
An Evaluation of the English Textbook Grow with English for Fourth-grade Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Textbooks are the major instructional resource that has a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. To obtain an appropriate textbook, a teacher must evaluate or analyze it before applying it in the classroom. A textbook, moreover, is expected to cover student needs, support national education goals, and implement curriculum values. However, based on the previous studies, many textbooks still need to meet the criteria of a good textbook, and the majority of the previous research is conducted on high school English textbooks. Therefore, this research examines the suitability and quality of the four-grade elementary school English textbook entitled (Grow with English). In analyzing the textbook, this study employed descriptive qualitative approach and utilized both the BSNP or Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (National Education Standards Agency) framework and theory of Developing Criteria for Textbook Evaluation by David Williams (1983). The findings show that the Grow with English textbook follows the 2013 ELT (English Language Teaching) curriculum of Indonesian Education goals and Indonesia's National Education goals. Furthermore, this textbook meets William's (1983) criteria, such as being designed with meaningful drills and learning activities, connecting to the student's age, interests, culture, and environment, having guidance for teachers and students, and graphically having good quality. For further research, observing and analysing other EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks is suggested to determine whether it is commensurate with The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), the current Indonesian curriculum.

Keywords: Curriculum; English textbook; students' needs



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1. Introduction

Textbooks are the major instructional resource that has a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. There is a situation where the teacher is not well-trained, so the textbook in language teaching is extremely involved (Williams, 1983). Cunningsworth, (2008) stated that textbooks are most effectively viewed as a resource for accomplishing learner-needs-based goals and objectives. Moreover, textbooks must also fit the student's interests, backgrounds, and abilities and comply with Ministry of Education guidelines (Lee, 2013). Related to Indonesian Education, the 2013 ELT (English Language Teaching) curriculum aims to prepare Indonesians to become devout, creative, innovative, and passionate citizens who can contribute to society and national and global culture (Two et al., 2014). Therefore, textbooks must be integrated with the applicable curriculum values to develop students' abilities.

To obtain an appropriate English textbook, a teacher must evaluate or analyze it before applying it in the classroom, especially in the English for Young Learners (EYL) classroom. Because it is not all textbooks are suitable for the needs of every classroom (Williams, 1983). Textbook evaluation is a straightforward process of matching student needs with available solutions (Hutchinson and Waters 1987:97, as cited in Sheldon, 1988). Instead of participating in daily decisions over what to teach and how to teach it, it is simpler to operate the system, secure in the knowledge that the textbook was written by virtuous and knowledgeable individuals who recognized what was best for us (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). Williams (1983) conveyed that the ESL (English as a second language) textbook should provide adequate guidance for teachers and adhere to the psychological and linguistic concepts underlying present, widely accepted second-language teaching techniques. Moreover, according to the Minister of Education and Culture No. 8 of the Year 2016 Regulation, the material in the textbook must support the achievement of national goals (Permendikbud, 2016).

Numerous scholars and researchers have extensively researched English textbooks to determine their quality and value. Xiang & Yenika-Agbaw (2021) examined how multicultural characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, social class, and individuals with impairments) and power relations are portrayed in the junior high schools textbook in Inner Mongolia, China. The findings pointed out that depictions of cultures of three-circle nations and multicultural factors are imbalanced, stereotyped, and devoid of variation. Furthermore, other studies investigated moral content and values represented in

English primary textbooks from the book series "Grow with English" (Sulistiyo et al., 2020; Puspitasari et al., 2021), while the findings indicated that moral values are depicted in the textbooks. In addition, Rashidi & Kehtarfard (2014) investigated an English textbook (a third-grade high school English book used in Iran) to be evaluated using a needs analysis framework. The study revealed that although all language abilities and components were nearly essential for most students, this textbook could not support all of them concurrently and adequately.

There are still many other studies on textbook evaluation, but on average, they examine the social or cultural values contained in textbooks. In addition, most of the studies are conducted on high school textbooks or intermediate-level English textbooks (see Van Canh, 2018; Hidayati, 2022; Adi & Astuti, 2019; and Huang, 2019; Shakourzadeh & Izadpanah, 2020). Meanwhile, this present study was conducted on a four-grade primary school textbook and analyzed using the BSNP (*Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan*) framework and theory of Developing Criteria for Textbook Evaluation by David Williams (1983). This research aims to examine the suitability and quality of the four-grade primary school English textbook

2. Method

This study used descriptive qualitative research because it described the textual and visual text in the textbook. Case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that explain routines, challenging moments, and significance in life are collected and analyzed as part of qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:2, as cited in Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The data of this study were extracted from the four-grade primary school textbook series *Grow with English* published by ERLANGGA (Curriculum 2013). This textbook is nationally accredited in Indonesia. In addition, it was written by Indonesian authors familiar with the Indonesian ELT context. Furthermore, the researcher adopted the BSNP (*Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan*) framework and the Developing Criteria for Textbook Evaluation theory by David Williams (1983) in analyzing the textbook. For data analysis, the researcher read the texts and examined the pictures in the textbook to see whether this textbook complies with the BSNP framework and the textbook evaluation theory by David Williams. Then, the researcher sorted out some samples of the textual and visual examples that indicate the criteria or not of the appropriate textbooks. Moreover, the researcher closely investigated the selected textual and visual samples to understand the criteria presented in the textbook.

3. Finding

After conducting the analysis, the researcher divided the findings into four categories, namely material aspects, language, presentation of materials, and graphics based on the criteria of

the BSNP framework. In addition, these results correspond to William's (1983) theory regarding the developing criteria for English textbook evaluation. Here are the findings:

3.1. Material Aspect

In the material aspects, the result reveals that this textbook complies with the applicable curriculum and incorporates the most up-to-date theories of English language learning and child development. Furthermore, it contains accurate theoretical and empirical source material. Moreover, the materials have the potential to encourage the emergence of student independence and innovation, encourage students' personal development, and maintain the nation's unity and integrity.

Figure 1 shows that this textbook complies with the applicable curriculum and incorporates the most up-to-date theories of English language learning and child development. Therefore, its content is factual and verifiable and contains the most recent concepts and data. Then, this textbook can contribute to achieving the national education goals defined in Law No. 20 of 2003 (Haryanto, 2003). It can be seen from the material and exercises offered in this book that can train students to be independent, encourage students to think creatively, communicate, and develop cognitive abilities. This book is built with purposeful learning activities and seeks to improve student's communication skills daily.



Figure 1. The example of the explanation of material aspects occurs in the textbook

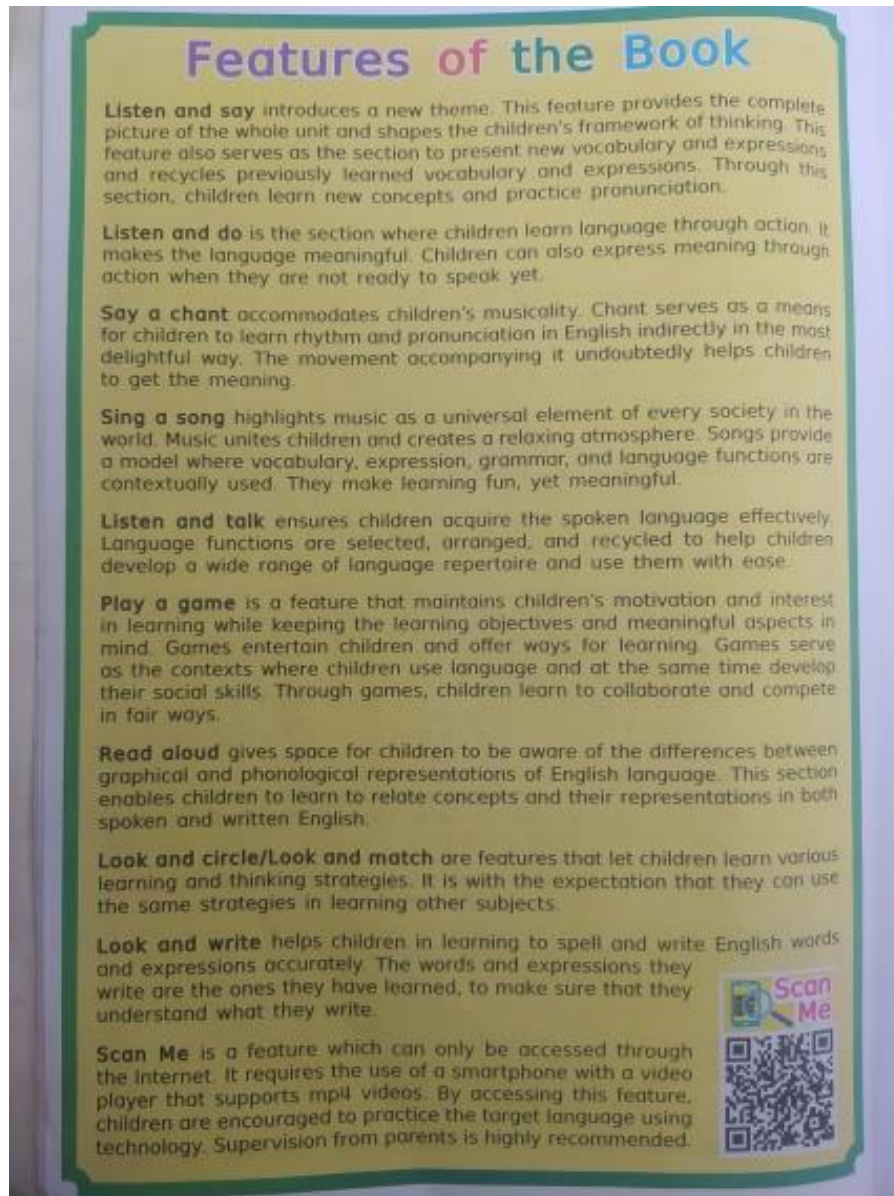


Figure 2. The example of the explanation of material aspects occurs in the textbook

This textbook, as displayed in Figure 2, contains accurate theoretical and empirical source material. Theoretically, it is apparent from the preface: *"This program adopts the most recent-theory of language learning and child development and is uniquely designed for diverse Indonesian contexts."* That means this textbook has been adapted to the character of children in the present and adapted to the context of Indonesian society which is ethnically and culturally diverse, so that they will relate to the material contained in the textbook. Then, empirically, this textbook is divided into several units or chapters, with each unit having a theme that fits the interests of elementary school pupils and the student's' language development stage.

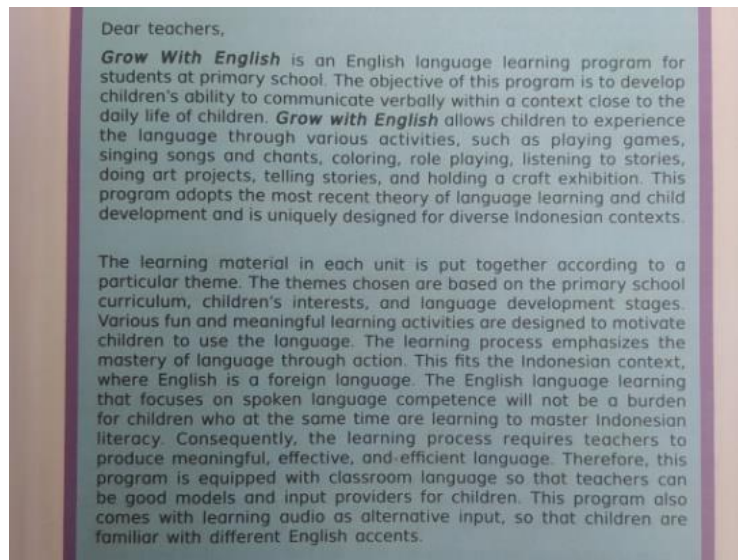


Figure 3. The features of the book

Based on Figure 3, it indicates that this textbook can encourage the emergence of student independence and innovation. It is evident from the book's features that promote students to engage in meaningful activities, such as "Listen and say, listen and do, say a chant, sing a song, listen and talk, play a game, read aloud, look and circle/look and match, look and write, and Scan Me."



Figure 4. The example of the material that can motivate students to develop themselves



Figure 5. The example of the material that can motivate students to develop themselves (p. 64)

Figures 4 and 5 show that this textbook can motivate students to develop themselves. For example, material in *Lesson 3* with the theme "It's a Tidy Living Room" and *Lesson 4* with the theme "There are Some Flowers in the Garden" can provide an overview and inspiration for students to clean the room independently and try to grow plants such as planting sunflowers. It can also illustrate to students that each individual must be responsible for keeping the environment clean.



Figure 6. The example of maintaining the nation's unity and integrity

Figure 6 displays that this textbook can maintain the nation's unity and integrity by accommodating diversity, the nature of cooperation, and respecting differences. For example, the name *Made*, in Indonesia, is typically associated with individuals from Bali. Apart from that, *Made* also wears a headband called *Udeng*, a Balinese trait. Then, *Nurul*, who wears the hijab, represents the identity of a Muslim woman. Moreover, these characters are portrayed with diverse skin colors. These differences, however, did not prevent them from learning, working, and playing together. On the contrary, they are friends and respect each other to maintain the nation's unity and integrity.

3.2. Language



Figure 7. The example of the unclear content (p. 20)

Figure 7 displays that the language used in this book (including spelling, words, sentences, and paragraphs) is precise, straightforward, clear, and age-appropriate. The book employs simple and not overly complex sentences. Nonetheless, in *Lesson 2* with the theme *Schedule* (p. 20), there is a written schedule for *Wednesday* consisting of *P.E.*, *English*, and *Math*. *P.E.* should be written clearly what it stands for, whereas *P.E.* is only written there. The author of the textbook tells that *P.E.* is *Physical Education* on the next page (p.26). However, it is better if the writer tells it at the beginning of the introduction of a new lesson so that readers can understand it.

Figure 8 represents that the illustration material presented in this book follows the developmental age level of the readers, namely grade 4 elementary school students, both in text and pictures. Those illustrations can also make content or material clearer and easier to understand.



Figure 8: The example of illustration suitability for the developmental age level of the students



Figure 9. The example of using communicative and informative language (p. 14)

Figure 9 shows that the "Grow with English" textbook for grade 4 students is structured using communicative and informative language so that positive messages can be appropriately conveyed to readers. In addition, the language used also has educative, polite, ethical, and aesthetic characteristics according to age development level. For instance, the phrase "Thank you." shows appreciation for the question. Then, at the end of the conversation, Nurul said, "Sorry." which represents that Nurul apologized for having to end the conversation and she had to leave. Those words or phrases signify politeness.

Figures 10 and 11 point out the textbook has an exciting title, "Grow with English", compared to other books that usually use "Bahasa Inggris" as their title. A book's interesting title can attract students' interest in reading it. In addition, not only is the book's title intriguing, but the titles of each unit or lesson are also attractive, harmonic, and not provocative.

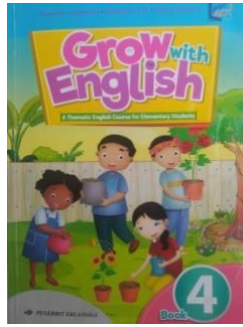


Figure 10. The example of the book's title

Contents	
A Letter from the Authors	v
Features of the Book	xv
General Notes	xv
General Tips	xv
Lesson 1. How do you speak your name?	1
Lesson 2. Schedule	18
Lesson 3. It's a Tiny Living Room	24
Lesson 4. Thank You Santa Claus in the Garden	37
LESSON 5	75
Lesson 5. Seto's Family is Having a Picnic	75
Lesson 6. It's Time to Prepare and Organize	107
Lesson 7. It's Time to Eat	127
Lesson 8. It's a Nice Day	147
Appendix 1	165
References	181
Index	187

Figure 11. The example of the title of each lesson

3.3. The Presentation of Material

Figure 12 indicates that this book contains interesting content that is coherent, straightforward, simple, easy to comprehend, and interactive. This book also includes a Scan Me QR feature for listening to the audio, making it easier for pupils to understand the material, train their listening skills and pronunciation and help them to become accustomed to English accents. The feature also functions well.



Figure 12. The example of interesting content

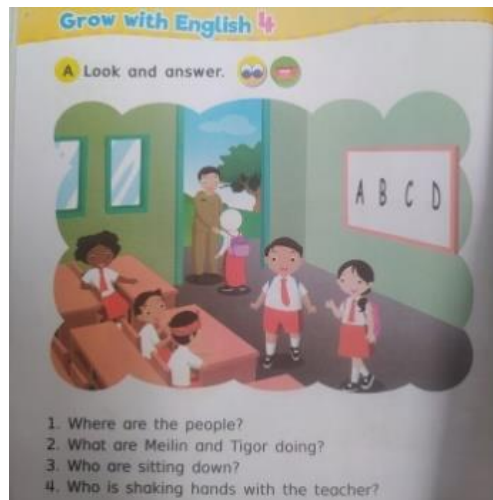


Figure 13. The example of one of the appropriate contents represented in the textbook (p. 2)

Figure 13 demonstrates that the illustration material in the form of text and images used in this book is presented attractively and politely, and still adjusts to the level of development of the reader's age and can clarify content or material. The characters shown are fascinating because they demonstrate tolerance. There is also a student shaking hands with the teacher, representing politeness.



Figure 14: The example of an appropriate illustration material (p. 96)

Figure 14 shows that the illustrations used to clarify this material/content are protected against the storage of pornography, extremism, radicalism, violence, SARA, and gender-biased characteristics. This figure is one of the examples in which males and females are represented equally, consisting of five males and five females. Therefore, there is no gender-biased characteristic in the textbook.



Figure 15. The example of a puzzle in the textbook (p. 52)

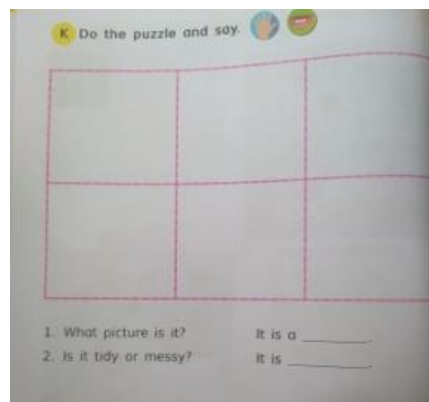


Figure 16. The example of a puzzle in the textbook

In Figures 15, 16, and 17, the materials presented can encourage students to think critically, creatively, and innovatively. For instance, some materials ask students to do projects, make something following the procedure, do puzzles by cutting out pictures, et cetera. Furthermore, the materials can stimulate a deep sense of curiosity and make learning more fun.

Figure 18 shows that this book's content is designed by adjusting to contextual insights, specifically in a daily life context, so that learning becomes more meaningful for students and can be applied in their daily lives.

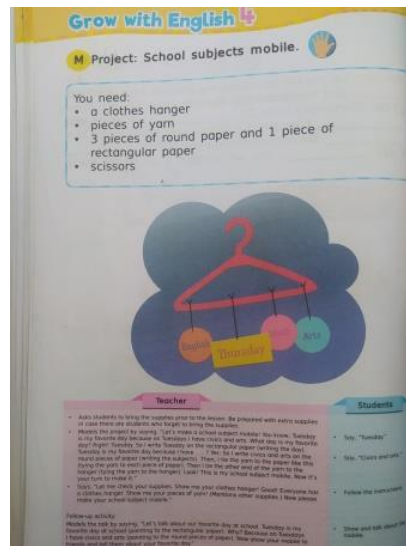


Figure 17. The example of a project in the textbook (p. 38)



Figure 18. The example of a daily life context material (p. 112)

3.4. Graphics

Figure 19 shows that the *Grow with English* textbook for grade 4 has a book size appropriate to the developmental level of the student's age and the material or content of the textbook, neither too small nor too large. While figure 20 indicates, this book has unity and harmony/appropriateness of the book cover layout elements, which are also displayed in harmonious colors and contribute to the clarity of its functions. Furthermore, figure 21 shows that the font size employed is neither too small nor too large but proportional to age

development level. Similarly, the appropriate font selection makes the text easily readable. In addition, this textbook has illustrations to help students understand the intended message



Figure 19. Size of the textbook



Figure 20. The example of the book cover elements layout

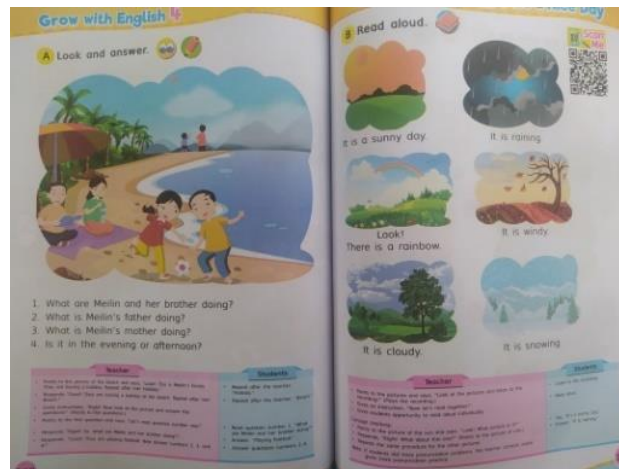


Figure 21. The example of the font size represented in the textbook

Based on the findings, the “*Grow with English*” textbook for grade 4 is in accordance with the 2013 curriculum and Indonesia's national education goals. Indonesia's national education goals are “*Pendidikan nasional berfungsi mengembangkan kemampuan dan membentuk watak serta peradaban bangsa yang bermartabat dalam rangka mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa, bertujuan untuk berkembangnya potensi peserta didik agar menjadi manusia yang beriman dan bertakwa kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, berakhlak mulia, sehat, berilmu, cakap, kreatif, mandiri, dan menjadi warga negara yang demokratis serta bertanggung jawab* (Depdiknas, 2003).” Meanwhile, the 2013 ELT (English Language Teaching) curriculum of Indonesian education aims to prepare Indonesians to become devout, creative, innovative, and passionate citizens who can contribute to society, national, and global culture (Widodo, 2016). Here are some reflections and notes based on the findings.

First, this textbook teaches students tolerance (e.g., Figure 6). There are characters named *Seta, Dona, Made, Nurul, and Meilin* that depict differences. It connects content to the culture and environment of the students (Williams, 1983) that Indonesia is a country with a diverse population. However, legally, all citizens of Indonesia receive equal rights and opportunities (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). Therefore, students must learn tolerance from an early age; Indonesia has various ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures. One of them is by integrating tolerance values into the textbook. While in the study of Sulistyono et al. (2020), the textbook that analyzed entitled *Grow with English* for 4, 5, and 6 grades (The 2006 curriculum) emphasizes addressing respect to others regardless of age and social status which can be used as ethical norms in various social contexts. Furthermore, this present study is similar with the study conducted by Puspitasari, et al. (2021) in analyzing grade 6 textbook entitled *Grow with English* (The 2006 curriculum), they found there is a picture in the textbook that they analyzed which showed a queuing activity. In the queue, the queue participants wear various traditional clothes (Javanese, Balinese, Chinese). From the symbols of the various tribes, it shows the nature of social norms to queue and still respect other people regardless of ethnicity. However, it is contrast to the study of Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw

(2021), in the textbooks of Mongol high school students that they analyzed, it was found that the world of culture in the textbooks is presented in a stereotyped, unbalanced and lacks diversity.

Furthermore, in this textbook, most of the pictures and text do not show any gender-biased characteristics (e.g., Figure 14). Males and females are represented equally. Meanwhile, in the study of Yanti and Wirza (2022), it was found that there was gender inequality represented in the textbook they analyzed which does not represent females where the categories or aspects analyzed turn out to be dominated by males than females.

Second, this textbook is designed with meaningful learning activities that can develop students, such as training students' independence, developing students' cognitive abilities, and encouraging students to communicate (see Figures 4, 5, 8, 9, and 18). Adi and Astuti (2019) investigated a textbook of grade eight of junior high school entitled *When English Rings A Bell* (Revised Edition) which their study also indicates that the textbook materials are pertinent with 2013 curriculum, in term of cognitive domain.

Furthermore, many materials require students to practice the dialogues in the textbook (see Figure 8, 9, and 18) so that students can try to communicate directly in English and practice their speaking skills. It is in line with Williams (1983) that the textbook should provide a variety of meaningful contexts and methods for teaching structural units. The dialogue in this textbook adjusts to the real-life context close to students' daily life, so students can later practice this way of communicating directly in real life. In addition, practicing dialogue can help students get used to the sentence structure of English. Furthermore, there is also other study conducted by Hidayati (2022) examined sociolinguistic competences in the textbook of Junior High School Grade IX entitled "Let's talk". It was found the textbook has already contained sociolinguistic competence in the dialogs which means the textbook should support students to be able to use English in real-life communications. While, it is different from the previous research conducted by Rashidi & Kehtarfard (2014), namely analyzing the English textbook for 3rd-grade high school in Iran, the textbook did not meet the expectations of the students. According to the students in that research, all English skills are important for them such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing so that they can get used to using English in real situations or everyday life. However, their textbook places too much emphasis on grammar and reading. In addition, in contrast to the present findings, Huang (2019) in his study of analyzing a set of secondary English textbooks *Project English* used in China, also conveyed that the textbook focuses more on the grammatical function of the English language than communicative function.

Third, this textbook is in accordance with the developmental level of the students' age in terms of material, presentation of material, language, and graphics. Young learners are at the age stage where they are happy with fun activities that attract their attention and interest. Bourke (2006) also stated that in planning a syllabus for young learners, teachers must adapt

it to topics related to student interests and fun activities such as songs, chants, games, and pair-work tasks (Figure 3). It is also reinforced by William's (1983) theory that textbooks should relate to young learners' ages, interests, and environments. In Figures 6 and 21, there are pictures of characters playing with skateboards and kites (e.g., Figure 6), while there are foods that children usually like, such as *ice cream, pudding, cake, juice, and eggs* (e.g., Figure 21). The two figures represent that the material in this textbook is appropriate for the age and interests of the students. In the study by Shakourzadeh & Izadpanah (2020) about perception of textbook-assigned and self-selected topics of Iranian male EFL learners, it also revealed that the students are more interested in topics that suit their interests and are familiar to them rather than topic importance and topic difficulty.

Fourth, this textbook is graphically designed with the proper book size, font size, and illustrations. Williams (1983) stated that a textbook should have qualities in terms of editing and publishing, such as cover, typeface, illustrations, et cetera. The researcher found this textbook following the criteria mentioned by Williams (1983) because the illustrations are presented in clear and unfading colors. For example, there is material about the weather (e.g., Figure 20). The illustrations are presented in different colors to suit certain weather conditions so that students can distinguish whether "*It is a sunny day*" or "*It is cloudy*." The book cover and each page also use quality paper.

Last, according to the theory of Williams (1983), "*The textbook should provide appropriate guidance for the teacher of English who is not a native speaker of English.*" such as providing guidance for language items' presentation, and suggesting methods for presenting and performing speech items. This textbook mostly has guidance or instructions for teachers and students at the bottom of each page (e.g., Figures 4, 5, 8, 15, 17, 18 and 20). This makes it easier for teachers and students in the learning process so that the teacher is not too confused in thinking about the methods of teaching material in the textbook. Then, an appropriate textbook clearly demonstrates the types of responses required during drills (Williams, 1983). For instance, in Figure 3, the textbook has features that can engage students in meaningful drills and activities.

From the preceding points, it can be concluded that it is crucial to emphasize an English textbook must comply with the criteria for an appropriate English textbook. The most important aspect of an English textbook is that it meets the needs of students, supports the aims of national education or the existing curriculum, and is suitable for each country's context or environment. Furthermore, the EFL textbook used in this study has good quality and meets the criteria, particularly the BSNP criterion and William's (1983) theory.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

To sum up, this research examines the suitability and quality of the English textbook *Grow with English* for 4th grade students in elementary school, published by ERLANGGA. Based

on the results of the study, it can be concluded that this textbook has an appropriate quality and is suitable for EFL elementary school students grade 4. The study's outcomes revealed two significant findings. First, the study results indicated that this textbook is in accordance with the goals of the 2013 ELT Curriculum of Indonesian Education and Indonesia's National Education goals. Second, this textbook meets William's (1983) criteria, such as providing meaningful drills and learning activities, being relevant to students' age, interests, culture, and environment, offering guidance for both teachers and students, and having a high-quality graphics.

Furthermore, this study provides several recommendations based on the findings. First, the government or policymakers must ensure that every EFL textbook used in schools' suits students' needs. Second, school stakeholders and teachers must be aware of evaluating and selecting EFL textbooks before students use them. Third, EFL textbook authors must understand students' needs, the educational curriculum, and the ELT context in Indonesia. Finally, nowadays, most schools in Indonesia have applied The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), so that for further research, it is recommended to observe and analyze other EFL textbooks whether they are in accordance with the independent curriculum.

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