

Exploring Modern Islamic Boarding School English Textbooks Based on the SLA Principles

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Abstract

The main focus of this study is to analyze the activity in the "English Lesson" textbook utilized in contemporary Islamic boarding schools, which is published by Gontor Press. The researcher's objective was to conduct a thorough analysis of the English lesson book designed for sixth-grade students. In modern Islamic boarding schools, the sixth grade corresponds to the third grade in senior high school. This article employs qualitative research methods, specifically concentrating on content analysis proposed by Littlejohn (2011) regarding three main questions: What is the learner supposed to achieve? With whom? What material? Each question describes certain criteria that outline the elements of the three questions to describe the textbook material. Additionally, the author employs the idea of the ten principles of SLA proposed by Ellis (2005) to enhance the task-based analysis presented in the textbook. Findings indicate that vocabulary-based and sentence-building tasks have the potential to support L2 acquisition by providing both explicit and implicit knowledge. However, the analysis identifies a limited presence of interactive and communicative tasks. This research serves as a preliminary step before evaluating and highlighting the importance of SLA principles in designing effective English textbooks for Islamic boarding schools. This research can be used to increase the awareness of EFL teachers, English textbook material makers, and English textbook policymakers about the importance of SLA principles in textbook materials that can help students master English.

Keywords: English textbook, SLA principles

Introduction

Textbook is one of several sorts of teaching materials. This textbook contains print-based teaching or learning materials. Almost all learning activities require textbooks as a source of material, including the language learning process. Textbooks play a crucial role in language teaching by giving guidance and supporting students' task-based activities (Mares, 2003). In addition, there is a statement from Cunningsworth that textbooks can form an effective and quick language learning process (Cunningsworth, 1995).

This remark demonstrates how crucial textbooks are in the process of learning a language like English. Meanwhile, not all textbooks are effective learning tools. The quality of the textbook determines how successfully teachers and students use it. To create effective learning materials, three principles should be followed as a pattern. The principles governing the selection of materials or subjects for textbooks include relevance, consistency, and adequacy (Mursini, 2012).

To complement these efforts, Indonesia maintains a textbook quality



assessment institution, known as BSNP. According to BSNP, an English textbook should convey the feasibility of the subject, which is made up of four components: material content, language, presentation, and graphics (Minister of National Education of Republic of Indonesia, No. 11, 2005). Because these elements are important, the theory of language teaching and learning must be studied in the field of applied linguistics, which is related to language and education.

Some modern Islamic boarding schools apply English as a mandatory language in daily interactions. English Language Teaching (ELT) is a subject that must be taught to students thoroughly. Most of these modern Islamic boarding schools use a textbook published by the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School entitled English Lesson. The book is prepared based on the English curriculum of modern Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, it is necessary to know how the material described in English textbooks for students in modern Islamic boarding schools can complete six years of L2 learning. This analysis stage can be a first step before evaluating the material. Therefore, this research tries to reveal several methods that are suitable for use in textbooks to provide an effective L2 learning process for students and teachers.

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a sub-discipline of applied Linguistic (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, in terms of analyzing the

quality of textbooks, SLA is very necessary. Second language acquisition can provide insights into some strengths and shortcomings in the development of language learning resources (Cook, 1998). By analyzing textbooks using SLA principles, the quality and suitability of a textbook for continuing language learning can be determined. This shows the important role of SLA in textbooks.

There have been many previous studies that analyzed textbooks based on an SLA perspective. The previous research analyzed English textbooks for high school by analyzing three different types of books to find out which books best suited to the SLA perspective (Ruhlessin, 2021). A similar study was undertaken in China, evaluating two Chinese-based college English textbooks against a Standard English framework (Xinying, 2021). This study was conducted by adapting the quality of the books to the standards established by the China Standards English Framework. The findings of this study indicate that the quality of the book does not meet the specified requirements. The book's quality is worse than that mentioned in the Chinese standards English framework.

Aside from that, this research has been conducted on English books published by Gontor and utilized as textbooks in the Islamic Boarding School of Daarul Falah Serang, Banten. The study found that Gontor Press's English textbooks incorporate Islamic



values in dialogue and stories. Data from observations and interviews led to the conclusion that the three textbooks align with the goal of English learning at Daarul Falah, an Islamic boarding school. EFL textbooks for Islamic boarding schools should instill Islamic principles in students.

Based on this background, it is known that no research has been conducted to analyze Gontor Press's textbook *English Lessons* from an SLA perspective. It knows that SLA plays a crucial role in textbook analysis. Gontor Press's *English Lesson* textbook is unique in that it incorporates Islamic values and is based on the curriculum of an Islamic boarding school. As a result, this study examines the quality of English lessons for class VI textbooks issued by Modern Islamic Boarding School Gontor based on SLA perspective. What is meant by sixth grade in a modern Islamic boarding school is the same as third grade in a senior high school. According to this situation, this research raises valuable research questions: (1) To what extent does the *English Lesson* for sixth-grade follow SLA principles? (2) What types of tasks are addressed by SLA principles?

Theoretical Review

English Textbook

Textbooks are books designed for students at a particular level of study and contain relevant material produced by specialists in their respective professions

(Muslich, 2016). Language textbooks are typically graded and include multiple skills (e.g. listening, writing, reading, and speaking) or focus on a specific ability. Textbooks are dedicated as books designed especially for classroom use, typically made to teach knowledge points within a subject area and designed to step in apart from teaching (Nicholls, 2009).

Despite their limitations, textbooks remain the primary source of learner practice and putative language input in the teaching-learning process. They provide the finest learning opportunities for each student and serve as the foundation for the majority of classroom activities. The third serves as a resource for pupils with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other topics.

Material analysis on English textbook

A model for good teaching should be a quality textbook that facilitates students' language skills. However, the selected materials in a textbook may not provide optimum conditions for language learning (Guilloteaux, 2012). In most cases, the previous researcher was inclined to give an appraisal based on his assessment of a textbook.

According to Littlejohn (1992), evaluation by making judgments to such criteria tends to be subjective and difficult to quantify. An in-depth content analysis by examining the material as it is would be one way to select more objective materials for textbooks. It is considered that a material



analysis could be regarded as an initial step in the overall evaluation (Littlejohn, 1992).

Littlejohn (2011) proposed three questions as tools for deconstructing these materials. The elements of the materials into textbook analysis, aiming to determine what the learner is expected to do, who they are expected to do it with, and the content involved. He asserted that these questions were appropriate for analyzing language acquisition as they could dissect the tasks to identify which ones aligned with the language input for learners. Moreover, the three main aspects previously mentioned could shape the understanding of how tasks could guide learners and teachers in the classroom, determining who the learners should work with and what content they should focus on (Littlejohn, 2011).

The nature of SLA

SLA is a process where someone can receive a language that is not their mother tongue. In the context of language learning in Indonesia, English is not the second language of Indonesian society. English in Indonesia is called a foreign language or English Foreign Language (EFL). It can be concluded that in a classroom or at school, Indonesian students studying English are not able to speak it very well. They are restricted from interacting in the target language due to the environment.

Even though English is not a second language in Indonesia, this does not mean that SLA is not important in the English learning process of Indonesian students.

According to Ellis (1997), second language acquisition is how people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom. In this case, he uses the phrase *second* not to distinguish it from the term *foreign* but to convey whether learners learn languages through direct experience or as a result of classroom instruction. As a result, whether English is used as a second or foreign language, is determined by how teachers and students create new habitual contexts for language acquisition.

To build a new habit, the teacher needs to have a fundamental understanding of the process that students go through when learning a second language. A new habit can be a natural sequence of tactics for establishing a second language (Garza, 2003). The development process begins with the simple imitation of words or linguistic structures, followed by memorization (items/song/rhyme) and formulaic expressions (greetings). Communication skills include verbal attention getter, answering in the union, internal monologue, elaboration, anticipatory answers, self-correction, appeal for assistance, request for classification, and role-playing.

Principle in SLA

SLA principles were used to analyze and criticize material design characteristics (Ellis, 1997). Ellis proposed ten SLA principles to assist researchers in understanding the needs of L2 learners (Ellis,



2005). The principles emphasized the importance of teaching in guiding learners in L2 acquisition, drawing from task-centered studies. First principle emphasizes the need to confirm learners' fluency and competency with grammar rules. Second principle emphasizes the importance of using meaning-focused approaches to learning. Third principle emphasizes the significance of focusing on form. Fourth principle emphasizes the need for both implicit and explicit understanding of L2 development in the learning process. Sixth principle emphasizes the importance of comprehensive L2 input for effective learning outcomes. Seventh principle prioritized output. Eighth principle focuses on L2 proficiency and interaction during the learning process for L2 learners. Ninth principle recognizes that each learner's motivation and abilities may necessitate a unique learning method, which may be challenging for teachers to accommodate. Tenth principle emphasizes the importance of assessing L2 proficiency, whether freely or in a controlled setting.

Method

This research used the modern Islamic boarding school's English textbook namely *English Lesson* for sixth grade. This book has been used by most modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia as a complementary book in the process of learning English. This study used qualitative research methods, which focus on content analysis.

The study utilized a qualitative research design because the researcher aimed to investigate and comprehend the occurrences of individuals or groups related to a social or human issue (Creswell, 2009). The analysis of content is a method of research that examines data within a particular context to understand the interpretations given to them by an individual, group, or culture. Essentially, content analysis is a research method that enables the extraction of dependable and accurate conclusions from text (or other meaningful material) about the context in which they are used (Krippendorff, 2004).

Qualitative research uses descriptive data from documents, audio or video recordings, transcripts, pictures, and words. This paper focused on materials analysis, leading to the development of a descriptive qualitative research design. This research applies the three-level analysis proposed by Littlejohn, especially at level two, which identified three questions to deconstruct material analysis, providing a deeper understanding of what users need to achieve and the importance of material aspects. At this level, it was necessary to conclude the goals of both the teacher and the student. The materials were categorized into task elements using the three questions: What is the learner supposed to achieve? With whom? And with what material? (Littlejohn, 2011).

The goal was to establish a precise definition of the term *task*. While level 1



provided an unbiased account of what exists, level 2 detailed subjective choices based on the objective facts of materials, such as descriptive statements, the physical aspects of materials, and instructional segments of the main procedures. Level 3 provided an overall summary of levels 1 and 2, encompassing the underlying principles of the materials and outlining the roles intended for teachers and students.

To analyze the data, the researcher took data from Chapter I of the English Lesson book for class six until Chapter VI. Chapter I with the title "Mother and Moral Education," Chapter II with the title "The Islamic School of Doctrine," Chapter III with the title "Albania," Chapter IV with the title "Arabic Calligraphy," Chapter V with the title "The Absent Minded Scientist," and Chapter VI with the title "A brief about TV." Chapter I until VI will be used as a sample in this research. In the first phase of data analysis, the researcher divided the book's content into chapters and their respective tasks based on Littlejohn's (2011) approach. Multiple tasks may be grouped under a single number. Second, the writer employed three primary questions from Littlejohn to pinpoint the task boundaries and recognize the task materials' process, participation, and content. In the end, the writer utilized characteristics to expand upon the three inquiries to uncover the most effective approach to language learning, as indicated by the SLA principles put forth by Ellis (2005).

Result

The English textbook "English Lesson for Class Six" consists of 13 Chapters. Each chapter has a different title and contains five until six worksheets. Even though each chapter has a different theme, the pattern of formulating assignments and activities in the description is similar. Therefore, the author chose six chapters at random to thoroughly investigate using the task analysis schedule as presented in the findings table.

The data findings underwent analysis using Littlejohn's theory of material analysis, which comprises three fundamental questions. The initial query pertains to *What is the learner expected to do?* This question is associated with the learning process, emphasizing specific details about the expected actions from students in the given assignment. The first question is divided into three components: turn-take, focus, and mental operation. Turn-taking pertains to classroom activities and the responsibilities that students are required to undertake during classroom discussions. These responsibilities may include initiating a discussion, speaking, or simply listening to the teacher's explanation without having to participate.

The table below presents an analysis of these findings. Task activities that demonstrate SLA principles are indicated with a plus sign (+), while those that do not are indicated with a minus sign (-), and those that display neither are marked with a cross (x).

Table 1. Turn-take tasks analysis

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the learner expect to do?						
Turn-take						
a. Initiate language (make question)	+	+	+	+	+	+
b. Produce response (Answer direct question)	+	+	+	+	+	+
a. Not required action or no direct interactive activity (listen, read, explain)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Total value	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2

In table 1, one of the three questions asked by Littlejohn is presented, namely "What are students expected to do?" In the turn-take section, all chapters encourage students to start L2 with their own words so that a + sign always appears in Table 1. Each chapter has a text with a different title and theme. Each chapter includes model questions prompting students to generate questions based on the reading material. Consequently, the "initiate language" column is marked with a + for every chapter. The question model for "initiate language" in each chapter is "Make Questions from the following answer! Explain these phrases! And put each word in the sentence!"

In producing responses, engaging in task activities is an effective way to capture students' focus and help them understand the context of the task. Each section includes tasks that highlight the importance of developing students' skills in extracting knowledge from course material, for example, answering questions directly related to reading material. All chapters contain

elements of the task of producing responses so that in the produce responses column, chapters 1 to 6 have a + sign.

There is no mandatory action sessions described in the textbook. There is an order to make an explanation of the sentence fragments in each chapter, but the assignment is in the form of a written assignment. Next, the focused task-based analysis is presented in Table 2 as follows.

Table 2: Focus tasks analysis

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6
Focus						
a. Language system	+	+	+	+	+	+
b. Meaning	+	+	+	+	+	+
c. Meaning/form relationship/system	+	+	+	+	+	+
Total value	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3

The analysis in table 2 focuses on the significance of materials, determining if specific task activities align with SLA principles. The findings indicate that the majority of tasks have a positive impact on students' attention and motivation to enhance their L2 skills. In terms of language practice, all assignments within each chapter include components designed to enhance students' understanding of L2 by incorporating exercises that allow students to engage in practicing language structures and patterns. Tasks that involve understanding alternative meanings require activities that promote awareness, like selecting words based on their meaning within a sentence and constructing complete sentences from word

fragments. The analysis of the planned task aligns with the principle of second language acquisition (SLA) that prioritizes meaning-based learning. This approach effectively supports the learning process of students.

Table 3. Mental operation tasks analysis

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mental operation						
a. Express own idea	+	+	+	+	+	+
b. Mechanical drills	x	x	x	x	x	x
c. Meaningful drill	+	+	+	+	+	+
d. Hypothesize	+	+	+	+	+	+
e. Apply general	x	x	x	x	x	x
Total value	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3

The mental operation is related to the mindset of learners when processing L2 information. Most aspects of mental operation have been clearly explained. There are four elements that can cater to the needs of learners such as expressing their own ideas, engaging in both mechanical and meaningful exercises, and applying general knowledge. These four aspects need to be implemented to enhance students' ability in using L2, but it turns out that in the textbook, there are one or two things that are overlooked and cannot be applied to express students' ideas. Meanwhile, this aspect is crucial for training L2 comprehension.

Littlejohn (2011) raises a second question: "with whom?" This part addresses the students' working partners, whether they are working in pairs, groups, or individually.

Table 4. Participant involved task analysis

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6
Who with?						
a. Learners work individually	+	+	+	+	+	+
b. Learners pair or group work	x	x	x	x	x	x
c. Teacher to students	+	+	+	+	+	+
Total value	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2

The participant structure task analysis results are outlined in Table 4. As per the textbook, the majority of students dedicated their time to individual work. Additionally, the teacher directed the students to independently complete their assignments. While these tasks may benefit L2 learners, they do not contribute to the improvement of the learning process. It appears that the textbook does not govern collaborative activities within pairs or groups.

In the L2 learning process, pair and group work activities enable significant interaction and negotiation. Therefore, when English textbooks emphasize pair or group work in task activities, this will enable L2 learners to exchange ideas and better understand the material. This is in line with the SLA principles put forward by Ellis regarding the importance of interaction in the learning process to improve L2 abilities.

Littlejohn (2011) poses a third question about the nature of the content: What input is to be covered in the assignment and what output is expected from the students? The type of input for students can include written or oral assignments, pictures, series, stories, and more. On the other hand, the expected output from students can

involve responding, filling in the blanks, answering questions, matching objects, circling pictures, singing songs, and so on.

The ingredients' properties and sources are examined in the content. The focus is on whether the assignment involves grammatical explanations of vocabulary or the use of specific expressions. The sources pertain to how the task is introduced, which can be from text or dialogue in the material, teacher presentations, or student presentations.

Table 5. Content materials task analysis

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6
With what content?						
A. Form						
a. Learners input	+	+	+	+	+	+
b. Learners expected output	+	+	+	+	+	+
B. Source						
a. Dialog or text material	+	+	+	+	+	+
b. Learners (presentatio)	x	x	x	x	x	x
c. Teacher (facilitate text instruction)	+	+	+	+	+	+
C. Nature						
a. Non fiction	+	+	+	+	+	+
b. Fiction	+	+	+	+	+	+
c. Game	x	x	x	x	x	x
d. Song	x	x	x	x	x	x
Total value	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6

In Table 5, there is a content analysis highlighting the importance of input and output in the L2 learning process. Complete task facilities are widely used as input for learning L2. On the whole, students are expected to have a balance between input and output. Non-fiction elements make natural elements seem less regulated. Despite this, elements like games, and songs, which can enhance students' motivation to acquire L2, are not present in them.

Table 6. Summary of result analysis

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. What is the learners expect to do?	+8	+8	+8	+8	+8	+8
2. Who with?	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2
3. With what content?	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6
Total value	+16	+16	+16	+16	+16	+16

Table 7. Details instructions and tasks for each chapter

Chapter	Title	Instruction and task description
1	Mother and moral education	Answer the question! Make question from the following answer! Explain these phrase! Chose the one word which would best keep the meaning of the word! Put each of these word in sentence!
2	The Islamic school of doctrine	Answer the question! Make question from the following answer! Explain these phrase! Chose the one word which would best keep the meaning of the word! Put each of these word in sentence!
3	Albania	Answer the question! Make question from the following answer! Explain these phrase! Chose the one word which would best keep the meaning of the word! Put each of these word in sentence!
4	Arabic calligraphy	Answer the question! Make question from the following answer! Explain these phrase! Chose the one word which would best keep the meaning of the word! Put each of these word in sentence!
5	The absent minded of scientist	Answer the question! Make question from the following answer! Explain these phrase! Chose the one word which would best keep the meaning of the word! Put each of these word in sentence!
6	A brief about TV	Answer the question! Make question from the following answer! Explain these phrase! Chose the one word which would best keep the meaning of the word! Put each of these word in sentence!



Table 6 presents the overall analysis results, revealing a pattern that signifies a task-based analysis approach with an SLA principle. Table 7 provides details about the instructions and tasks for each chapter. It can be inferred from the aforementioned table that the textbook "English Lesson for Class Six" has consistent instructions and tasks across all chapters. The analysis results indicate that the primary content and language structure are suitable for high school level, as proficiency in grammar and vocabulary holds significant importance in language acquisition. This book offers an extensive and diverse range of vocabulary.

The textbook includes sufficient written exercises to develop skills. Additionally, it offers a substantial amount of listening materials to aid comprehension. It also provides ample speaking activities to prepare students for real-life interactions. The textbook contains instruction and task descriptions that are well-suited for use in high school due to the assumption that students at this level can already creatively write texts or construct lengthy sentences. In general, the instruction and task descriptions in the textbook highlight the importance of students' capability to form extended sentences or write text.

The analysis findings indicate the necessity of developing English textbook content integrating SLA principles. Various factors have been identified. Giving more emphasis on extensive input is essential for

enhancing desired outcomes in L2 learning. Extensive input plays a crucial role in maximizing students' performance. The textbook material needs to be engaging and captivating, making it easier for students to comprehend. By doing so, these activities can motivate students to actively invest in L2 learning.

EFL material analysis means understanding the needs of teachers and students in the L2 learning process. However, adapting teaching materials, especially from textbooks, is not always successful. Classroom teachers can create their materials to meet students' needs. If a textbook does not meet learning standards, teachers can change the material to meet students' needs. Teachers can simplify complex texts to suit the abilities of students in the class.

The findings of this study are not yet applicable to all cases, but they can serve as a guide for carrying out comparable research to enhance the material of English textbooks. The examination and outcomes of this study represent the first phase in the assessment process to establish how suitable specific textbooks are in assisting L2 students during the learning process.

Conclusion

The standards for second language acquisition can be used to conclude the material analysis of the selected textbooks. The researcher emphasizes the significant impact of assignment types on L2 language



acquisition, aligning with the task-based analysis goal of improving input and output for L2 students. They also stress the importance of a comprehensive in-use evaluation for determining textbooks that effectively support the learning process. The results show that vocabulary-based and sentence assembly tasks are effective in supporting L2 acquisition because they elicit both explicit and implicit knowledge. Ultimately, this research can aid in the selection of English textbooks during the initial evaluation stage.

This research is expected to provide important elements to outline several processes in SLA principles for the development of context-relevant materials for subsequent researchers, teachers, English language textbook makers or publishers, and English language textbook policy makers or authorizers.

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