



## Exploring 21st-Century Skill Portrayals in an Indonesian EFL Textbook

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### Abstract

This study investigates how 21st-century skills are represented in an Indonesian government-funded EFL textbook designed for first-grade junior high school students. Through content analysis, the study examines the integration of these skills within the textbook components, employing Rinekso (2021) framework of analysis. Results indicate comprehensive coverage of all four Cs skills (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation), with communication skills being most prominent and creativity skills less emphasized. The representation of these skills varies across different tasks, encompassing goals, inputs, procedures, and teacher and learner roles. The findings underscore the need to expand tasks fostering creativity skills. Moreover, the study anticipates that English teachers provide practical examples of 21st-century skills in everyday contexts, fostering enthusiasm for skill development in the era of globalization.

## INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is characterized by rapid technology, communication, and globalization. To address the challenges of this era, educational systems must prioritize the development of 21st-century skills, encompassing critical thinking & problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity & innovation. These skills are considered crucial for preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century and are recognized as differentiators between well-prepared and those who are not (Kay & Greenhill, 2010). The National Education Association (2015) and

Bouزيد (2016) emphasize the need to integrate these four Cs into teaching and learning to equip individuals for the demands of the modern world and cultivate a lifelong learning mindset. As a widely used international language, English plays a crucial role in fostering these skills.

In response to the demands of the 21st century, the Indonesian government has introduced the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Emancipated Curriculum), designed to enhance education quality, including providing English textbooks aligned with 21st-century skills. However, not all teachers are equipped to assess whether a textbook aligns with the curriculum and promotes 21st-century skills (Sihotang et al., 2021). Therefore, textbook analysis is crucial to identify potential weaknesses and ensure effective learning outcomes (Hidayah et al., 2021).

Previous studies have highlighted the need to integrate 21st-century skills into language textbooks. (Bouزيد, 2016) conducted research on Moroccan ELT textbooks. The finding showed that the textbooks lacked activities that effectively developed ICT skills and presented these skills as traditionally unsuitable for the 21st century.

In another study, Rakhmawati & Priyana (2019) investigated the integration of 21st-century skills in an English textbook for senior high school grade ten. Their study revealed that the textbook effectively incorporated 21st-century skills, particularly learning and innovation skills, across various sections.

Furthermore, Rinekso (2021) analyzed an Indonesian EFL textbook using qualitative content analysis. The study found that the textbook represented 12 out of 15 21st-century skills, with communication and collaboration skills being the most dominant. Gunawan et al., (2022) also examined a senior high school textbook using the 2013 Curriculum and focused on the four Cs skills. Their research revealed that the textbook predominantly emphasized these skills in its activities.

Several studies cited above suggest incorporating 21st-century skills into language textbooks to help students survive in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the research on analyzing textbooks that followed the emancipated curriculum was limited. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the representation of 21st-century skills in an Indonesian government-funded EFL textbook for junior high school students.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized content analysis as a research technique that enabled the researcher to draw reliable and valid conclusions about how texts (or other forms of meaningful content) are used in particular contexts (Krippendorff, 2018). The object of this study was an Indonesian government funded EFL textbook for the first grade of junior high school students.

The researcher used the adapted framework for 21st-century learning as an instrument to analyze the textbook. The data was collected by examining the textbook's components, such as goals, inputs, procedures, teacher/learner roles, and settings (Nunan, 2004; Rakhmawati & Priyana, 2019).

Additionally, the data were examined by assessing each task component and learning activity in terms of the presence of 21st-century skills, and the percentage of these skills incorporated into the textbook was calculated.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An Indonesian government funded EFL textbook was analyzed, and 304 activities were discovered spread over several categories, including goals, inputs, procedures, teacher and learner roles, and settings. It is crucial to note that not all of these 302 tasks represented 21st-century skills. Only 179 of the total tasks were discovered to encourage 21st-century skills (as shown in Table 2). For a comprehensive understanding of the categorization and distribution of all tasks, we can refer to Table 1.

**Table 1. The summary of task categorization and distribution**

<b>Task Category</b>	<b>Task Distribution</b>
Goals (G)	17 (found in the learning objectives)
Inputs (I)	135 (mostly found in listening and reading section)
Procedures (P)	126 (spread evenly, found in all learning stages)
Teacher & Learner Roles (T&LR)	5 (mostly found in the enrichment section)

Settings (S)

21 (spread evenly in all chapters)

**Total Task****304 tasks**

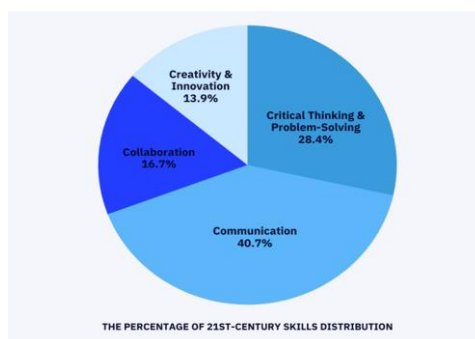
The next step in the analysis was to categorize the textbook based on task categories. The researcher then proceeded to analyze them using the 21st-century learning framework. The findings suggest that the textbook effectively covered all of the four Cs skills. A summary of the 21st-century skills covered in the textbook is presented in the table below.

**Table 2. The 21st-century skills integrated into the textbook**

No.	The 21st Century Skills	Location (Page)	Task/Learning Activities (Textbook Components)					Total
			G	I	P	T&LR	S	
1.	Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	23, 25, 32, 34, 37, 39, 40, 41, 50, 58, 60, 69, 74, 76, 78, 90, 95, 109, 112, 117, 127, 128, 131, 137, 138, 143, 167, 173, 177, 182, 185, 196, 197, 198, 199, 218, 221, 223, 230, 235, 237, 238, 239, 241	1	19	24	2	3	51 (27.6%)
2.	Communication	14, 15, 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 27, 32, 37, 39, 42, 51, 52, 58, 60, 69, 72, 73, 74, 79, 80, 84, 90, 92, 94, 96, 102, 109, 112, 114, 116, 124, 137, 143, 154, 162, 166, 167, 168, 170, 179, 180, 182, 185, 197, 198, 199, 204, 205, 217, 218, 223, 238, 240, 241, 242	14	8	35	4	12	73 (41.2%)
3.	Collaboration	34, 39, 52, 76, 79, 84, 86, 108, 112, 114, 120, 121, 124, 162, 166, 168, 180, 194, 212, 214, 217, 229, 230, 241, 242	-	5	4	1	20	30 (16.9%)

4.	Creativity & Innovation	39, 41, 42, 49, 52, 58, 74, 95, 102, 114, 116, 124, 128, 129, 131, 137, 140, 143, 173, 182, 196, 218, 235, 238, 242	2	5	17	-	1	25	(14.1%)
<b>Grand Total</b>								<b>179</b>	<b>(tasks)</b>

According to Table 2 above, the results revealed that inputs and procedures stood out as the main tasks representing 21st-century skills. In contrast to this, teacher and learner roles became the least task for incorporating 21st-century skills. While the skills were not evenly distributed across all tasks, they were spread in all chapters of the textbook. We can see how various the location (page) of each skill is. Additionally, out of the 179 tasks that introduced the four Cs skills, the textbook primarily emphasized communication skills, accounting for 40.7% and appearing in 73 tasks. In contrast, creativity and innovation skills were the least emphasized, making up only 13.9% and being featured in 25 tasks. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of 21st-century skills percentages.



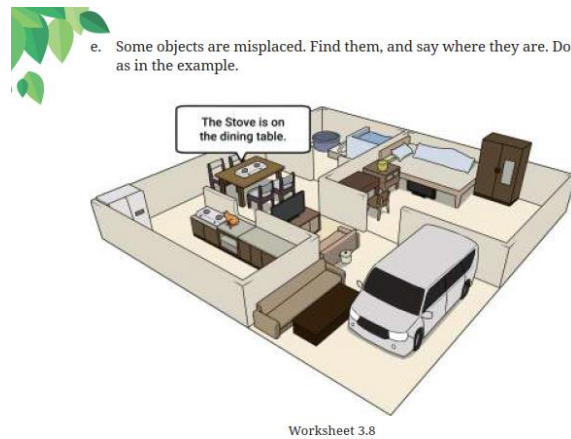
**Figure 1. The percentage of the 21st-century skills distribution**

Below is the description of each skill included in the textbook.

### **The Representation of Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving Skills**

Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities were evident across various tasks in the textbook. These skills were emphasized in tasks that required students to identify pictures, evaluate information in texts, and analyze information from audio sources. The textbook encompassed 51 instances of critical thinking and problem-

solving skills, which were distributed mostly in the procedures. Here is an illustration of how these skills were integrated into the procedures of the task.



**Figure 2. The representation of critical thinking & problem-solving skills**

To complete this activity, students must first identify an image in which some objects are misplaced and then identify where those objects should be. Students closely analyze and compare object placement with their perception as part of this exercise, which requires critical thinking. As a result, analyzing visual information while using critical thinking skills is required for this task.

### The Representation of Communication Skills

The majority of tasks within this textbook incorporated communication skills, focusing on speaking and writing activities that required students to effectively express their thoughts and ideas in various forms and contexts, both orally and in written form. A total of 73 tasks integrated this skill. The task below is an example of how communication skills were integrated into the procedures of the task.



**Figure 3. The representation of communication skills**

This task involves communication skills, where students are instructed to discuss their favorite room, sketch objects within it, and then provide descriptions of these objects to their friends. Subsequently, their friends redraw these objects based on the provided descriptions. This task represents the application of communication skills as students are required to convey ideas and information clearly, use appropriate language to describe the objects in their room, and ensure that their message is comprehensible to their friends.

### The Representation of Collaboration Skills

Collaboration skills were evident in multiple tasks in the textbook, with 30 tasks incorporating this particular skill. One of these tasks illustrates settings that ask students to collaborate in groups.

**Section 6 - Fun Time: Chain Sentences**

- Divide the class in groups.
- Discuss in your group what room you want to describe.
- Each member of the group should write three words related to the description of a room on a piece of small paper. One word is written on one piece of paper.
- When everyone is finished writing, roll the small papers and collect them in a cup.
- The first person in the group will take a piece of rolled paper and see the word inside. He or she should make the first sentence to describe the room using the word from the rolled paper. For example, if the word in the rolled paper is 'science laboratory', he or she can say: 'This is our science laboratory.'
- The second person in the group will take another piece of rolled paper, see the word and continue with the next description.
- Continue the chain until all the members make a description of the room.
- Write the chain sentences on a piece of paper.
- Check if the chain sentences that you make make a good descriptive text.
- If it does not make a good descriptive text, can you reorder the sentences to make it better?

Name of the room:

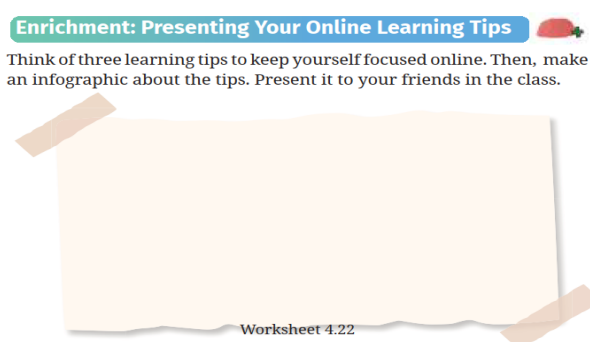
Worksheet 5.23

**Figure 4. The representation of collaboration skills**

Collaboration takes place at several phases of this task, starting with group discussions to select a room, writing relevant descriptive words, creating sequential descriptive phrases, and doing checks and reordering as needed. These procedures demonstrate how team members must cooperate to produce quality descriptive writing. This assignment reflects a group writing project where students write independently while ensuring their contributions are integrated into a cohesive and well-written descriptive text. This assignment strongly emphasizes collaboration, communication, and ability for group writing.

## The Representation of Creativity & Innovation Skills

25 tasks focused on this skill and encouraged students to develop their creativity and innovation in this textbook. Procedures or instructions mainly were used to describe this skill. While some tasks guide students to discuss and share their ideas, others assign projects like making a sticker sign, recycling plastic bottles for making a pencil case, designing an infographic about learning tips, or drawing a map of their school. The following task illustrates how creativity and innovation skills are integrated through procedures.



**Figure 5. The representation of creativity & innovation skills**

This particular task highlights creativity and innovation skills by challenging students to come up with original ideas when designing an infographic. They are required to blend visual elements and text in an engaging and informative manner to effectively communicate three valuable study tips.

This textbook's emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving skills aligns with the recognition that these skills are highly important for 21st-century students, as emphasized by Trilling and Fadel (2009). By providing practical opportunities for students to practice critical thinking, analyze information, and generate alternative solutions, the textbook encourages the development of independent and analytical thinkers. Furthermore, the textbook corresponds with the perspectives of Nurmaharani et al., (2017), Guang et al., (2012) and Yusuf, (2008) who underscore the importance of students not only accepting others' opinions but also consistently applying rationality and analysis. Therefore, it can be concluded that the textbook



empowers students to become independent and analytical thinkers, equipping them with essential skills for success in the modern world.

Moreover, this textbook effectively integrates communication skills by actively engaging students in tasks that encourage the development of both oral and written communication. It aligns with the definition of communication as the ability to express thoughts and ideas effectively through various means and contexts (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Additionally, the textbook promotes active listening, which is a crucial aspect of effective communication, as it helps students understand the meaning behind shared information. This approach to communication skills development is consistent with the indicators outlined by Almurashi et al., (2022), emphasizing the importance of active listening to comprehend meaning, including knowledge, attitudes, values, and interests. Overall, the textbook provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to enhancing communication skills in students.

In addition, the findings in the textbook support the idea that collaborative learning is widely accepted and beneficial for students (Harmer, 2008) in Pardede (2020, p. 74). The textbook's promotion of collaboration through various tasks and activities equips students with the skills necessary to work effectively in teams, respect diverse perspectives, and make meaningful contributions to their environment. These findings align with previous research, emphasizing that collaboration not only enhances learning but also develops teamwork skills, sensitivity to individual contributions, and the ability to provide constructive feedback (Rakhmawati & Priyana, 2019). Overall, the findings in this textbook reinforce the importance of collaboration skills in education, in accordance with previous research results.

Furthermore, creativity and innovation skills were found to be the less integrated skills in the textbook. As a result, there is a need for improvement in tasks and activities that promote creativity among students. Enhancing these tasks will enable students to better develop and communicate their new ideas openly and responsively to others (Yusliani et al., 2019). It is suggested that textbooks can introduce more tasks that explicitly stimulate students' creative thinking. This might involve tasks like designing their own projects, crafting multimedia presentations, or writing imaginatively.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This study examined the representation of 21st-century skills in an Indonesian government-funded EFL textbook and found that the textbook has integrated these skills, particularly the four Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. The analysis revealed variations in how these skills are represented across different aspects of the textbook. Communication emerged as the most prominently integrated skill, emphasizing the importance of effective expression for academic and personal development. Critical thinking and collaboration skills were moderately represented, highlighting their significance for teamwork and critical analysis. However, creativity and innovation skills were comparatively less integrated, indicating room for improvement in promoting creative thinking among students.

In addition, integrating 21st-century skills into English textbooks is crucial given the global demands students face in the era of globalization. Real-life contexts should be incorporated into materials, and the principles of 21st-century learning should connect teaching and learning to real-world situations, ensuring that students are better prepared for the challenges of the modern world.

Teachers are suggested to actively encourage and promote creativity and innovation among their students, especially when these skills are less integrated into the provided textbooks. Students are also encouraged to take the initiative to supplement their learning by exploring additional resources beyond the textbook.

The study recommends that textbook writers and publishers incorporate real-world scenarios and interactive activities that explicitly encourage critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Additionally, future researchers in this area should consider a broader analysis that includes other categories of 21st-century skills, such as life and career skills, information literacy, media literacy, and technology skills. Analyzing textbooks across various grade levels will also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these skills are progressively integrated throughout the educational system.

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