasks in the language learning process. CLT encourages students to use language in real social contexts, while TBL guides students to complete tasks that are relevant to everyday life, making learning more contextual and student-centered. In practice, the evaluation of these methodological approaches is divided into student-centered activities aspect. The student-centered activities aspect reflects how much the learning activities allow students to be active, interact, collaborate, and provide opportunities to share their opinions, ideas, and personal experiences freely during learning.

In the aspect of Student-Centered activities, all units strongly emphasise student-centered learning approaches, encouraging interaction, creativity, and autonomy through a variety of activities. For instance, in Unit 1, activities like interviews, storytelling, and role-play support creativity and interaction (page 6). In Unit 2, drawing, retelling, and group work engage learners actively (pages 26-28, 32). In Unit 3, role-plays as zookeepers or adventurers encourage imagination and collaboration (pages 46, 53). In Unit 4, role-playing market scenarios and planning shopping lists involve students in practical communication (pages 87, 89). In Unit 5, group discussions and projects like environmental poster creation promote autonomy and action-based learning (pages 109, 111). And in Unit 6, interviews, opinion sharing, presentations, and creativity in tech assignments support learner autonomy (page 123).

Thus, in the exercises, students are given opportunities to personalise responses and express ideas beyond fixed answers, encouraging active engagement and language creativity. For instance, in Unit 1, students describe their holidays in writing and oral presentation formats (page 11). In Unit 2, creative descriptions related to family and home environments (pages 29, 32). In Unit 3, open-ended questions about favourite animals encourage elaborated responses (pages 45, 49). In Unit 4, speaking prompts ask learners about food preferences and

reasons (pages 79, 82-85, 87, 89). In Unit 5, poster making and sharing personal ideas on environmental care (pages 105, 111). And in Unit 6, students describe tech experiences and suggest ideas for digital tools, including making chants (pages 119, 123).

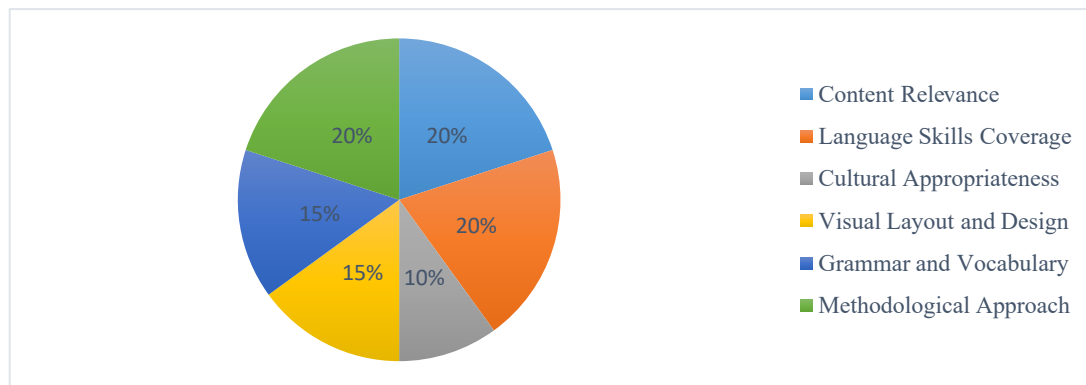


Figure 1. Alignment the Exercises *Grow with English* with the Learning Outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum

Discussion

The Conformity of the exercises of the textbook with the Learning Objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum

Based on the findings, the exercises in the textbook show a strong alignment between its thematic content and the daily realities of sixth-grade students in Indonesia. Units like "My Holiday Was Great," "Someone is Sleeping in My Bed," and "Do You Have Any Oranges?" present topics grounded in familiar environments such as home, school, and market settings. This approach supports contextual learning, helping students relate English usage to their lived experiences. Ayu and Inderawati (2018) emphasise that real-life themes enhance learner motivation and comprehension, especially in EFL contexts. However, the representation of diverse social and cultural settings within the textbook remains limited. Most units reflect urban middle-class environments, overlooking Indonesia's cultural richness and rural realities. As Sarifah and Ambarwati (2023) suggest, textbooks should reflect the local context and cultural variety of learners to foster inclusivity. Including regional stories, traditions, or local characters would enhance the cultural relevance and encourage identity formation among students.

The integration of language skills in the textbook is present but leans heavily toward Listening and Speaking as isolated elements rather than fully integrated skills. While tasks often combine listening with oral repetition or pair dialogue, connections to reading and writing are minimal and often procedural. This pattern suggests an imbalance that could impact holistic language acquisition (Ayu & Indrawati, 2018). Some units include semi-integrated exercises that bridge skills, such as listening to a story and retelling it or reading a dialogue and performing it aloud. For instance, Unit 1 has students listen to a holiday story, then work in pairs to share their own. These combinations provide limited, yet important, exposure to multiple modes of communication.

The exercises of the textbook reflect the aspects of the Pancasila Student Profile by promoting collaboration, independence, and empathy. Tasks like pair discussions, group-based exercises, and role-play foster values such as gotong royong and mandiri. Unit 1's dialogue-based questions about holidays encourage sharing personal experiences, thus reinforcing respect and interpersonal communication (Barlian & Solekah, 2022). In Unit 5 (Let Us Save the World), learners are asked to reflect on environmental issues and suggest solutions, nurturing the value of global citizenship (*berkebinekaan global*). Likewise, Unit 3 (It Is an Amazing Animal Adventure) fosters empathy and moral awareness by promoting care for animals. These align with Pancasila dimensions such as environmental stewardship and religious values (Millah et al., 2024; Maharani & Safitri, 2024). Nevertheless, aspects such as critical thinking (*bernalalar kritis*) and creativity (*kreatif*) are underrepresented. Most activities emphasise repetition and limited production, missing opportunities for learners to explore ideas or present creative responses. Integrating tasks that promote reflection,

justification of opinions, or simple debates could better support holistic character development and align with the broader goals of the Merdeka Curriculum (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

The exercises of the textbook display a well-structured and visually engaging layout, which is appropriate for the cognitive and developmental levels of sixth-grade students. The use of bright colours, clear fonts, and consistent section formatting (such as vocabulary boxes and illustrations) contributes to an accessible and attractive learning experience. Visuals are consistently integrated with language content, particularly in supporting listening and speaking comprehension (Ayu & Indrawati, 2018). Illustrations in the textbook are also used to stimulate learner interest and support emotional engagement. Units such as "It Is an Amazing Animal Adventure" and "Let Us Save the World" contain visually rich content that not only helps learners understand vocabulary and context but also motivates them to participate actively. Sarifah and Ambarwati (2023) note that affective engagement is essential for sustained language learning, and visuals that appeal to learners' interests can greatly enhance that motivation.

Thus, each unit integrates language components (vocabulary and grammar) that suit the learners' developmental stage and communication needs. Grammar instruction in the textbook is contextually embedded, often presented through dialogues or short texts. For example, the past tense is introduced through holiday recounts in Unit 1, while Unit 4 presents countable and uncountable nouns in a market setting. This contextual approach aligns with the functional-notional principles of communicative language teaching, where grammar supports meaningful communication rather than isolated rule memorisation (Ayu & Indrawati, 2018). Vocabulary is thematically organised across units and reinforced through matching activities, labelling pictures, and guided speaking tasks. Units like "It Is an Amazing Animal Adventure" and "Let Us Save the World" integrate key terms related to animals and the environment, respectively. Repetition across different activities helps learners retain vocabulary and apply it in both oral and written contexts. These features are consistent with the vocabulary acquisition strategies suggested by (Aryani et al, 2018).

The methodological design of exercises in the *Grow with English* demonstrates a mix of structural and communicative techniques, consistent with EFL teaching practices. Controlled drills and repetition tasks provide foundational practice, while communicative tasks allow learners to use language in meaningful contexts. Units often begin with dialogues or listening texts, followed by grammar practice and speaking activities. For instance, Unit 2 includes a story followed by tasks such as acting out dialogues and asking questions based on pictures. These activities promote oral fluency and are suitable for the early stages of language learning. However, effective textbook design should move beyond controlled input to include opportunities for personalised expression (Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2012). In *Grow with English*, freer production tasks such as storytelling or interviews are present, but could be expanded.

Furthermore, based on the statement above, the exercises of the *Grow with English* textbook for sixth-grade in all units demonstrate substantial alignment with the learning objectives outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum Phase C (grades V and VI). The curriculum emphasises students' ability to engage in basic communicative tasks using patterned sentences in predictable classroom and social contexts. This is evident in Unit 1 (*My Holiday Was Great*), where students are introduced to expressions recounting past activities, such as "What did you do on your holiday?" through listening and speaking practices found on pages 4–6 and 8–12. In Unit 2 (*Someone is Sleeping in My Bed*), vocabulary and dialogues about home environments are introduced. Students describe furniture and rooms using "There is/There are" structures and prepositions of place (pp. 23–29, 32), matching the curriculum's demand for contextual communication. Unit 3 (*It's an Amazing Animal Adventure*) reinforces descriptive skills where students learn to describe animals' characteristics and abilities using "can/can't" and appropriate adjectives (pp. 41–42, 44–49, 53).



Figure 2. Cover by "Grow with English" for unit 1 - 6 Textbook

In Unit 4 (*Do You Have Any Oranges?*), students engage in shopping-related dialogues involving countable and uncountable nouns, quantities, and polite requests (pp. 79, 82–87, 89). Unit 5 (*Let Us Save the World*) integrates environmental topics with modal verbs “should/shouldn’t”, encouraging value-based language use while fostering environmental responsibility (pp. 101–113). Unit 6 (*Journey into the Tech Universe*) introduces technology-related vocabulary (pp. 119–126, 128), encouraging discussions about gadget use, although multimodal and digital interactions remain limited. While the units reflect familiar Indonesian contexts, opportunities to foster intercultural communication and broader global awareness remain underdeveloped.

Moreover, Exercises in *Grow with English* aligns notably well with the Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) or learning outcomes for Phase C (grades V&VI) of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in its Listening and Speaking tasks. From Units 1 to 6, learners are encouraged to participate in basic communicative exchanges such as asking for clarification, responding to instructions, and expressing preferences. These activities are consistent with the CP outcomes that emphasise patterned dialogue and social interaction in predictable classroom settings (Ayu & Indrawati, 2018).

Table 1. Number of tasks or instructions in textbooks

CODES		UNITS		1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL
LS	Listening-Speaking Tasks			7	5	8	7	12	7	46

According to the content analysis, there are 46 Listening and Speaking tasks distributed across the six units (see table 1), with activities like “Listen and repeat” (e.g. page 4), “Ask your friend” (e.g. page 6) and “Make questions based on pictures” (e.g. page 45). These tasks set learners’ interactional competence and contribute to developing fluency in structured settings. For instance, Unit 3 allows learners to describe animals and express opinions, while Unit 5 connects environmental topics with speaking practices, which are reflective of cross-subject learning.

Despite these strengths, the textbook heavily relies on controlled tasks, limiting students’ opportunities for spontaneous speech or open-ended dialogue. As Aryani et al. (2018) note, excessive mechanical drilling can hinder the development of authentic communicative competence. To address this, the inclusion of inquiry-based and dialogic tasks such as storytelling, problem-solving, or short presentations would better align the textbook with the CP’s broader communicative objectives and promote deeper language engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

This study evaluated the exercises in the *Grow with English* textbook for sixth-grade elementary students in relation to the Merdeka Curriculum’s Phase C (Grades V and VI), focusing on the Listening and Speaking components. The findings show that the textbook aligns substantially with the curriculum’s learning objectives by presenting age-appropriate and contextually relevant content on themes such as holidays, home routines, animals, shopping, environmental awareness, and technology, supported by engaging visuals, structured grammar and vocabulary, and student-centered activities that foster interaction, autonomy, and creativity. However, the analysis also identifies areas for improvement, including limited integration of reading and writing skills, underrepresentation of cultural diversity, and a lack of emphasis on intercultural awareness, inclusivity, critical thinking, and

creative expression. Thus, the predominance of controlled exercises may restrict opportunities for spontaneous communication and deeper engagement, highlighting the need for enhancements that would better support holistic learning and character development in line with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. To address these shortcomings, teachers should supplement textbook content with diverse materials and interactive strategies that promote critical thinking and authentic language use. Authors are encouraged to design textbooks that reflect a broader cultural spectrum and foster holistic skill development. Policymakers, meanwhile, should provide clear guidelines and support for textbook development that ensures alignment with curriculum goals while embracing innovation and inclusivity.

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