

Content Analysis of My Next Words Grade 3: An Evaluation Based on Tomlinson's Criteria

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Abstract. *This study aims to evaluate the My Next Words Grade 3 textbook using evaluation criteria developed by Brian Tomlinson, which include impact, readability, usefulness, practicality, localization, and flexibility. Through a qualitative content analysis approach, this study analyzes the suitability of the content of the book to the needs and characteristics of elementary school students. The results showed that the book had a number of strengths, such as an attractive visual presentation and systematic structure of the material, but also found some weaknesses, such as a lack of local context and challenges in readability for some students. This research provides recommendations for the development of textbooks that are more effective and in accordance with modern pedagogical principles and educational contexts in Indonesia. These findings are expected to contribute to teachers, curriculum developers, and textbook writers in improving the quality of English learning materials at the elementary school level.*

Keywords: *Content analysis, English learning, Material evaluation, Textbooks, Tomlinson.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Textbooks have a central role in the process of learning English as a foreign language because they provide structure, content, and guidance for teachers and students in achieving learning goals (Komariah, 2022). In the modern era of education, a systematic evaluation of textbooks is a crucial step to ensure their effectiveness, relevance, and suitability to the needs of learners, especially for the elementary school level where the foundation of the language is first built. Although there are various English textbooks available in the Indonesian market, there are still few that are comprehensively evaluated using internationally recognized evaluation frameworks such as the Tomlinson criteria.

The book "My Next Words Grade 3" has been adopted by many elementary schools in Indonesia as the main teaching material in English learning for grade 3 students. However, there has been no in-depth evaluation that examines the suitability of this book with pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural aspects based on scientific criteria. This limitation of evaluation causes teachers and educational institutions to lack the necessary information to maximize the use of books or make the necessary adaptations according to their learning context.

Textbook evaluation using the Tomlinson criteria offers a comprehensive perspective that includes impact, readability, usefulness, practicality, localization, and flexibility—aspects that are essential to the effectiveness of a textbook. Through a systematic content analysis approach, this study will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the "My Next Words Grade 3" book so that it can provide a scientific basis for the development and improvement of English textbooks in the future.

The results of this research are expected to contribute to the field of development of English learning materials, especially for the context of basic education in Indonesia. By evaluating the "My Next Words Grade 3" book based on comprehensive criteria, this study not only provides valuable information for teachers, researchers, and curriculum developers, but also encourages a more critical and evidence-based approach to the selection and use of textbooks in Indonesian schools.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Textbooks in Language Learning

2.1.1 Definition and Function of Textbooks

Textbooks are one of the important components in a language learning system that has been systematically and structured to achieve certain learning goals. According to Tomlinson (2011), textbooks are materials or materials used by teachers and students in the learning process to improve language knowledge and/or experience. Textbooks not only serve as a source of learning materials, but also as a guide for teachers in designing learning activities and linguistic experiences for students.

In the context of language learning, textbooks have several main functions. First, textbooks function as a syllabus that determines the content and order of learning. Second, textbooks provide authentic or semi-authentic language inputs that may not be available in a learning environment. Third, textbooks offer a variety of activities and exercises designed to develop language skills. Fourth, textbooks serve as a reference for students about grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other linguistic aspects. Fifth, textbooks are a source of stimulation and ideas for teachers in developing creative learning activities (Ismaniar & Hazizah, 2018).

Cunningsworth (1995), a good textbook should not only serve as a source of instructional material, but it "should aim to match the needs of learners, support the syllabus, and facilitate effective language learning.". Rohma (2021), a textbook is a carefully designed instructional material that serves as a guide for both teachers and students in the learning process. It provides structured content and learning activities aimed at facilitating language acquisition. The

functions of a textbook include organizing the syllabus, offering language input, providing exercises for skill development, serving as a reference for linguistic knowledge, and supporting teachers in planning and conducting effective lessons.

Dini (2022) identifies the role of textbooks in language learning, including: (1) a source for the presentation of material both oral and written, (2) a source of activities for students' communicative practice and interaction, (3) a source of reference for students about grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc., (4) a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities, (5) a syllabus that reflects the learning objectives that have been determined, and (6) support for less experienced teachers who still need to build confidence.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Approach

This research uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis method. Content analysis was chosen because it allows for a systematic review of the written and visual material in the "My Next Words Grade 3" textbook. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is a research technique to make replicable and valid conclusions from the text to the context of its use. This approach allows researchers to identify patterns, themes, and characteristics in textbook content and evaluate them based on specific criteria. Content analysis was carried out by identifying and categorizing elements in the textbook based on Tomlinson's evaluation criteria. This approach is interpretive and descriptive, focusing on an in-depth understanding of textbook quality and characteristics rather than quantitative measurement. However, to reinforce the validity of the findings, several aspects were also quantified such as the proportion of types of activities, the distribution of language skills, and the frequency of certain topics.

3.2 Objects of Research

It is important to note that the Student Book is not a stand-alone resource. Rather, it is part of a broader, integrated learning system that includes several additional components designed to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning. These supplementary elements play a crucial role in supporting both teachers and students throughout the instructional process.

The object of this research is the English textbook "My Next Words Grade 3" published by Publisher X in 2022. The book consists of the following main components:

1. Student's Book: contains 10 learning units with a total of 120 pages
2. Workbook: contains additional exercises to reinforce learning with a total of 80 pages
3. Teacher's Guide: contains methodological guides and lesson plans with a total of 150 pages

4. Audio Material: contains recorded dialogue, songs, stories, and pronunciation exercises
5. Flashcards and Posters: as a medium to support visual learning

This study will evaluate all of these components as a single learning system, with an emphasis on Student Books as the main component.

According to Green and Petty (1971, as cited in Tarigan, 1986), a good textbook should be interesting and motivating to encourage learners to use it. The content must be illustrative and suitable for learners' abilities, and it should connect with other scientific fields to support integrated learning. A good textbook stimulates learners' active participation, is clearly written to avoid confusion, and presents a clear point of view to guide learners. Additionally, it should balance and emphasize important values while respecting individual differences among learners.

The object of this research is English teaching materials analyzed using Brian Tomlinson's (2011) principles of materials development. The study focuses on how the materials fulfill principles such as emotional engagement, the provision of meaningful input, opportunities for active language use, and the development of cultural awareness in the language learning process.

3.3 Research Instruments

The main instrument in this study is an evaluation checklist developed based on Tomlinson's criteria. This checklist includes six key dimensions: impact, readability, usefulness, practicality, localization, and flexibility. For each dimension, several specific indicators are developed that can be observed in the textbook.

Table 1 Evaluation Indicators Based on Tomlinson's Criteria

Yes	Dimension	Indicators
1.	Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of illustrations and attractive visual designs 2. Variety of topics relevant to the child's interests 3. Consistent use of characters as a guide 4. Activities that encourage active engagement 5. Elements that evoke a positive emotional response
2.	Readability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarity of instructions and explanations 2. Language conformity with the student's ability level 3. Layout that supports understanding 4. Use of appropriate fonts and colors 5. Consistency of format and structure
3.	Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suitability with learning objectives and curriculum 2. Completeness of supporting components 3. Clear learning structure 4. Integration of language skills 5. Integrated assessment and evaluation system
4.	Practicality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical quality of the book (paper, binding) 2. Availability and accessibility of supporting materials 3. Ease of use in resource-constrained contexts 4. Proportion of price and quality 5. Realistic duration of activities

5.	Localization	1. Sensitivity to local values 2. Integration of local and global cultural elements 3. Conformity with the national curriculum 4. Relevance to the context of Indonesian students' lives 5. Use familiar references and examples
6.	Flexibility	1. Variety of activities for different learning styles 2. Options for learning differentiation 3. Room for adaptation and creativity 4. Possible use in various pedagogical approaches 5. Enrichment and remediation activities

In addition to the checklist, observation sheets are also used to record specific examples from the book that describe strengths and weaknesses based on each indicator. This documentation is important to provide concrete evidence for the evaluation findings.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection is carried out through several systematic stages:

1. Familiarization: The researcher studies all components of the textbook to gain a comprehensive understanding of the structure, content, and approach of learning.
2. Identification of units of analysis: Books are divided into units of analysis consisting of chapters, sub-chapters, or sections with specific themes. Each unit is analyzed separately before thorough synthesis.
3. Coding: The content of the book is coded based on the indicators in the evaluation checklist. Coding is done in detail by noting specific pages, sections, and examples.
4. Documentation: Representative examples from the book that illustrate strengths or weaknesses are noted and documented as supporting evidence.
5. Validation: To ensure the reliability of the encoding, some of the data was encoded by a second researcher familiar with the Tomlinson criteria. The coding results are compared and discussed to address differences in interpretation.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data is analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach with the following steps:

1. Data reduction: Irrelevant data are removed, while data that fit the research focus is organized based on evaluation criteria.
2. Data presentation: Data is presented in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, or matrices that show patterns and themes in textbooks. Specific examples are included to support interpretation.
3. Drawing conclusions: Based on the patterns and themes that emerge, conclusions are drawn about the strengths and weaknesses of the book based on each of the criteria.

4. **Triangulation:** To increase the credibility of the findings, the method is triangulated by comparing the results of the content analysis with the study of supporting documents such as curriculum guidelines and related research literature.
5. **Synthesis:** Findings from the various components of the book and evaluation criteria are synthesized to provide a comprehensive picture of the overall quality of the textbook.

Through this analysis process, the research aims to produce a comprehensive and in-depth evaluation of the "My Next Words Grade 3" textbook based on Tomlinson's criteria.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 General Description of the Book "My Next Words Grade 3"

4.1.1 Book Structure and Organization

"My Next Words Grade 3" consists of 10 thematic units designed for learning over the course of one academic year. Each unit is built around themes relevant to children's lives such as "My Family", "School Life", "Healthy Habits", "Animal World", and "My Neighborhood". The internal structure of each unit is consistent with the following pattern:

1. **Starting Point:** An introductory section that introduces themes and keywords through illustrations and introductory activities.
2. **Listen and Learn:** Focus on listening skills through short dialogue, songs, or simple stories.
3. **Speak Up:** A speaking activity that encourages students to use the target language in a controlled context.
4. **Word Power:** Vocabulary development through games, groupings, and visual activities.
5. **Grammar Focus:** Introduction of simple grammatical patterns through contextual examples and guided exercises.
6. **Reading Corner:** Short reading text with illustrations that support comprehension.
7. **Writing Time:** Guided writing activities with supporting models and frameworks.
8. **Fun Time:** A game, craft, or kinesthetic activity that integrates the target language.
9. **Review:** A brief exercise to review the main content of the unit.
10. **Self-Assessment:** A simple self-evaluation section using emoticons or visual scales.

4.1.2 Content and Coverage

The linguistic content of the book includes basic vocabulary (around 300-350 words), simple grammar structures (present simple, present continuous, simple imperatives, basic questions), and basic communicative functions (greeting, introducing oneself, expressing likes/dislikes, asking for permission, describing people and things). This content is in line with level A1 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

The distribution of language skills in the book is relatively balanced with slightly more emphasis on receptive skills (listening and reading) than productive skills (speaking and writing), which is reasonable for a beginner level. There is cross-skill integration in many activities, although some units show an imbalance in this regard.

Cultural aspects are introduced implicitly through illustrations, character names, and situational context. There is an attempt to present cultural diversity by featuring characters from different ethnic backgrounds and cultural contexts, although the representation of Indonesian culture is still limited.

4.1.3 support components

The student book is supported by several additional components that form an integrated learning system:

1. **Workbook:** Provides additional exercises for reinforcement, independent practice, and homework. The structure of the workbook adapts to the units in the student book.
2. **Teacher's Manual:** Contains detailed lesson plans, methodological advice, additional activities and answer keys. It also provides classroom management tips and differentiation strategies for differently-abled students.
3. **Audio Materials:** Includes recorded dialog, songs, stories, and listening activity instructions. The audio quality is quite good with clear pronunciation and appropriate speed for beginner level.
4. **Flashcards and Posters:** Additional visual media that support the presentation of vocabulary and language structures. Flashcards are printed with a colored picture on one side and the word or phrase on the other.
5. **Digital Resources:** QR codes scattered throughout the book link to additional digital resources such as animated songs, interactive games, and downloadable worksheets

4.2 Evaluation Based on Tomlinson's Criteria

4.2.1 Impact

Advantages:

“My Next Words Grade 3” book shows significant strength in the aspect of visual impact. The brightly colored illustrations and consistent characters provide strong visual appeal for Grade 3 students. The main characters “Max”, “Lily”, “Beni”, and “Siti” appear consistently throughout the book, allowing students to develop connections and follow their “journey”. The use of emoticons and interactive visual elements such as stickers in some activities also increases student engagement. The variety of activities in the book is good, with a combination of individual, paired and group activities that accommodate different learning preferences. The “Fun Time” section in each unit consistently provides game-based activities, songs, or simple projects relevant to the unit's theme. For example, in the “Animal World” unit, students make animal masks while practicing simple descriptive expressions.

The book also succeeds in creating an emotional response through short stories with a plot that resonates with children's experiences. Stories such as “Lost in the Park” in Unit 5 are well designed to evoke empathy and emotional engagement in students.

Weakness:

Despite the variety of activities, some topics lack relevance to the context of Indonesian students' daily lives. For example, the “Four Seasons” unit features seasons and activities that most Indonesian students do not directly experience such as snow play and fall activities. This reduces the relevance and personal impact of the learning materials. The book also shows limitations in terms of interactive elements that arouse curiosity. Most questions are convergent with a single answer, and there are few activities that encourage independent exploration and discovery. Meaningful project-based activities are also relatively minimal, with only 1-2 small projects per unit that are often decorative rather than functional or communicative. Activity formats tend to be repetitive between units, with very similar patterns that can reduce novelty and interest over time. For example, the “Word Power” section almost always uses the same format of grouping words and completing simple tables.

4.2.2 Readability

Advantages:

The instructions in the book are written in simple language and supported by consistent visual icons for each type of activity, making navigation and understanding easier for students. The page layout is well designed with sufficient white space, logical grouping of information, and clear visual hierarchy through the use of color and font size. The fonts chosen are well

suited for beginner readers with sizable sizes and clear letterforms, including clear distinctions between often confusing letters such as 'b' and 'd'. Consistent color coding is used to distinguish different types of content (e.g., blue for dialogue, green for new vocabulary, and orange for grammar points). Language progression is also well structured, with a gradual introduction of new vocabulary and structures. Each unit introduces about 20-25 new words, which is an appropriate amount for the cognitive level of grade 3 students.

Weakness:

While most of the texts are appropriate for the students' level, some of the reading passages in “Reading Corner” are too dense without sufficient visual support. For example, the text “My School Day” in Unit 3 has 12 sentences without enough illustrations to support comprehension. There is limited scaffolding for more complex texts. Pre-reading and during-reading strategies are often minimal, with more focus on post-reading questions. This can hinder students' comprehension of new texts. Explanations of grammatical concepts are sometimes too abstract for Grade 3 students, with an emphasis on grammatical terminology rather than functional usage. For example, the explanation of “subject pronouns” in Unit 4 uses technical terms without adequate contextualization in real communicative situations. There are also inconsistencies in the level of difficulty between units, with significant jumps in Units 7 and 8 introducing complex sentence structures without adequate preparation in the previous units.

4.2.3 Usability

Advantages:

The teacher's guide that accompanies the student book is very comprehensive with detailed lesson plans, including time allocation, learning steps and classroom management strategies. It also provides suggestions for adapting the activities based on students' abilities and classroom conditions. The supporting materials are quite comprehensive with audio, flashcards and posters well integrated into the learning activities. QR codes linking to additional digital resources add to the book's usefulness in modern learning contexts. The learning structure follows a clear pattern with pre-teaching, while-teaching and post-teaching stages for each language skill. The flow of learning within each unit is also logical, moving from language input to controlled practice and finally semi-free production. The assessment system is well integrated through a “Review” section in each unit and a “Unit Test” every three units. Assessment formats vary and include simple written tests, performance tasks and mini-projects.

Weakness:

Although the teacher's manual mentions differentiation, concrete options for students with different abilities are limited. Enrichment activities for high-ability students and additional support for struggling students are not adequately developed. There is an over-reliance on supplementary workbooks to consolidate learning, with many important activities placed in workbooks rather than student books. This can be problematic if students do not have access to workbooks. The time allocated for some activities in the teacher's guide is not realistic to real classroom conditions in Indonesia. For example, some writing activities are allocated only 10 minutes, whereas grade 3 students generally need more time for productive tasks.

4.2.4 Practicality

Advantages:

The physical quality of the book is very good with thick paper, strong binding, and clear print. The size of the book (A4) is appropriate for grade 3 students with enough space to write directly on the book in certain sections. The consistent structure of the book and the use of icons make navigation easy for teachers and students. The illustrated vocabulary index at the back of the book also enhances practicality as a quick reference. Most of the activities are designed to be done with minimal resources, using easily available materials such as paper, colored pencils, and simple cards that can be made by yourself.

Weakness:

Some listening activities require audio devices which may not be available in all schools, especially in areas with limited infrastructure. While the book provides audio transcripts, there are no alternative activities specifically designed for classes without audio access. Worksheets that require photocopying are quite numerous, especially for games and project activities. This can be an obstacle for schools with limited access to photocopying facilities or with limited budgets. The book does not yet provide a comprehensive interactive digital version. While there are some digital resources via QR codes, there is no integrated platform that enables effective online or hybrid learning. The price of the book is relatively high compared to similar books on the market, especially considering the additional components that need to be purchased separately such as workbooks and audio materials. This may limit accessibility for schools and students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds.

4.2.5 Flexibility

Advantages:

The book provides a variety of activities that accommodate several different learning styles. There are visual (drawing, coloring, matching pictures), auditory (songs, oral stories, dialogues), and kinesthetic (physical games, crafts, total physical response activities) activities. The teacher's manual includes additional activity options for enrichment in each unit, providing flexibility for teachers to extend learning according to time and student ability. The book components can be used separately or together, providing flexibility in implementation. For example, flashcards can be used for additional activities or as visual aids regardless of the order of the units in the book.

Weakness:

The order in which the material is presented is relatively rigid assuming the same linear progression for all students. There are no alternative pathways or flexible entry points for students with different background knowledge of English. Options for independent learning are very limited, with most activities designed to be teacher-led. The lack of guidance for independent learning or metacognitive strategies limits flexibility in contexts where teacher support is limited or for home learning. Activities for critical thinking development are minimal. Most questions and tasks focus on literal comprehension and factual recall, with little opportunity for analysis, evaluation or creation which are higher order thinking skills. Room for teacher and student creativity is limited as most activities have predetermined answers or outcomes. For example, writing activities often use rigid templates with little room for personal expression or student-selected content.

4.3 Comprehensive Analysis

4.3.1 Alignment with Language Learning Theory

The book “My Next Words Grade 3” shows the influence of the communicative approach in language learning, with an emphasis on using language in a communicative context through dialog and role-play activities. However, the implementation is still limited to controlled communication with minimal room for authentic interaction and negotiation of meaning which are key elements of the communicative approach. The task-based approach is seen in some project activities such as making family posters or describing pets. However, most “tasks” are still structured exercises rather than meaningful communicative tasks with real outcomes as advocated by Willis (1996) and Ellis (2003). The principle of Total Physical Response (TPR) was applied in some activities in the “Fun Time” section, supporting the concept that motor

learning can improve language retention. The use of songs and chants is also consistent with the popular approach of language learning through music for children.

4.3.2 The Development of Listening Skill

The development of listening skills receives adequate attention with various types of audio input including dialog, songs, instructions, and short stories. Listening activities are designed in stages from outline understanding to specific details. However, pre-listening activities are often limited to vocabulary recognition without adequate schema activation or expectation building.

Speaking skills are developed primarily through controlled activities such as scripted dialog, repetition, and model-based question-answer. Opportunities for more spontaneous and communicative language production are limited, especially in meaningful contexts that encourage negotiation of meaning.

The development of reading skills shows good progression from the introduction of individual words and phrases to short texts. However, there are limitations in the variety of text genres and reading strategies taught. Most texts are descriptive or simple narrative, with little exposure to instructional, informational or simple poetry texts.

Writing skills receive the least attention, with the main focus on writing words, phrases and simple sentences. The writing process as a cycle (planning, drafting, revising) is not well modeled, and most writing activities are copying or completing rather than producing original texts, even in simple forms.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the evaluation using Tomlinson's criteria, the book “My Next Words Grade 3” shows strengths in the aspects of attractive visual appearance, readability suitable for grade 3 students, and alignment with the national curriculum. However, there are limitations in the aspects of localization, flexibility of learning, and development of critical thinking skills. Overall, the book provides a clear learning structure but does not accommodate the diversity of learning contexts and learning styles of students.

The results of this evaluation have some practical implications for teachers who use the book “My Next Words Grade 3”. First, teachers need to adapt the materials to improve the localization aspect by integrating more relevant local cultural contexts. Second, enrichment of learning activities is needed to accommodate various learning styles and develop higher order thinking skills. Third, teachers need to use additional learning resources to complement the book's shortcomings, especially in the aspects of project-based learning and collaborative activities.

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