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## **A content analysis of teaching approaches in the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook**

<sup>1</sup>Nisrina, <sup>2</sup>Rindu Avianta, <sup>3</sup>Nur Alya Shafira, <sup>4</sup>Sri Rahayu

<sup>1234</sup>English Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, State Islamic University of Sultanah Nahrasiyah, Lhokseumawe, 24352, Aceh, Indonesia

Corresponding author: [nisrina.ninarg09@uinsuna.ac.id](mailto:nisrina.ninarg09@uinsuna.ac.id)

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42

### **ABSTRACT**

This study conducts a content analysis of teaching approaches embedded in the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook. Using a qualitative checklist-based analysis, the study examines how instructional methods are represented through the book's grammar explanations, exercises, and learning activities, with particular attention to the presence of traditional and contemporary English language teaching approaches. The findings indicate that the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is the primary approach utilized in the book. The content emphasizes grammar rules, vocabulary acquisition, and sentence translation from English to Indonesian. While the book provides various written exercises, it lacks components that promote speaking, listening, and interactive communication. Furthermore, the study reveals the absence of Communicative Language Teaching, Text-Based Learning, and Digital Learning approaches. These limitations suggest that the book focuses mainly on structural aspects of language learning rather than communicative competence. Despite its usefulness in helping beginners understand grammatical concepts, the textbook would be more effective if combined with modern, student-centered approaches that enhance all language skills. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for English teachers and curriculum developers in selecting and designing an English textbook for young learners.

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## INTRODUCTION

English for Young Learners (EYL) has become an increasingly important area in English language education, particularly as many educational systems introduce English at the early stages of schooling. For young learners, English textbooks serve as central pedagogical tools that structure classroom instruction and mediate the learning process (Le, 2021; Mithans, 2020). They not only determine the linguistic input and learning progression but also reflect underlying pedagogical and cultural assumptions about language learning. Consequently, a critical examination of English textbooks for young learners is essential to evaluate their alignment with communicative language teaching principles and their effectiveness in fostering young learners' linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural development. In addition, within this framework, English textbooks serve not only as instructional materials but also as instruments for transmitting language skills (Azam & Asim, 2023), cultural values (Prajabka et al., 2025), and learning orientations (Mithans, 2020). Thus, analyzing the content and pedagogical features of EYL textbooks becomes essential in understanding how they support or constrain the broader educational goals of English language learning from an early age.

In the classroom, textbooks remain one of the most widely used resources in English language instruction. They provide structured lessons, exercises, and explanations that guide both teachers and learners through the learning process. The pedagogical approach and content design of a textbook play a crucial role in shaping students' linguistic development and engagement. Previous studies have emphasized that textbooks not only reflect specific teaching methodologies but also influence classroom interaction patterns and learning outcomes (Fan et al., 2021; Vermunt et al., 2023). Some textbooks prioritize grammatical accuracy and written exercises, while others adopt communicative or task-based approaches that promote speaking, listening, and collaboration (Huang et al., 2022). Moreover, modern textbooks increasingly incorporate multimodal elements such as visuals, interactive tasks, and digital media to enhance learner motivation (Rosi, 2024). Therefore, understanding how textbooks support or constrain English language learning is essential for improving instructional effectiveness and aligning materials with pedagogical goals.

Despite increasing emphasis on communicative, text-based, and technology-enhanced approaches in English language teaching, many English textbooks for young learners continue to rely heavily on traditional, form-focused instruction. While such materials may support grammatical accuracy, they often provide limited opportunities for communicative practice and skill integration (Uzunboylu & Özcan, 2019). Moreover, although textbooks play a central role in shaping classroom pedagogy, systematic content analyses examining the teaching approaches embedded in EYL textbooks remain relatively limited, particularly in the

Indonesian context. The textbook *Basic English for Young Learners*, which is widely used at the beginner level, has not yet been thoroughly examined in terms of the instructional approaches it reflects. Therefore, a focused content analysis is needed to identify the dominant teaching methods represented in the textbook and to evaluate its pedagogical orientation in relation to current expectations for young learner English instruction (Kondracki et al., 2002).

Closely related to the use of textbooks is the selection of appropriate teaching methods in English language education. Various pedagogical approaches have been developed over time, each emphasizing different aspects of language acquisition (Huang et al., 2022). One of the traditional approaches is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which focuses on teaching grammatical rules and encouraging students to translate texts between English and their first language (Milawati, 2019). This method is effective in developing learners' understanding of grammar and vocabulary. However, it tends to neglect communicative competence, offering limited opportunities for authentic conversation or listening practice. As a result, students taught primarily through GTM may excel in reading and writing skills but struggle with oral fluency and real-life communication.

Another widely recognized approach is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, which emphasizes the practical use of English in authentic communicative situations (Yahya et al., 2024). Unlike the Grammar Translation Method, which centers on grammatical accuracy and translation, CLT prioritizes the development of communicative competence. Classroom activities in this approach often include pair or group discussions, information-gap tasks, question-and-answer sessions, and role plays designed to simulate real-life interactions. Through these activities, students learn English by actively using it rather than merely studying its forms. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) encourages learner interaction, promotes fluency, and helps students build confidence in speaking and listening. As a result, it has become one of the most influential and widely implemented approaches in modern English language education (Qasserras, 2023). However, while CLT emphasizes meaningful communication and interaction, it may place less emphasis on explicit grammatical accuracy (Gunduz & Hursen, 2015).

In addition to CLT, another influential approach is Text-Based Learning, also known as Genre-Based Teaching. This method focuses on helping students learn English through engagement with a variety of spoken and written texts. It emphasizes understanding how different types of texts, such as narratives, reports, descriptions, and letters, are structured and how language choices vary according to purpose and audience (Rubab, 2023). Through explicit instruction and modeling, students learn the linguistic and organizational features of each genre before producing their own

texts. This approach supports learners in developing both receptive and productive skills, particularly in reading and writing (Rachman & Yusuf, 2024). Moreover, Text-Based Learning aligns with functional views of language that see communication as socially situated, making it highly relevant for teaching English for academic and real-world purposes.

In recent years, rapid technological advancements have also introduced Digital Learning as a significant approach to English language education. This method integrates digital tools such as computers, mobile devices, the internet, and educational applications to facilitate learning (Haleem et al., 2022). Through these platforms, students can access multimedia materials, watch instructional videos, complete online quizzes, and engage in interactive games designed to enhance language proficiency. Digital learning environments offer flexibility, interactivity, and opportunities for learners to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing in authentic contexts. This approach not only makes learning more engaging but also supports the development of digital literacy skills essential in the 21st century (Zou et al., 2025).

In light of the teaching approaches discussed above, this study aims to conduct a content analysis of the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook to identify the instructional approaches reflected in its design. The analysis focuses on the textbook's grammar explanations, exercises, and learning activities to examine the representation of traditional and contemporary English language teaching methods, including the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Text-Based Learning (TBL), and Digital Learning. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the dominant teaching approaches embedded in the textbook and to examine the extent to which these approaches support balanced development of young learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) What teaching approaches are represented in the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook? and (2) To what extent do these approaches support integrated English language skill development for young learners?

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative content analysis to examine the teaching approaches embedded in the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook. The data source of this study was the textbook *Basic English for Young Learners* (Mujahidah et al., 2020), which served as the object of analysis. The textbook is designed for beginner-level young learners and was developed to support early English instruction, particularly for students in Islamic early childhood education programs (PIAUD). According to the authors, the book aims to provide structured, straightforward

English learning materials that focus on basic grammar and vocabulary, with coverage of reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills (Mujahidah et al., 2020). The textbook was selected for analysis due to its strong emphasis on grammatical instruction and its relevance to foundational English learning contexts.

An analytical checklist was developed based on key characteristics of established English language teaching approaches, namely the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Text-Based Learning (TBL), and Digital Learning. Each unit and activity in the textbook was systematically reviewed using this checklist to identify features associated with each approach, such as explicit grammar instruction and translation (GTM), communicative tasks (CLT), text-based activities (TBL), and the use of digital or multimedia components (Digital Learning).

The findings were then compared across units to identify dominant patterns, strengths, and weaknesses. This approach allowed the researcher to evaluate the extent to which the textbook aligned with current pedagogical theories and supported effective English learning for young learners. The identified features were coded according to the corresponding teaching approach and then compared across units to determine their frequency and prominence. The coded data were subsequently summarized and interpreted to identify dominant patterns, methodological tendencies, and areas of underrepresentation. This analytical process enabled the researcher to evaluate the textbook's overall pedagogical orientation and its alignment with current expectations for effective English instruction for young learners.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook reveals a predominantly traditional and form-focused instructional orientation. The textbook places strong emphasis on explicit grammar explanations, vocabulary development, and sentence construction, with each chapter introducing a specific grammatical topic such as articles, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. These topics are presented in a clear, sequential manner through definitions, grammatical rules, and illustrative example sentences, indicating a structured approach to support beginner learners' understanding of English grammar. This instructional pattern reflects the core characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), particularly the reliance on direct grammar instruction and the use of translation from English into the learners' first language, Indonesian, as a primary means of conveying meaning. Table 1 summarizes the teaching approaches identified in the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook and highlights the key pedagogical implications derived from the analysis.

**Table 1. Summary of teaching approaches identified in the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook**

Teaching Approach	Key Characteristics	Evidence from the Textbook	Pedagogical Implications
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	Explicit grammar instruction; translation between English and LI; emphasis on accuracy	Grammar explanations written in Indonesian with English–Indonesian translations (Articles, pp. 7–8; Nouns, pp. 9–11); vocabulary lists with direct translations (pp. 9–11); sentence completion and identification tasks across chapters	Supports grammatical accuracy and vocabulary recognition but limits communicative language use
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	Interaction; speaking and listening practice; authentic communication	No role plays, dialogues, pair/group work, or speaking tasks identified across units	Learners have limited opportunities to develop communicative competence
Text-Based Learning (TBL)	Learning through complete texts; contextualized grammar; genre awareness	Short reading passage used only for grammatical identification (noun identification task, p. 11); grammar taught separately from texts	Limited exposure to contextualized language use and discourse-level understanding
Digital Learning	Multimedia input; interactive platforms; technology-enhanced learning	No references to digital tools, multimedia resources, or online activities throughout the textbook	Learning remains paper-based and teacher-centered, reducing learner engagement
Skill Integration	Balanced development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing	Activities focus mainly on reading and writing through grammar exercises; speaking and listening tasks not provided (pp. 7–11)	Uneven skill development, with oral skills underrepresented

Evidence of the GTM is consistently found throughout the textbook. For example, in Chapter I (“Articles”, pp. 7–8), grammatical rules for the use of *a*, *an*, and *the* are explained in Indonesian, followed by English example sentences accompanied by their Indonesian translations, such as *He kicked the ball* → *Dia menendang bola* (pp.7) and *I live in an apartment* → *Saya tinggal di sebuah apartemen* (pp.8). This bilingual presentation illustrates a central feature of GTM, which learners are expected to understand grammatical forms through explicit explanation and translation rather than through communicative use. The frequent use of translated examples suggests that the textbook prioritizes grammatical accuracy and

comprehension of form over communicative practice. These examples illustrate the GTM approach, where learners grasp grammatical rules through direct explanations and translations. The frequent use of bilingual examples suggests that the textbook emphasizes form over communicative practice.

A similar pattern is evident in Chapter II (“Nouns”, pp. 9–11), where various noun categories—such as common, proper, concrete, abstract, countable, and uncountable nouns are explained in Indonesian and illustrated through English words with direct translations (e.g., book → *buku*, teacher → *guru*, gold → *emas*, friendship → *persahabatan*). This presentation reinforces memorization and rule-based learning, further demonstrating the textbook’s strong orientation toward GTM. Additionally, learners are explicitly instructed to memorize vocabulary lists along with their Indonesian meanings, reflecting an emphasis on rote learning. While such activities may support vocabulary recognition and grammatical awareness, they provide limited opportunities for learners to use English in meaningful communicative contexts (Rosi, 2024). This presentation reinforces the use of translation as the primary means of understanding meaning and grammatical classification. It also illustrates the book’s emphasis on memorization and rule-based learning rather than communicative application.

In addition, the activity explicitly instructs students to memorize lists of English words along with their Indonesian meanings, reflecting a strong emphasis on rote learning. This instructional design aligns with the typical features of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which prioritizes vocabulary retention and grammatical understanding through direct translation. While such activities help learners recognize word meanings and sentence structures, they offer limited opportunities for students to practice speaking or use the language in communicative contexts (Rosi, 2024).

Most exercises in the textbook are written tasks, including matching items, identifying parts of speech, and completing sentences. Interactive activities such as role plays, dialogues, or group discussions are notably absent. This pattern indicates that the instructional design prioritizes individual written practice over oral communication, which aligns with the characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method. In contrast, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes interaction, collaboration, and authentic language use through speaking and listening activities (Qasserras, 2023). The absence of such activities in the textbook limits learners’ opportunities to develop communicative competence.

Even when short reading passages are included, as in the exercise on page 11 that asks learners to identify nouns in a short story, the focus remains on grammatical analysis rather than on communication. Learners are not encouraged to use the

identified vocabulary in spoken interaction or to construct their own sentences orally. Compared to communicative and genre-based approaches, which emphasize contextualized language use and learner participation, the activities in the textbook remain largely decontextualized and structurally oriented (Rubab, 2023).

Furthermore, the textbook shows minimal alignment with the principles of Text-Based Learning (TBL) and Digital Learning. Grammar instruction is presented in isolation rather than integrated into complete texts such as dialogues, narratives, or functional genres, which limits learners' exposure to how language functions within meaningful discourse (Rachman & Yusuf, 2024). In addition, there is no incorporation of multimedia resources, digital platforms, or interactive technologies. The learning process remains paper-based and teacher-centered, in contrast to Digital Learning approaches that promote engagement through technology-supported interaction and multimodal input (Yoyo, 2017; Haleem et al., 2022).

Overall, the findings indicate that the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook strongly reflects the Grammar Translation Method, as evidenced by (1) the use of Indonesian for grammar explanations, (2) frequent English–Indonesian translation examples, (3) an emphasis on grammar rules and written exercises, and (4) the absence of communicative, speaking, listening, and digital activities. This pedagogical orientation prioritizes linguistic accuracy and structural knowledge over communicative competence. While such an approach may be appropriate for beginner learners who require clear grammatical foundations, it offers limited support for holistic language development, particularly in speaking and listening skills.

The findings of this study indicate that the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook is predominantly grounded in the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), as evidenced by its strong emphasis on explicit grammar explanations, memorization of vocabulary, and English–Indonesian translation. This pedagogical orientation reflects a form-focused approach that prioritizes linguistic accuracy and structural knowledge over communicative competence. While such an approach may be beneficial for beginner learners who require clear grammatical foundations, it offers limited opportunities for young learners to engage in meaningful language use, particularly in speaking and listening activities. The dominance of GTM in the textbook suggests a mismatch between traditional instructional practices and contemporary expectations in English language teaching for young learners. Current pedagogical perspectives emphasize that young learners acquire language more effectively through interaction, contextualized input, and active engagement rather than through rule memorization alone (Qasserras, 2023; Yahya et al., 2024). However, the absence of communicative tasks, role plays, dialogues, and group activities in the textbook limits learners' exposure to authentic language use, thereby constraining the

development of communicative competence.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that many English textbooks, particularly at the beginner and primary levels, continue to rely heavily on traditional, grammar-oriented approaches (Milawati, 2019; Rosi, 2024). Such textbooks often prioritize written exercises and translation activities while marginalizing oral interaction and listening practice. The present study extends this body of research by providing empirical evidence from the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook, demonstrating that GTM remains a dominant methodological orientation in contemporary EYL instructional materials.

The persistence of GTM in the textbook may be influenced by contextual factors, including curriculum demands, assessment practices, and teachers' familiarity with traditional methods. In many educational settings, especially those that emphasize written examinations and grammatical accuracy, GTM-based materials are perceived as practical and manageable for classroom use (Mithans, 2020; Vermunt et al., 2023). This context may partly explain why more learner-centered approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Text-Based Learning (TBL), are underrepresented in the textbook despite their recognized benefits for young learners.

In addition to the limited application of CLT principles, the textbook also shows minimal integration of Text-Based Learning. Although short reading passages are included, grammar instruction is primarily presented in isolation rather than embedded in complete, meaningful texts. This contrasts with TBL principles, which emphasize learning language through engagement with various genres and contextualized texts to support both receptive and productive skills (Rachman & Yusuf, 2024; Rubab, 2023). As a result, learners may have fewer opportunities to understand how grammatical features function within authentic discourse.

Furthermore, the absence of Digital Learning elements highlights another limitation of the textbook. Digital learning approaches, which incorporate multimedia resources, interactive platforms, and technology-supported activities, have been shown to enhance learner motivation and engagement, particularly among young learners (Haleem et al., 2022; Zou et al., 2025). The textbook's exclusive reliance on printed materials and paper-based exercises suggests a conventional instructional design that does not fully respond to the evolving digital landscape of language education.

Despite these limitations, it is essential to acknowledge that the Grammar Translation Method is not inherently ineffective, especially for beginner learners who benefit from clear explanations and structured input. The textbook is a helpful resource for introducing basic grammatical concepts and vocabulary at an early stage

of English learning. However, when used as the sole instructional approach, GTM may restrict opportunities for holistic language development. Therefore, to better support young learners' needs, the textbook would benefit from integrating communicative activities, text-based tasks, and digital resources that promote active participation and balanced skill development.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that teachers using this textbook may need to supplement it with additional activities that foster interaction, speaking, and listening practice. For textbook developers and curriculum designers, the results highlight the importance of designing EYL materials that integrate traditional and contemporary teaching approaches to align with current pedagogical principles and learners' communicative needs.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the teaching approaches embedded in the *Basic English for Young Learners* textbook through a qualitative content analysis. The findings indicate that the textbook predominantly reflects the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), as evidenced by its emphasis on explicit grammar explanations, memorization of vocabulary, and English–Indonesian translation activities. This instructional orientation aligns with beginner-level learning objectives that prioritize foundational grammatical knowledge and vocabulary development, making the textbook a useful resource for introducing basic English structures to young learners.

However, the analysis also reveals limited integration of contemporary pedagogical approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Text-Based Learning (TBL), and Digital Learning. The absence of interactive speaking and listening activities, contextualized text-based instruction, and technology-supported learning restricts learners' opportunities to develop communicative competence and balanced language skills. Consequently, while the textbook supports grammatical accuracy, it provides insufficient support for holistic language development.

From a pedagogical perspective, the textbook may be effectively used as a supplementary resource for grammar-focused instruction at the beginner level. Nevertheless, to better meet current expectations in English language teaching for young learners, it should be complemented with communicative, contextual, and technology-enhanced activities. Future textbook development and classroom implementation would benefit from a more integrated approach that balances traditional grammar instruction with opportunities for meaningful interaction and skill integration. Additionally, further research examining multiple textbooks or classroom implementation practices would provide broader insights into the alignment between EYL materials and contemporary teaching methodologies.

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