

# A Critical Evaluation of Task Design in *Bright: An English* Textbook for Grade 8 Based on TBLT Principles

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## Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the extent to which the tasks in *Bright: An English* textbook for Grade 8 align with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). This study employed a qualitative research design using content analysis. The data were taken from three selected chapters representing the beginning, middle, and end of the textbook. The tasks were analyzed using criteria adapted from TBLT principles, including meaning focus, communicative gap, learner language use, communicative outcome, and interaction. The findings reveal that the tasks are only partially aligned with TBLT principles. While some activities promote meaningful communication and interaction, the majority of tasks are dominated by form-focused exercises such as fill in the blank, matching, and sentence completion. These activities limit students' opportunities to engage in real life communication. It can be concluded that the textbook does not fully support the implementation of TBLT. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to adapt the tasks to make them more communicative, and textbook developers should incorporate more task-based activities to better support communicative language learning.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT); Textbook Evaluation; Task Design

## INTRODUCTION

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL), textbooks play a central role in classroom instruction. They are often used as the main source of learning materials, as they help structure teaching programs, ensure consistency in instruction, and reduce teachers' workload (Sun & Dang, 2020). In Indonesia, textbooks are also widely utilized to support the implementation of the current curriculum and to guide teaching and learning activities. For this reason, it is important to examine whether the content provided in textbooks effectively supports students' language development. One of the key elements of an English textbook is the learning task, which influences how students engage with language and participate in classroom activities. Tasks guide learners in processing input, producing language, and interacting with others during the learning process. Well-designed tasks can promote active participation, sustain learners' engagement, and foster both critical thinking and language proficiency (Damayanti & Mukarto, 2024). Therefore, the quality of task design is crucial in determining the effectiveness of a textbook in facilitating meaningful language learning.

One approach that highlights the importance of task design is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). This approach views language learning as a process that occurs through the use of meaningful tasks. Rather than focusing primarily on grammatical forms, TBLT emphasizes communication and the use of language to achieve specific purposes. Nunan (2004) explains that this approach integrates authentic materials into the classroom and encourages learners to focus on meaning and real communication. In line with this, Willis and Willis (2007) state that

tasks should resemble real-life language use and require learners to achieve communicative goals through meaningful interaction. Thus, TBLT offers a useful perspective for evaluating how tasks are presented in language textbooks.

From a Task-Based Language Teaching perspective, a task is considered the central unit in designing language instruction and organizing classroom activities (Ellis, 2009). In this approach, tasks are used to facilitate meaningful language use rather than focusing solely on linguistic forms. Ellis (2003) identifies several key characteristics that distinguish tasks from other types of classroom activities. A task is designed as a structured activity that requires learners to focus primarily on meaning and to use language to communicate. It typically involves some form of gap, such as an information, reasoning, or opinion gap, which encourages learners to engage in communication. In addition, tasks are expected to reflect real-world language use, involve various language skills, engage learners' cognitive processes, and lead to a clear communicative outcome. Furthermore, Willis (1996) categorizes tasks based on the types of activities learners perform, such as listing, ordering, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks. These classifications highlight the diversity of task types that can be used to support communicative language learning.

*Bright: An English* is a textbook series designed for junior high school students and published by Erlangga. The Grade 8 textbook is organized thematically and includes a range of components such as texts, activities, expressions for daily communication, grammar explanations, and project-based tasks. It is also presented as a textbook that provides varied activities and authentic materials to support students' communicative competence. However, the inclusion of diverse activities and texts does not automatically ensure that the tasks are consistent with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to critically examine how far the tasks in this textbook reflect meaningful, goal-oriented, and communicative language use. Several studies have examined textbook use and task design in EFL contexts, revealing recurring limitations in how learning activities are structured. Overall, textbook tasks tend to emphasize lower-order thinking skills, form-focused activities, and limited interaction, which restrict opportunities for meaningful communication (Soe, 2024; Puspa & Jazadi, 2025). In addition, task distribution is often unbalanced, with certain types of tasks dominating while others are underrepresented (Sholihah, 2022).

From a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) perspective, research shows that although some textbooks demonstrate general alignment with TBLT criteria, important elements such as real-life relevance and opportunities for learner negotiation are often lacking (Astriani et al., 2023). Furthermore, while textbook evaluations may report overall usability and positive linguistic features, issues related to adaptability and task quality remain evident (Alshumaimeri & Alharbi, 2024). On the other hand, studies on TBLT implementation highlight its potential to enhance learners' engagement and communicative ability, although challenges such as task difficulty and limited feedback may affect its effectiveness (Fujita & Shintani, 2025). Taken together, these findings indicate that although textbooks and TBLT-based practices offer valuable contributions to language learning, the design and implementation of tasks still require critical evaluation to ensure meaningful, interactive, and contextually relevant learning experiences.

However, while previous studies have provided valuable insights into textbook evaluation and task design, they predominantly focus on general textbook criteria, task classification, or cognitive aspects rather than offering a critical evaluation of task design from a specific pedagogical perspective. Although some studies have examined textbook tasks using Task-

Based Language Teaching (TBLT) criteria, they often remain limited to general assessments and have not sufficiently explored how task design supports key TBLT principles such as meaning-focused language use, communicative goals, learner interaction, authenticity, and clear task outcomes. Moreover, the textbook *Bright: An English* has not been specifically investigated from a TBLT perspective. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by critically evaluating the extent to which the tasks in the textbook reflect core TBLT principles. This study is guided by the following research question: To what extent do the tasks in *Bright: An English* Textbook for Grade 8 Junior High School align with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching?

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using content analysis to examine the task design in *Bright: An English* textbook for Grade 8. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring the characteristics and patterns of learning materials in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study specifically used document analysis, as it involved the systematic examination and interpretation of textbook content (Bowen, 2009). The data of this study were taken from *Bright: An English* textbook for Grade 8, published by Erlangga. The textbook was selected because it is designed for junior high school students and is aligned with the current curriculum. The analysis focused on the tasks presented in the textbook.

In this study, three chapters were selected purposively to represent different stages of the textbook. Chapter 1, Chapter 5, and Chapter 8 were chosen to reflect the beginning, middle, and end of the learning progression. This selection aimed to provide a representative overview of task design across the textbook. The instrument used in this study was an analytical checklist developed from Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles proposed by Ellis (2003) and Willis (1996). The checklist was used to evaluate the characteristics of each task, including focus on meaning, presence of a communicative gap, use of learners' own linguistic resources, communicative outcomes, authenticity, and opportunities for interaction. The data were collected through document analysis by identifying and selecting all tasks found in the selected chapters. Each task was recorded and organized for further analysis.

The data analysis was conducted through several stages. First, task identification was carried out by identifying and numbering all tasks found in the selected chapters of the textbook. Second, task coding was conducted by analyzing each task using a checklist adapted from Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles. Each task was examined based on criteria such as meaning focus, communicative gap, learner language use, communicative outcome, and interaction. Third, descriptive summarization was performed by categorizing the tasks into fully aligned, partially aligned, or not aligned with TBLT principles. The frequency and distribution of each category were then calculated to identify patterns in task design. Finally, interpretation was conducted by analyzing the patterns found in relation to TBLT principles to determine the extent to which the textbook supports meaningful and communicative language learning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This study analyzed a total of 56 activities extracted from three selected chapters (Chapter 1, Chapter 5, and Chapter 8) of *Bright: An English* textbook for Grade 8. The analysis was conducted using criteria adapted from Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), particularly the

characteristics of tasks proposed by Ellis (2003), including meaning focus, communicative gap, learner language use, communicative outcome, and interaction.

The findings reveal that the majority of activities do not align with the principles of TBLT. As presented in Table 1, 30 activities (53.5%) were categorized as Non-TBLT, 16 activities (28.6%) as Partially aligned with TBLT, and only 10 activities (17.9%) fully met the criteria of TBLT tasks.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Activities Based on Their Alignment with TBLT Principles

Category	Frequency	Percentage
TBLT	10	17.9%
Partial TBLT	16	28.6%
Non-TBLT	30	53.5%

### Meaning Focus

In terms of meaning focus, a large proportion of activities emphasize linguistic forms rather than meaningful communication. This is particularly evident in activities such as fill-in-the-blank exercises (e.g., Chapter 1 Activities 3, 9, and 12; Chapter 5 Activities 9–11), sentence completion tasks, and grammar-focused exercises (e.g., combining sentences using *when* or *while* in Chapter 5 Activity 12). These activities require students to manipulate grammatical structures rather than express their own ideas or meanings. Such tasks prioritize accuracy over meaning-making, indicating limited alignment with the TBLT principle that language should be used as a tool for communication rather than as an object of study.

### Communicative Gap

The presence of a communicative gap is largely absent in most activities. Many tasks can be completed individually without requiring learners to exchange information, opinions, or ideas. For instance, matching exercises (Chapter 1 Activity 11), true/false comprehension tasks (Chapter 5 Activity 4), sequencing activities (Chapter 5 Activity 5), and multiple-choice questions (e.g., Chapter 5 Activity 15 and end-of-chapter exercises) do not require interaction or negotiation of meaning. This indicates that information gaps, reasoning gaps, and opinion gaps, key features of TBLT tasks are generally not incorporated in the textbook activities.

### Learner Language Use

Regarding learner language use, many activities provide fixed or controlled responses, limiting students' opportunities to use their own linguistic resources. Examples include sentence rewriting (Chapter 1 Activity 4), structured grammar exercises (Chapter 5 Activities 8 and 12), and vocabulary-focused tasks requiring predetermined answers (e.g., Chapter 5 Activity 6). These activities reflect a high level of control, where learners are guided to produce specific forms rather than engage in spontaneous language production. As a result, opportunities for creative and meaningful language use are restricted.

### Communicative Outcome

Only a limited number of activities demonstrate a clear communicative outcome. Tasks such as role plays (Chapter 1 Activities 5 and 14), email writing (Chapter 1 Activity 15), dialogue creation (Chapter 5 Activity 16), and mini-projects (end-of-chapter tasks) require students to produce meaningful output, such as presenting ideas, expressing opinions, or engaging in extended communication. However, these activities are relatively few compared to the total

number of activities analyzed, indicating that communicative outcomes are not a dominant feature in the textbook.

### **Interaction**

In terms of interaction, most activities are designed for individual work rather than pair or group interaction. This is evident in various types of activities such as fill-in-the-blank exercises (e.g., Chapter 1 Activities 3, 9, and 12; Chapter 5 Activities 9–11), multiple-choice questions (e.g., Chapter 5 Activity 15 and end-of-chapter exercises), true/false tasks (Chapter 5 Activity 4), and matching exercises (Chapter 1 Activity 11). These tasks can be completed independently without requiring students to interact or negotiate meaning with others. Only a small proportion of activities involve meaningful interaction among students. These include role-play tasks (Chapter 1 Activities 5 and 14), class surveys (Chapter 1 Activity 10), group discussions (Chapter 5 Activity 1), dialogue creation (Chapter 5 Activity 16), and collaborative storytelling or retelling tasks (Chapter 8 Activities 21 and 23). Such activities require learners to communicate with peers and exchange ideas, which is essential in communicative language learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that while the textbook includes some activities that reflect TBLT principles, these are limited in number and not systematically integrated. The majority of activities emphasize form-focused instruction, individual work, and controlled language use, suggesting a stronger alignment with traditional language teaching approaches rather than task-based pedagogy.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that the tasks in *Bright: An English* textbook for Grade 8 are only partially aligned with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Although some activities promote interaction and meaningful communication, the overall task design is still largely dominated by form-focused exercises. This is reflected in the distribution of activities, where more than half (53.5%) were categorized as Non-TBLT, while only a small proportion (17.9%) fully met TBLT criteria. This imbalance suggests that the textbook prioritizes grammatical accuracy over communicative competence. According to Ellis (2003), a task should primarily focus on meaning and require learners to use language for communicative purposes. However, a significant number of activities identified in this study, such as fill-in-the-blank, matching, sentence completion, and multiple-choice tasks, do not meet these criteria, as they mainly involve controlled language practice rather than meaningful language use. As a result, learners are provided with limited opportunities to express their own ideas and engage in authentic communication.

Furthermore, the lack of communicative gaps in many activities indicates limited opportunities for learners to exchange information, negotiate meaning, and interact with others. Most tasks can be completed individually without requiring collaboration, which reduces the potential for meaningful interaction in the classroom. This finding contradicts the core principles of TBLT, which emphasize real-life communication and learner interaction (Willis & Willis, 2007). Consequently, the textbook may not sufficiently support the development of students' communicative competence. This finding is consistent with previous studies. Puspa and Jazadi (2025) found that textbook tasks are often dominated by form-focused and non-interactive activities, which restrict opportunities for meaningful communication. Similarly, Sholihah (2022) reported that English textbook tasks are not evenly distributed and tend to emphasize certain types of activities over others. In line with these findings, Pirzad and Abadikhah (2022)

also revealed that English textbooks tend to lack task-based activities, as most tasks focus on controlled language practice such as multiple-choice, true/false, and matching exercises. These types of activities limit students' opportunities to engage in real-life communication and meaningful interaction. The dominance of form-focused activities in the textbook raises concerns about its effectiveness in implementing TBLT principles. While the inclusion of some communicative tasks (e.g., role plays, discussions, and projects) indicates an attempt to incorporate TBLT, their limited number and lack of systematic integration reduce their overall impact. Therefore, the textbook can be considered insufficient in fully supporting TBLT-based learning. From a pedagogical perspective, these findings imply that teachers play a crucial role in mediating textbook use. Teachers may need to adapt or redesign form-focused activities into more communicative tasks by incorporating interaction, meaningful contexts, and open-ended responses. In addition, textbook developers are encouraged to include a greater proportion of task-based activities that promote communication, interaction, and authentic language use, in order to better align with TBLT principles and support the development of students' communicative competence.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the extent to which the tasks in *Bright: An English* textbook for Grade 8 align with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The findings reveal that the textbook is only partially aligned with TBLT principles. While some activities promote meaningful communication and interaction, the majority of tasks are dominated by form-focused exercises that emphasize grammatical accuracy rather than communicative language use. These findings indicate that the textbook does not fully support the development of students' communicative competence as emphasized in TBLT. Therefore, it is important for teachers to adapt the tasks to make them more communicative and meaningful. In addition, textbook developers are encouraged to incorporate a greater proportion of task-based activities to better align with TBLT principles. This study is limited to the analysis of selected chapters in one textbook. Future studies may examine a wider range of textbooks or explore how tasks are implemented in classroom practice to gain a more comprehensive understanding of TBLT application.

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