An ELT Textbook Analysis Through a Pedagogical Lens: A Case Study in Turkiye

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Abstract

As in many countries, English textbooks are key elements in language teaching in Turkish schools. Because Türkiye does not have an English-speaking environment, English can only be learned in the classroom using English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks and their accompanying materials. Therefore, a systematic and rigorous approach is needed when analyzing ELT textbooks in order to help students learn the language effectively. This study critically analyzes a local ELT textbook, widely utilized in Turkish schools, to identify its effectiveness and assess its alignment with pedagogical principles and national curriculum standards. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, a representative chapter of the textbook was analyzed for task design, cognitive engagement, interaction types, and content variety. The findings reveal a structured approach to language instruction, emphasizing written tasks and non-fictional content, but with significant limitations in fostering oral communication, learner autonomy, and high-level critical thinking skills. Recommendations for improvement include integrating useful content and increasing collaborative tasks to improve language learning. This study provides insights for enhancing ELT materials in Türkiye.

Keywords: English Textbooks, English Language Teaching, Textbook Analysis

1. Introduction

In Turkish schools, English textbooks play a crucial role in language teaching. Many audio and visual materials are also utilized when teaching and learning English. The textbook is one type among the various materials used, and functions as a primary resource for instructional activities for teachers. As Vitta (2023) states, ELT textbooks support the development of language proficiency and provide material that a teacher might need to teach his/her lesson. In this regard, textbooks can be used in several ways in the classroom: as the main resource for teaching, a material to support the learning and teaching process, an initiator of activities, and an educational program on which the teacher depends. Moreover, Hycroft (1998) discusses the fact that it becomes easier to gauge the student's achievements through the use of textbooks and the textbook acts as a crucial psychological support for students. It can also be used by teachers to design a syllabus for the course and make the learning environment safe, in the sense that it paves the way for them. By offering reading texts and other visual exercises, a textbook can help the teacher economize on the time spent searching for or creating course materials. In short, textbooks have a major function in assisting the process of language teaching and learning (Khachaturyan & Ghalachyan, 2023). They also enable the sharing of the same input in different classes and create a chance to evaluate the language learning process in a simple way (Abdelwahab, 2013).

Given the importance of textbooks, in the 1990s there was a greater focus among researchers and teachers on evaluating the materials. Tomlinson (1999) underlines the fact that the content, the instructions, the purpose and the tasks are closely worked on during any analysis of material. Hence, to improve the English learning process, especially in contexts where English is not a second language, textbooks should be given the utmost attention and analyzed thoroughly, to determine whether there any points that can be improved and enable their effective use.

2. Literature Review

2.1 EFL Textbooks in Primary and Secondary Education in Turkiye

According to the Turkish primary and secondary education curricula (Ministry of National Education, 2018a, 2018b), language teaching should be formulated in accordance with the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR "provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (p.1). Therefore, since 2020, Communicative Language Teaching has been the officially preferred language teaching method in state schools (Khan & Tas, 2020).

In this context, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) defines how local textbooks should be designed, and commissions chosen Turkish publishers and authors to work and prepare them. After the preparation period, these textbooks are evaluated based on four criteria

to determine whether they align with the national objectives of foreign language instruction. These criteria are prepared and announced by the Turkish Ministry of National Education Board of Education and Discipline (Act no: 27040, 2013) and list some requirements, like appropriateness of visual and content presentation, compliance of the content with the official curriculum, adequacy of the scientific aspects, and the suitability of visual and content design (Khan & Tas, 2020). Afterwards, the MoNE provides these textbooks to schools for free.

2.2 Studies on ELT Textbooks and Content Analysis

There are various studies in which local English textbooks are analysed for different purposes. For example, Guzel Yuce and Emir (2020) analysed the textbooks regarding culture of thinking. They investigated the *Moonlight 8th Grade Textbook* and found that some of the activities and the expressions used in them did not support the culture of thinking and could cause problems. Also Kucuk (2024), in her study on the analysis of the textbook, underlines the necessity of more activity integration in the ELT textbooks to foster critical thinking. Cakir (2021), on the other hand, evaluated English textbooks from a sociolinguistic perspective. She concluded that the textbook for the 3rd grade, *Just Fun English*, was hardly in accordance with sociolinguistic patterns which proved to be something negative for the textbook under consideration. Similarly, Yigit and Dolgunsoz (2023) focused on the linguistic and cultural context of the local Turkish textbooks, concluding that more group activities were needed to foster communication and the textbooks were dominantly displaying the native culture. Likewise, Topal (2022) explored the teaching of pronunciation and how textbooks could help improve it. Extending the focus to the overall effectiveness of textbooks, Alsan and Eminoglu Kucuktepe (2023) assessed the 6th grade English textbook based on the teachers' perspective and found that, although the majority of educators had a positive view of the coursebook, they thought it was unsatisfactory when it came to encouraging students to learn the language in the long run. Besides, in general the studies carried out in previous years (Cakit Ezici, 2006; Arikan, 2008; Huang, 2019) found that teachers and students had a negative opinion of their textbooks. In the study by Cakit Ezici (2006), the textbook prepared by MoNE for 9th grade, "New Bridge to Success 3", was found to be complicated, in terms of the grammar and vocabulary, with regard to the level of the students. They believed the textbook had been created without taking the audio, visual and kinesthetic learning styles into consideration.

From another perspective, Tekir and Arikan (2007) found out that 7th grade students and teachers had negative opinions on *Let's Speak English 7*. Moreover, Solhi et al. (2020) report that the English textbooks used in Turkish state primary schools are not sufficient, as they lack important aspects of language acquisition, and do not encourage autonomy or critical thinking. Khan and Tas (2020), on the other hand, compared an international with a local (Turkish) textbook in terms of the emphasis on teaching speaking skills, and the international textbook was found to be more effective. The coursebooks analysed were *Talent* 1 (International) and *Teenwise* (local). They emphasized that the local textbook was heavily dependent on structural activities. In another study, Ozes (2012) also found that teachers had a negative view of the activities, skills, language, grammar and vocabulary activities of the textbook for 8th grade, entitled *Spot on 8.*

When it comes to the international context, Hajar (2013) looked at the humanistic elements in a global textbook, *Headway Intermediate Student's Book* (4th Edition), and concluded that humanization of the textbook needs to be improved to help language learners connect the tasks with the real world. In another study, Rindawati et al. (2014) found that the textbook Bahasa Inggris: *When English Rings the Bell* included tasks which required learners to construct a text and apply their general knowledge. Most of the tasks focused on meaning, and Rindawati et al. (2014) concluded that the textbook aimed to improve learners' communication skills by encouraging them to build text, to use the language and to focus on the meaning, and to build positive affective aspects through the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Fuyudloturromaniyyah (2015) studied one of the textbooks used in Indonesia for 7th grade, wanting to find out if it was following the scientific approach prescribed by the curriculum released by the Indonesian MoNE. Although the images, songs, games and various types of exercise made the textbook attractive, it was not implementing the scientific perspective suggested by the Indonesian MoNe. Similarly, Alkhaldi and Kayapinar (2022), who investigated a sample ELT textbook in Jordan, concluded that the objectives stated by the textbook and the content included in it were not in harmony. In their research on developing ELT textbooks, Erkir and Alkhaldi (2025) underlined the fact that textbooks need to address different learner preferences, relate to their culture and lend themselves to creative teaching practices. They must be culturally relatable, flexible and inclusive, to address diverse learner preferences and enable creative teaching practices.

Hence, it can be concluded that more studies are needed to improve the EFL textbooks and enhance language learning, if English is not spoken in a particular country and the textbook is the primary source used. These studies might help give feedback to the publishers and contribute to language learning in a country. Bearing this in mind, this study aims to make some constructive comments and suggest changes in the textbooks prepared locally.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive qualitative research design was applied for data analysis. As the data is collected from the documents, the research conducted is descriptive qualitative research. Moreover, Bowen (2009) states that documents are indispensable items in qualitative research, as systematic procedures are used to work on the data set. In this context, a textbook that can be found online or in hardcopy. In this study, a chapter from a textbook has been selected for in-depth analysis and the researchers have used document analysis. Littlejohn (1998; 2011) suggests analyzing about 10% to 15% of the total material, to get a snapshot impression of a set of materials. So, the sample selected for this research included one chapter (10%) of the total material and a total number of 28 tasks.

Tasks were analyzed by adapting Littlejohn's framework (1998; 2011, see Appendix A). This framework evaluates the textbook no matter

how it is used in the classroom, as Littlejohn (1998) analyzes the material 'as it is'. A random unit from the textbook was analyzed, because all the units follow the same format.

3.2 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions with reference to *English Textbook Bilim ve Kultur 7th year:*

What are the qualities of the ELT *Textbook "Bilim ve Kultur" 7th year*?

What pedagogic values does the ELT *Textbook "Bilim ve Kultur" 7th year have*?

3.3 Instrument and Framework

Littlejohn's (2011) evaluation framework was employed to collect the data. This checklist was chosen as the framework, enabling the researchers to assess the textbooks regardless of how they are utilized in the classroom, since a set of materials can be used quite differently in numerous circumstances, depending on the information, capacities and inclinations, plus the preferences, of different teachers (Rashidi & Zare Asl, 2011). The framework has an 'in-depth' and objective nature owing to the detailed analysis of individual activities. The two parts of the checklist were: Task Analysis Sheets (TAS), where the researchers checked the items in a standard unit of the the coursebooks, and the 'Design' part, through which the researchers scored the textbooks according to nine subsections. The latter part is mainly about the pedagogical philosophy. The design part includes the following sections: 1**.** Aims and objectives; 2. Principles of selection; 3. Principles of sequencing; 4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter; 5**.** Types of teaching/learning activities.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

A structured and systematic approach was used to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings in this textbook analysis. The process involved the selection of materials, document analysis, and the application of a framework. Below are the key steps in the data collection procedure:

3.5 Textbook Selection

The analysis focused on the ELT Textbook *Bilim ve Kültür 7th Year*, an instructional material widely used in Turkish state secondary schools. This textbook was chosen due to its accessibility, its alignment with the national curriculum, and its significance as a primary resource for English teaching in contexts where it is not a native or widely spoken language.

The Task Analysis Sheet is used to analyze the activities (see Appendix B). Each activity in the selected chapter was analyzed in terms of cognitive demand, learner expectations, interaction patterns, and the nature of the content.

3.6 Data Analysis Process

Three researchers independently analyzed the selected chapter to ensure consistency and inter-rater reliability. They used the Task Analysis Sheet to evaluate each activity based on predefined categories, including:

- The learner's role (initiation, response, mental operations).
- Interaction types (individual or group/pair work).
- Content formats (graphic, written, or oral inputs/outputs).
- The source and nature of the content (materials, teacher input, or learner contribution).

Discrepancies between researchers were resolved through meetings and discussions, and the final ratings were aggregated to form the basis of the analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

The national English curriculum for secondary schools aims to produce individuals who can speak and write English at an international level, and also to train people with competences, such as learning to learn and creativity (MoNE, 2018a).

It should be noted that this article does not aim to be negative about the local ELT textbooks under the supervision of MoNE, but to find out what improvements can be made to ELT in Türkiye. Given that the national goal is making Turkish learners good users of English, the ELT textbooks should be continually improved.

Therefore, this textbook analysis provides valuable insights into the alignment of pedagogical strategies with applied linguistic principles, particularly in the Turkish educational context. By dissecting the textbook's objectives, methods, and materials, the analysis identifies key patterns in the design and implementation of language instruction. The findings are discussed below, based on the analytical criteria used: learner expectations, interaction types, content forms, sources, and nature. The analysis outlines a framework focused on:

- **Learner Tasks**: Emphasizing initiation, response, and mental operations.
- **Interaction Patterns**: Highlighting individual and group-based engagement.
- **Content Forms and Sources**: Differentiating between graphic, oral, and written inputs and outputs.
- **Content Nature**: Classifying inputs and outputs into personal opinions, information, and metalinguistic comments.

4.1 Learner Expectations and Cognitive Engagement

4.1.1 Learner Roles

The analysis reveals that the majority of tasks are response-oriented, with 92.86% of activities requiring learners to respond to prompts and only 7.14% allowing them to initiate tasks, as shown in Table 1. This disproportionate focus on reactive learning suggests a teacher-centered approach that limits the opportunities for learners to exercise autonomy. Therefore, this may be an obstacle to learning English language effectively, especially when it comes to communication skills.

4.1.2 Cognitive Demands

The analysis shows that the tasks do not emphasize higher-level cognitive processes, as shown in the table below. It is only 50% focused on retrieving information from short-term memory. Moreover, 21.43% of it requires students to attend to examples or explanations. The high-level cognitive skills are not emphasized. For example, deducing rules (3.57%) and applying these rules (7.14%), are rarely included in the textbooks. Moreover, there is no role for learners to formulate original content. The analysis shows that there is a lack of focus on language forms and high-level critical thinking skills.

Table 1. Learner Expectations and Cognitive Engagement

1 WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO?		Average
A TURN-TAKE		
Initiate		7.14
Respond		92.86
Not required		0
B FOCUS on		
Language system (rules or form)		0
Meaning		89.29
Meaning/system relationship		10.71
COOPERATION	What the mental process involves	
Retrieve from ST memory		50
Attend to example, explanation		21.43
Repeat with expansion		17.86
Deduce language rule		3.57
Apply stated language rule		7.14

4.1.3 Interaction Patterns

The analysis shows that most activities were designed to be done individually, with 71.43% of the activities (see Table 2). It also shows that pair or group work is limited to a few opportunities (10.71%). This may hinder the development of teamwork skills. This result shows that the activities should be designed in a balanced way, for both individual and group/pair activities, to develop teamwork skills and learn the language in an interactive environment.

Table 2. Interaction Patterns

II WHO WITH?	Average
Learner to class	17.86
Learners individually simultaneously	71.43
Learners in pairs/groups	10.71

4.2 Content Forms and Delivery

4.2.1 Content Characteristics

The results show that the focus is on written texts, and based on written words, phrases, and sentences (46.43% input and 64.29% output), as shown in Table 3. The results also show that oral activities are de-emphasized (28.57% output) at the sentence level. Consequently, students' communicative skills will not be effectively developed. Table 3 shows key results about the content forms and delivery.

Table 3. Content Forms and Delivery

III WITH WHAT CONTENT	
A FORM	
1 input to learners	Average
Graphic	17.86
Words/phrases/sentences: written	46.43
Words/phrases/sentences: oral	3.57
Extended discourse: written	17.86
Extended discourse: oral	14.28
2 expected outputs from learners	Average
Graphic	
Words/phrases/sentences: written	64.29
Words/phrases/sentences: oral	28.57

Extended discourse: written	7.14
Extended discourse: oral	
B SOURCE	
Materials	71.43
Teacher	28.57
Learner(s)	
C NATURE	Average
Personal opinion	7.14
Non-fiction	60.72
Fiction	
Personal information	21.43
Metalinguistic comment	10.71

The nature of the tasks is non-fictional (60.72%), and the integration of personal information into the tasks is moderate (21.43%). However, fictional material is not included. Therefore, the student's creativity is restricted. Moreover, extended discourse, whether written (17.86%) or oral (14.28%), is underutilized, limiting learners' exposure to authentic and complex language use.

Furthermore, the absence of graphic-based output tasks is a notable limitation. Visual aids, which are widely acknowledged for their role in enhancing comprehension and memory retention, are not effectively utilized. Diversifying the modes of input and output – including the integration of oral, graphic, and fictional elements – could better support diverse learning styles and foster multimodal literacy, thereby improving overall learning outcomes.

4.2.2 Sources and Nature of Content

The textbook predominantly relies on material-based sources (71.43%), with limited incorporation of teacher-led content and no learner-generated tasks. This heavy dependence on predesigned materials may reduce the adaptability of lessons to suit the learners' interests, prior knowledge, and contextual needs.

Furthermore, the content is overwhelmingly non-fictional (60.72%), with minimal representation of fiction or opinion-based tasks (7.14%). While non-fiction provides informational depth, incorporating fictional and opinion-based content could enrich the learning experience by promoting cultural awareness, creative thinking, and personal expression. A more balanced content design, featuring diverse sources and a mix of fictional, non-fictional, and learner-generated tasks, would contribute to a more dynamic and engaging learning environment.

The findings highlight several key areas for improvement in the design of the textbook. Adopting a more balanced approach that incorporates greater opportunities for learner initiation, collaborative activities, and tasks requiring higher-order cognitive engagement would better align with the principles of communicative language teaching. As Alkhaldi (2023) states, language learning can be more active and creative if material development teams connect the textbook activities with the students' real lives and experiences.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of this textbook, *English Textbook Bilim ve Kultur 7th year,* used in Türkiye provides a comprehensive evaluation of its weaknesses and strengths. The textbook analyzed aligns with Türkiye's national curriculum, unlike the study by Fuyudloturromaniyyah (2015), which concluded that the textbook they explored was not following the scientific approach suggested by the Indonesian MoNE. *English Textbook Bilim ve Kultur 7th year* is well-developed and organized, as stated by Erkir and Alkhaldi (2025) earlier. It includes non-fictional content and written activities, which reflect a traditional approach in education. Nevertheless, there are gaps in this ELT textbook in terms of supporting critical thinking, language communication skills, and learner engagement. This also reflects that these findings align with Kucuk (2024), Yigit and Dolgunsoz (2023), and Alsan and Eminoglu Kucuktepe (2023), who also concluded that the activities were not satisfactory in terms of fostering critical thinking and encouraging students to learn the language. A good English textbook should motivate students to learn through engaging activities which also make them think while using the language. Textbooks focusing on the language structure with similar activities may be boring and will not help students with the learning process.

The results of this study also show that the content supports a teacher-centered approach, and the role of learners is to "respond" without displaying initiative and or being cooperative. Similar to the findings of Khan and Tas (2020), the textbook analyzed depends on written content (inputs and outputs) at the sentence level, without an appropriate focus on oral content. Consequently, learners cannot effectively develop their creativity, language communication skills, and autonomy. This kind of activity may not pose any challenges and allow students to be creative. As stated by Alkhaldi et al. (2022), students' creativity should be developed by using a variety of interesting sources which include more fiction and reading texts.

To address these limitations, the textbooks should incorporate extended written and oral discourse content – which fosters a high level of critical thinking skills – integrate individual and group work in a balanced way, and encourage cooperation to enhance language learning. Furthermore, ELT textbooks should include content that develops students' creativity and encourages them to engage in language learning.

Authors' contributions

Dr. Sarp Erkir was responsible for the study design and discussion. Dr. Emsal Ates Ozdemir was responsible for data collection and

literature review. Dr. Ali Ata Alkhaldi was responsible for data analysis and drafting the manuscript.

All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and have contributed equally to this study.

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Appendix A

Coursebook Analysis Checklist

Task number:						
1 What is the learner expected to do?						
A Turn-Take						
Initiate						
Respond						
Not required						
B Focus on						
Language system (rules or form)						
Meaning						
Meaning/system relationship						
C Mental Operation						
II Who with?						
III With what content						
A Form						
1 input to the learners						
2 expected output from the learners						
B Source						
Materials						
Teacher						
Learner(s)						
C Nature						

Appendix B

c	Unit 6																											
Task number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1 WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO?																												
A TURN-TAKE																												
Initiate								✓										✓										
Respond	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Not required																												
B FOCUS on																												
Language system (rules or form)																						✓		✓	✓			
Meaning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Meaning/system relationship																												
C MENTAL OPERATION																												
Retrieve from ST memory		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓				✓	
Attend to example, explanation																												
Draw on prior knowledge	✓																✓	✓		✓	✓							✓
Compare																												
Decode semantic meaning																												
Select information																												

Repeat with expansion							✓	✓												✓			✓			✓		
Deduce language rule																					✓							
Apply stated language rule																								✓	✓			
Formulate items into larger content																												
II WHO WITH?																												
Learner to class	✓						✓		✓									✓										
Learners individually simultaneously		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learners in pairs/groups								✓							✓	✓												
III WITH WHAT CONTENT																												
A FORM																												
1 input to learners																												
Graphic		✓						✓						✓							✓		✓					
Words/phrases/sentences: written	✓		✓						✓								✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
Words/phrases/sentences: oral										✓																		
Extended discourse: written							✓				✓	✓								✓							✓	
Extended discourse: oral				✓	✓	✓																✓						
2 expected output from learners																												
Graphic																												
Words/phrases/sentences: written		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Words/phrases/sentences: oral	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓											
Extended discourse: written																		✓									✓	
Extended discourse: oral																												
B SOURCE																												
Materials		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Teacher																												
Learner(s)	✓						✓	✓								✓	✓	✓								✓		✓
C NATURE																												
Personal opinion																		✓										✓
Non-fiction		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	
Fiction																												
Personal information	✓							✓				✓			✓			✓										
Metalinguistic comment																						✓		✓	✓			