



A Critical Analysis of Tasks in Senior High School EFL Textbooks in Indonesia

Dewi Satria Elmiana
Queen's University Belfast - UK

Introduction

In recent years, the influence of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has spread widely into the process of learning and teaching in classrooms (Celce-Murcia, 2001). The CLT approach involves students' ability to successfully communicate in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 2004). CLT is implemented by English language teaching (ELT) stakeholders such as teachers, syllabi and curriculum designers by designing and administering communicative language tasks that reflect real-life situations (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Moreover, the link between CLT methodology and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has significantly increased the attention and interaction between educators and material developers. Therefore, English language teaching materials are developed with communicative tasks in mind to promote learners to use communicative strategies in their English interactions (Alemi et al., 2013). However, 'most teachers and instructors are using the materials without being aware of the task types used in them and whether these task types involve learners in the communication process or not' (Alemi et al., 2013, p. 42). In the case of Indonesia, the Indonesian Ministry of Education has implemented a new curriculum (Curriculum, 2013) and published new textbooks for EFL learners which incorporate CLT methodology. However, as of yet, no studies have been conducted to analyse the types of tasks that are present in these textbooks. The present study is therefore crucial because textbooks are intended for all students around the country and particularly for students in senior high school, and they play an important role in the Indonesian education system. Schools rely on textbooks as the predominant source of information for teachers and students. Therefore, this study will encourage English textbook developers to raise their awareness to develop tasks which promote communicative competence.

Regarding the aforementioned issues, this report analyses the EFL textbooks being used in senior high schools in Indonesia in terms of the tasks according to Nunan's (1999) task type framework. Thus, this paper posed the following questions:

1. What kinds of task types are employed in senior high school EFL textbooks in Indonesia?
2. Which of these task types are more frequent in these textbooks?

Combining CLT Goals with TBLT Methods

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is mainly concerned with what students will learn and views a language as a means of communication (Hubbard, 1995). The key theoretical point of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is communicative competence. This term was initially introduced into discussion of language use in foreign or second language learning in the early 1970s (Lochland, 2013; Savignon, 1972). The aim of CLT is to develop students' communicative competence in social interaction rather than in linguistic form (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 2005). The significant function of communication is thought to be both meaning as well as the objective CLT (Butler, 2011). Students in classrooms, therefore, should receive meaningful input of language use for their interactive activities (Brown, 2001).

However, Klapper (2003) contends that the role of the teacher in the classroom should be to introduce structures and functions of communicative activities in a 'controlled manner'; therefore, students are able to directly respond to the meaning in a representational setting. According to Li (1984), three key points classify classroom activities as communicative: (a) activities must be inserted in real-life contexts; (b) the aim and elements of activities must be represented in a communicative manner, and (c) the activities involve a level of unpredictability and freedom. Moreover, students must be motivated to focus on completing tasks rather than focusing on the language form, and emphasis is more on fluency than accuracy (Hubbard, 1995). Generally, Ma (2009) explains that CLT approaches highlight students' needs to inextricably link to classroom activities and language use in real-life situations. For instance, in listening it might be listening to a weather broadcast; in speaking it might be asking for directions to go shopping in the city centre; in reading it might be understanding social activities through a series of instructions; in writing it could be mastering how to write an email to a colleague. Moreover, Littlewood (2004) deliberates how TBLT emanates from the communicative approach, in which the main focus is on the communicative tasks as a part of methodology as well as an organised unit within the course. 'Task-based learning and teaching is an overall approach to language learning that views the tasks that learners do as central to the learning process and is seen as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to curricular goals' (Oura, 2001, p. 71).

Task-based language learning and teaching (TBLT) has been the most popular teaching method since it was proposed by Prabhu in 1987, as it was a reaction to the criticisms of the traditional teaching practices in India (Sanchez, 2004). Students may gain knowledge effectively when the aim of learning focuses on the task rather than the language they have been using (Prabhu, 1987). In a similar vein, Brown (1994) indicated that the main purpose of task-based learning is about how language must be used rather than the priority of the language forms. Moreover, Prabhu (1987) established three stages of task: pre-task, task cycle, and post-task. Then Willis (1996) developed his task model with six stages: pre-task, task, and assess task, planning, task presentation, and post-task language focus, while Ellis (2003) consolidates these stages into three stages: pre-task, while-task, and post-task.

The authenticity of the task and text is one of the main characteristics of TBLT (Richards & Rodgers, 2002). 'Authenticity means that the texts used should not be manipulated or adapted and the tasks should represent authentic communicative situations of the everyday English-speaking culture' (Ebadi & Hasan, 2016, p. 7). Further, the aim of TBLT is to deliver an authentic function of learning materials which contribute to the natural process of learning and teaching (Anwar & Arifani, 2016; Richards & Rogers, 2002). For instance, before teaching, teachers need to organise task activities in the classroom which engage students with their real-life context (Oura, 2001).

Task vs Exercise

EFL textbooks generally consist of an amalgam of tasks and exercises with both student activities being distinct from each other. This section will discuss these differences.

The notion of task refers to the particular activities carried out in the classroom (Sanchez, 2004), where

the task is a language activity that requires the learner to use, to comprehend the meaning, and to achieve its aim (Bygate, 2001; Skehan, 2003). Furthermore, a task can be viewed as ‘a piece of meaning-centred language that makes learners comprehend, produce and communicate in the target language’ (Rozati, 2014, p. 1277).

Specifically, tasks can be analysed in terms of their goals, inputs, activities, settings, and role. According to Oura (2001), goals denote the general purposes of the tasks for the learning process; input refers to the initial data that contributes to the starting point for the tasks; activities convey the lesson that students will perform in regard to the input; settings affecting the task interaction in relation to the classroom arrangement, for instance, group or pair work activities; and role means the social or interpersonal relation between teachers and students in a task. In contrast, an exercise is considered as a classroom activity that learners do which has no communicative purpose whilst completing it (Littlewood, 2007). Nunan (1999) clarifies this difference as: “The essential difference between a task and an exercise is that a task has a non-linguistic outcome, whilst an exercise has a linguistic outcome” (p. 25).

Method

Data Sample

The sample in this study was three Indonesian senior high school EFL textbooks which are currently used with students aged 15 to 17 in grades 10 to 12. The textbooks have been revised with the newest curriculum in Indonesia (Curriculum, 2013) compiled by the Ministry of Education. The data cover all tasks from the three textbooks; there were 469 tasks identified based on the taxonomy of task types as proposed by Nunan (1999).

Data Analysis Procedures

This mixed methods study used two types of methodological frameworks, qualitative and quantitative. The initial qualitative part classified each task in the three textbooks according to Nunan’s (1999) task taxonomy, as summarized in Table 1. The quantitative analysis involved presenting the task type frequencies for each book.

TABLE 1
Task Types (Nunan, 1999).

Cognitive tasks	Interpersonal tasks	Linguistics tasks	Affective tasks	Creative tasks
Classifying	Co-operating	Conversational patterns	Personalising	This part encourages students to find out a new word and improve their vocabulary, and then use it through the tasks
Predicting	Role playing	Practicing	Self-evaluating	
Inducing		Using context	Reflecting	
Note taking		Summarising		
Concept mapping		Selective reading/listening		
Inferencing		Skimming		
Discriminating				
Diagramming				

Findings

The results of analysing each task type in the three EFL textbooks are presented in Table 2:

1. What kinds of task types are employed in senior high school EFL textbooks in Indonesia?

TABLE 2
The Percentage and Frequency of Task Types

Book	Book 1		Book 2		Book 3	
	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
Task Type						
Classifying	7	3.6	3	2.6	11	4
Predicting	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inducing	6	3.1	7	6.1	21	7.7
Taking notes	13	6.8	2	1.8	1	0.4
Concept mapping	4	2.1	1	0.9	0	0
Inferencing	5	2.6	0	0	1	0.4
Discriminating	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diagramming	7	3.6	1	0.9	1	0.4
Total (Cognitive task)	42	22.1	14	12.3	35	12.8
Cooperating	21	11	15	13.2	46	16.8
Role playing	20	10.5	7	6.1	23	8.4
Total (Interpersonal task)	41	21.6	22	19.3	69	25.2
Conversational patterns	2	1	3	2.6	7	2.5
Practicing	45	23.7	40	35.1	97	35.4
Using context	5	2.6	6	5.3	5	1.8
summarising	2	1	1	0.9	4	1.5
Selective listening/ reading	8	4.2	12	10.5	9	3.3
Skimming	5	2.6	5	4.4	15	5.5
Total (Linguistics task)	67	35.3	67	58.8	137	50
Personalising	6	3.1	0	0	1	0.4
Self-evaluation	0	0	11	9.6	0	0
Reflecting	17	8.9	0	0	16	5.8
Total (Affecting task)	23	12.1	11	9.6	17	6.2
Brainstorming	17	8.9	0	0	16	5.8
Total (Creative task)	17	8.9	0	0	16	5.8
Total of all tasks	190	100	114	100	274	100

As shown by the data in Table 2, almost all task types were covered in the three EFL senior high school textbooks. However, several task types were not included in the textbooks.

Under the cognitive task type, inducing was the most frequent type in the three textbooks, with 3.1%, 6.1%, and 7.7 %, respectively. Nonetheless, in book 1, taking notes had the highest percentage with 6.8%, whilst in books 2 and 3, taking notes only accounted for 1.8% and 0.4% of all tasks. However, predicting and discriminating tasks did not feature in any of the books

Interpersonal task type frequencies reveal that both cooperating and role-playing sub-categories frequently appeared in the three EFL textbooks. Cooperating tasks had the highest percentages, with 11%, 13.2%, and 16.8%, respectively, followed by role playing with 10.5%, 6.1%, and 8.4%, respectively.

Additionally, in terms of linguistic task types, the most frequently used types in the three EFL textbooks were practicing tasks with 23.7%, 35.1%, and 35.4%, respectively, whilst the conversational patterns (1%, 2.6%, and 2.5%) and summarising (1%, 0.9%, and 1.5%) types had the lowest percentage and were rarely used in the textbooks.

Moreover, affective task types were not always used in the textbooks. Table 2 indicated that self-evaluation had the highest rate (9.6%) among the other sub-categories, but it only appeared in book 2. Additionally, reflecting (8.9% and 5.8%) and personalising (3.1% and 0.4%) appeared in books 1 and 3, but not in book 2.

Furthermore, creative tasks mostly appeared in book 1 with 8.9% and book 3 with 5.8%, but were not used in book 2.

2. Which of these task types are more frequent in these textbooks?

Figure 1 shows the most frequent general task types used in three EFL senior high school textbooks. It can be seen that linguistic task types were the most frequent task types used among the three textbooks.

Interpersonal and cognitive task types were the second dominant kind of task in the textbooks, and the least frequent types were affective and creative tasks.

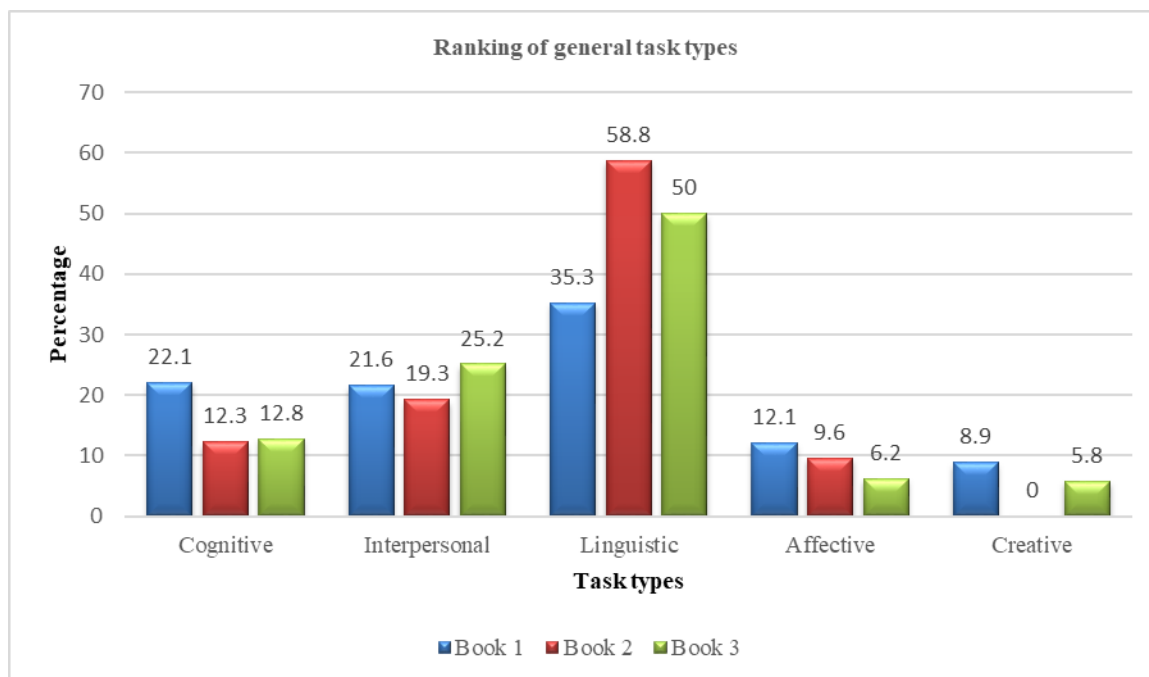


Figure 1. Ranking of general task types.

Discussion

This study analysed the task types in three EFL senior high school textbooks which are currently being used in Indonesia. This section provides the analysis of the result of each task types that has been found in the three EFL textbooks and answers the following research question:

1. What kinds of task types are employed in senior high school EFL textbooks in Indonesia?

The findings of the study identified that most of the task types from Nunan’s taxonomy were covered in the three textbooks. However, among the cognitive tasks, the subcategories of predicting and discriminating were not found in any of the three textbooks. According to Nunan (1999, p. 187) ‘predicting or looking ahead, helps learners to anticipate what is to come and the result is more effective in learning because the learners are adequately prepared for the new material’. Also, ‘discriminating tasks help learners who are skilled at identifying the most important information in a text and readers can process language more quickly and effectively’ (Nunan, 1999, p. 188). The lack of discriminating tasks may mean learners are unable to identify the important information in a text and are not able to foster effective reading or listening skills. Moreover, in intermediate and advanced learners, providing and introducing cognitive tasks are commonly implemented in textbooks (Celce-Muria, 2001; Nunan, 2004). ‘Cognitive tasks might contribute to effective learning because the tasks require high levels of thinking and foster intrinsic reasons for learning’ (Alemi et al., 2013, p. 55). Based on this absence, the three EFL textbooks used with senior high school students may not fully foster communicative competence in English. Therefore, it is suggested that textbook developers adequately include cognitive tasks in the newest editions of EFL textbooks particularly for senior high school students in Indonesia. In addition,

the findings showed that other subcategories of cognitive tasks, inferencing and concept mapping, were less frequently included in the three textbooks. These types are an extremely important strategy (Nunan, 1999, p. 187) and provide an opportunity to students to use their background knowledge to learn something new particularly in learning a language. In fact, sufficient use of these types are in line with the hypothesis proposed by Nunan (1999, p. 187) that, 'learning is basically making links between what is new and what is already known'. From this point of view, the lack of cognitive tasks presented in these textbooks could be identified as a limitation of EFL textbooks, since one of the main objectives of language learning is to foster reading and listening comprehension (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 1999).

The second kind of task type analysed in this study are interpersonal tasks, which consist of co-operating and role-playing types. Interpersonal tasks allow students to collaborate with others in doing a task. Thus, students have an opportunity to share their ideas and experiences in negotiating meaning by using the target language. According to Nunan (1999, p. 191), an interpersonal task is 'particularly effective in language learning' because it motivates students to communicate with each other in performing a pedagogical task. The analysis showed the percentage of the co-operating type at 11%, 13.2%, and 16.8%, respectively. As a result, the presence of co-operating task types might enable students to learn and share their ideas as well as their experiences with other English learners. Another type of interpersonal task is role-playing. This is considered as an effective and important strategy in teaching language because it has a beneficial effect on the students' motivation and communicative competence (Raz, 1985, as cited in Alemi et al., 2013). That is, role-playing provides an opportunity for language learners to speak actively by using the target language. 'Role playing provides an environment in which the students do not remain silent but rather may naturally speak in and listen to the target language' (Oyabu, 1999, as cited in Hasan & Ebadi, 2016, p. 19). The data showed that the percentage of role-playing type was 10.5%, 6.1%, and 8.4%, respectively, and had a slightly lower difference than the rate of the co-operating type.

The third task type analysed was the linguistic task, which was the most frequent task type used in the three EFL textbooks (as can be seen in Figure 1): 35.3 % (book 1), 58.8% (book 2) and 50% (book 3). It consists of six subcategories, and practicing was more frequent than the others, at 23.7%, 35.1%, and 35.4%, respectively followed by the selective listening or reading type at 4.2%, 10.5%, and 3.3%, respectively. According to Nunan (1999, p. 191), 'practicing means doing controlled exercises to improve knowledge and skills, while, selective listening or reading is an essential strategy for learners to cope effectively in genuine communicative situations outside the classroom'. It can be concluded that the three EFL textbooks would not allow students to use the language that they have learnt appropriately in an authentic communicative manner, since linguistic tasks were more frequently used in textbooks than other task types (see Figure 1).

The fourth task types were affective tasks, which consisted of three subcategories: personalising, self-evaluation, and reflecting. These task types encourage students to make a decision about strategies that they could improve regarding learning language (Anderson, 2005). These task types assist students to 'plan their learning, monitor their progress, or review their accomplishments and future learning directions (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Thus, the lower frequency of affective tasks in the three EFL textbooks might not be able to lead students to reflect on their process of learning (Ebadi & Hasan, 2016).

The fifth task types were creative tasks, which only consisted of brainstorming tasks. This type is most commonly used in textbooks, and it can be considered an advantageous element in EFL textbooks (Ebadi & Hasan, 2016). As Nunan (1999) discussed, this component encourages students to find a new word and improve their vocabulary, and then use it through the tasks. That is, students can move from the usage to the use phase in order to implement the authentic language (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 1999). Thus, creative tasks could improve students' intrinsic motivation (Elliot & Dweck as cited in Alemi et al., 2013).

2. Which of these task types are more frequent in these textbooks?

Figure 1 shows that the most frequent tasks used in the three EFL textbooks were linguistic tasks.

Nunan (1999) believed that the application of linguistic tasks would be implemented more frequently than others, and this depends on the proficiency, age, needs and skills of students. According to Purpura (2004 as cited in Alemi, Jahangard, & Hesami, 2013, p. 53), 'in language teaching, the view that grammar plays a central role in the language curriculum is often firmly held'. Even though grammar knowledge is important for communication in spoken or written form, an EFL textbook which mostly consisted of linguistics tasks to the detriment of other tasks would not achieve this objective. Linguistic tasks play an important role at a basic level of language learning, since they help students to construct and discover their language base, whilst for intermediate and advanced language learners, they need to communicate through language rather than the rules (Alemi et al., 2013). Therefore, linguistic tasks can be joined with creative or communicative tasks types indirectly.

Interpersonal and cognitive tasks were the second and third most frequently used in the three EFL textbooks. Interpersonal tasks provide a chance for students to collaborate with others and help them to reduce their anxiety as well as increase their motivation in learning a language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Moreover, cognitive tasks are included adequately in the textbooks and contribute effective learning strategies, since the tasks requiring high levels of thinking foster intrinsic reason for learning (Alemi et al., 2013).

Affective and creative tasks are the least represented among all tasks types in the three EFL textbooks. According to Raz (1985), the affective task is the most effective task in studying a foreign language, since it has a great effect on the students' communicative competence and motivation. Also, affective tasks expose comprehensive input to students and encourage them to have a positive attitude (Crookall, 1990). Additionally, the inadequate presence of creative tasks can be a limitation of the textbooks, since to challenge students' intrinsic motivation in learning language they need to be given creative tasks.

Conclusion and Implications

This study analysed the most currently used EFL textbooks for senior high school students in Indonesia. Of the task types proposed by Nunan (1999) covered in the three EFL textbooks, linguistic tasks are the most frequently used. This indicates that the textbooks paid more attention to the grammatical aspects of language. However, in terms of cognitive tasks, predicting and discriminating types were not implemented adequately. Furthermore, the positive aspects of the three textbooks is that they provide enough opportunities for students to share their ideas, opinions, feelings and experiences about the language that they have learnt to others as well as try to write and speak in the form of personalising tasks. However, the three textbooks implemented fewer creative tasks and this practice can be a limitation for language learning.

The results of this study could provide insight to curriculum designers to become aware of the task types in EFL textbooks. Moreover, education practitioners could do a better job at selecting the most suitable teaching and learning materials for their own purposes. Also, this study could help language material developers particularly those who work with English to develop more materials for communicative tasks.

In short, this study concluded that the three EFL textbooks for senior high school in Indonesia do not meet the criteria of communicative competence. However, this study shows that these issues need to be examined more thoroughly and there is a need for future researchers or textbook developers to avoid imbalanced task types in their EFL teaching and learning materials.

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The Author

Dewi Satria Elmiana is a Doctor of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) student at Queen's University Belfast – United Kingdom. Her research interests are in the areas of English materials development, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, and visual literacy.

School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work
Queen's University Belfast, UK
18 College Green
BT7 1LN
Tel: +44 7498593008
E-mail: delmiana01@qub.ac.uk

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