



SCOPE

Journal of English Language Teaching

| p-ISSN 2541-0326 | e-ISSN 2541-0334 |
<https://journal.lppmunindra.ac.id/index.php/SCOPE/>



Research Article

Unveiling the Alignment: Primary School English Textbooks “*My Next Words*” and Kurikulum Merdeka

Ralista Salsadika¹, Sisilia Setiawati Halimi^{2*}

¹ English Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia (UI), Jalan Margonda Raya, Pondok Cina, Kecamatan Beji, Kota Depok, 16424.

² Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia (UI), Jalan Margonda Raya, Pondok Cina, Kecamatan Beji, Kota Depok, 16424.

KEYWORDS

Kurikulum Merdeka;
 Content Analysis;
 English Teaching Approaches;
 Textbook Analysis.

ABSTRACT

To facilitate the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) publishes new textbooks (Puskur Dikbud Ristek, 2021). This article examines the compatibility of two *My Next Words English* textbooks for the first and fourth grades of primary school with the academic goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The method of teaching English utilised in the textbooks is also evaluated for its applicability to current English teaching approaches. Thus, the first section of each textbook is examined using the summative content analysis technique (Bengtsson, 2016; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Counting the frequency of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing activities in the textbooks, drawing inferences from the frequency counts, and comparing the final results comprise the analysis processes. The result of the study shows that despite the fact that *My Next Words Grades 1 and 4* are compatible with the English academic goals given by the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the textbooks are yet to adhere to the current English teaching approaches. Henceforth, future research may examine the effectiveness of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* textbooks in helping students achieve the new English curriculum’s academic goals.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

E-mail: sshalimi@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused severe learning loss not only in Indonesia but also in many other countries. The virus’s rapid spread has forced many schools to shut the physical classes and switch to online classes. However, the online learning practice led to a learning gap since many students did not have access to gadgets and internet services (Indrawati, Prihadi, & Siantoro, 2020; The SMERU Research Institute, 2020). Consequently, many schools could not deliver the school materials well. Many studies about learning loss conclude that one plausible solution to the problem is to adjust the curriculum or even

invent a new one that will fill in the learning loss (Puskur Dikbud Ristek, 2021).

Harmey and Moss (2021) propose a flexible curriculum as a remedy for learning loss caused by Covid-19. They suggest prioritizing learning content that allows students to express emotions through arts and literature. Li et al. (2021) recommend a streamlined curriculum to ease the burden on teachers and students. By reducing content, students can engage more deeply with specific topics. Additionally, the content of the curriculum should focus on stimulating students’ interest, teaching around big ideas and integrated interdisciplinary content, focusing on cultivating students’ key competencies, facilitating their

positive thinking, and choosing the course contents based on students' cognitive development characteristics (Li et al., 2021). In response to learning loss, the Indonesian Ministry of Education developed *Kurikulum Merdeka*, a new curriculum based on six principles: simplicity, focus on student competence and personality, flexibility, alignment with student needs, collaboration, and consideration of evaluation and feedback (Puskur Dikbud Ristek, 2021). *Kurikulum Merdeka* aims to address the challenges posed by the pandemic and promote effective and student-centered learning experiences. As *Kurikulum Merdeka* has been implemented in many elementary schools in Indonesia, this paper aims to observe the compatibility between the textbooks designed for *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the new curriculum's academic goals.

Kurikulum Merdeka has been implemented in many schools in Indonesia. Two thousand and five hundred Sekolah Penggerak in 34 provinces and 111 cities began implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the 2021/2022 academic year. However, at the primary school level, only first and fourth graders follow the curriculum. (Angga et al., 2021; Sumarsih et al., 2022). The implementation is limited to grades 1 and 4 with the consideration that students in the first grade are not yet familiar with the learning methods and teaching materials. On the contrary, students in grade 4 have already experienced the learning process using the 2013 Curriculum for three years. Thus, there are two differences in learning experience that can be compared, for both teachers and students (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2022).

Kurikulum Merdeka has fewer language components and skills to teach in English subjects and this is expected to allow students to engage more in learning English. The curriculum reclassifies education levels into seven phases from kindergarten to Senior High School and suggests making English a required subject for primary students. Primary education consists of 3 phases. They are Phase A for grades 1-2, Phase B for grades 3-4, and Phase C for grades 5-6. The goal is to boost English proficiency and global awareness. (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims at *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022; Puskur Dikbud Ristek, 2021). Another academic goal is to help students comprehend English as a global language for communicating with individuals from diverse cultures. Thus, in Phase A (grades 1-2), English instruction emphasises the teaching of language for introduction and speaking abilities. (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022). Phase B (grades 3-4) introduces English writing. After Phase B, students should understand and respond to oral texts and basic visuals in English. Students must also understand and follow simple English instructions and

articulate their ideas in simple English. This phase of English learning teaches language arts (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022).

The Indonesian MoECRT continuously upgrades the quality of teaching materials to ensure that the materials are relevant to the curriculum which is constantly being revised and improved. (Khairunnisa & Mayrita, 2019) emphasises how teaching materials help students achieve educational goals. With the improvement of technologies and easier access to open external sources, textbooks are not solely teaching material sources. *Kurikulum Merdeka* allows teachers to supplement textbooks with teaching materials from other sources. Although textbooks are not the only teaching sources that schools can employ in the teaching-learning process, ensuring that the textbooks' contents fulfill the curriculum education purposes is also crucial.

Additionally, evaluating if the textbooks follow the current English teaching approaches is also critical. In the past two years, English teaching has involved using technology more often in the English learning process. The increase in technology use in English teaching is closely related to the shift in learning methods during the Covid-19 pandemic (Deerajviset, 2022). As many schools worldwide were forced to close for a long period, teachers had to develop a method or an approach that could help them conduct the learning process even though they were physically secluded, and online learning was the most plausible method to use. This is also true for Indonesia.

After the pandemic, however, English learning and teaching in Indonesia have returned to the previous practice in which various teaching methods and approaches, such as grammar translation, audio-lingual, communicative language, and genre-based, have been implemented again. In the previous studies conducted by Budairi (2015) and Feriovi & Abbas (2022), they found out that these methods and approaches were considered adequate to aid students' learning process in today's learning context. These methods and approaches were also considered to be useful to improve students' written and oral English communication skills, which has been always Indonesia's English learning aims (Budairi, 2015; Puskur Dikbud Ristek, 2021).

One of the most popular teaching approaches in Indonesia is the Genre-Based Approach (GBA). The GBA is a learning process that focuses on a specific goal to be achieved in a communication event within certain social contexts (Dirgeyasa, 2016). The GBA aims to provide students with knowledge related to the language to produce both written and oral text that will suit their social context. Thus, the learning process with this approach involves mastery of various texts that can be applied in specific

contexts in specific ways (Zebua & Rozimela, 2020). Students are provided with specific language skills that can be used to perform a communication practice in a specific social context.

The GBA has been a prevalent teaching method for English language education in Indonesia for quite some time, as implemented in the 2004 and 2006 curricula to enhance students' English communication skills inside and outside the classroom (Budairi, 2015; Zebua & Rozimela, 2020). However, the initial implementation of this approach yielded little impact on students' English language mastery, likely due to limited English exposure and opportunities for language use in daily communication and activities (Budairi, 2015). It was observed that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in metropolitan areas were more likely to feel the need to communicate in English, benefiting from greater exposure to English through various media. Conversely, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had fewer chances to interact in English, as they were less exposed to social situations where English was the primary mode of communication. Despite this, the GBA has regained popularity and has been incorporated as a teaching approach in the newest curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022). Therefore, it is expected that the textbooks provided by the MoECRT for English learning will demonstrate implementations of the GBA.

Studies on the relevancy between textbooks and the curriculum education aims are not a new practice. Previous studies by Dharma et al. (2018), Yuniarto (2021), and Nurhasanah et al. (2022) examined the compatibility of English textbooks with the 2013 Curriculum. They found that the provided textbooks aligned with the curriculum's academic aims. However, Rachmawati (2020) discovered that the scientific approach was lacking in eighth and ninth-grade English textbooks, contradicting the New 2013 Curriculum. Similarly, Hartatik et al. (2022) evaluated the relevance of the mathematics textbook for third-year high school students to the new curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and found it to be incompatible with the academic aims. These studies highlight the possibility of Ministry-issued textbooks not aligning with the curriculum.

While context analysis studies on textbooks are copious, studies focusing on the *Kurikulum Merdeka* are still limited, given that the curriculum is still newly implemented in Indonesia. Although a study that aims to see the correlation between the book created for the old curriculum and the academic goals of the latest curriculum has been conducted, the data source was not the textbook specifically published by the MoECRT for the curriculum

in question. Thus, studying the compatibility of the newly designed textbooks for the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is crucial, mainly the English textbooks for primary students. This paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. How are *My Next Words* textbooks in line with the academic goals in *Kurikulum Merdeka* for elementary students?
2. What strategies are used by the textbook writers to ensure that their textbooks could assist the students in reaching the academic goals in *Kurikulum Merdeka*?
3. To what extent do *My Next Words* textbooks follow the current English teaching approaches?

METHOD

This study examined the *My Next Words* English Textbooks for first and fourth-grade primary school students in Indonesia. The textbooks were published by the MoERT in 2021 and authored by Gemala et al. and Rahmawati et al. The analysis utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative approach involved counting the frequency of content in the textbooks, while the qualitative method was used to interpret the data. The analysis focused on units from the first semester of the textbooks, considering them crucial for students' initial learning experience. The content analysis followed the summative content analysis method proposed by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) and Bengtsson (2016).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe qualitative content analysis as a research method that aims to the subjective interpretation of text data's content through systematic classification on coding and identifying themes or patterns. The summative approach aims to understand and explore the contextual usage of the analysed words or content. The approach includes observing the data, counting the targeted content's occurrence, and interpreting the underlying meanings.

The study examined various student activities in the textbooks that required one or more language skills. The frequency counts were used to identify the most frequently included language skill categories and draw inferences from the data. The final data were then compared with the academic aims proposed in the Ministry's 2022 regulation on *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School (see Table 1 in Appendix). The aim was to determine the compatibility between the textbook contents and the proposed academic aims.

The compatibility of the textbooks and the academic aims is assessed with the compatibility percentage proposed by Puspito et al., (2021):

Table 1 Percentage of Compatibility Categories

Compatibility	Percentage
Very Compatible	73.2% $\leq x \leq$ 100%
Compatible	46.6% $\leq x \leq$ 73.%
Incompatible	0% $\leq x \leq$ 46.6%

Lastly, how the collected data follow the past and current English teaching approaches is also analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

My Next Words First Grade Semester 1 Compatibility with Kurikulum Merdeka's Academic Goals and the Strategies Used in the Textbook to Achieve Compatibility

Kurikulum Merdeka, the newest curriculum, encourages schools to commence English education at the primary level to improve students' confidence in communicating in English and build their global awareness (Puskur Dikbud Ristek, 2021). Advancing the students' oral skills becomes the main focus of English teaching to achieve the newest English subject's academic aims. In Phase A (Grades 1-2), the English learning process focuses on introducing the language itself and students' English oral skills (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022). Students in Phase A are expected to learn English to communicate with others in daily life and classroom context. Visual aids and non-verbal communication are also highly used to assist students.

In this phase, the main focuses in the teaching process are listening, speaking, reading, and viewing, while writing and representing visuals are not yet the learning focus (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022). Listening and speaking elements cover students' ability to appreciate their interlocutor and understand the delivered information so that they can give an appropriate response and deliver their ideas through their speaking abilities. Reading elements cover the ability to comprehend, utilise, and reflect on non-visual texts. On the other hand, the viewing elements focus on the comprehension of visual texts. The textbook published by the MoECRT concentrates more on the former language skills. The number of activities that include the mentioned language skills can be seen below:

Table 2 Number of Activities Focusing on Language Skills in My Next Words Grade 1 First Semester

Number of Activities Focusing on Language Skills					
Speaki ng	Listeni ng	Readi ng	Viewi ng	Writi ng	Visual Represe ntation
28	33	8	29	13	0

Table 2 shows that the language skill with the highest number of activities is listening, with 33 activities out of 50 different activities included in the 7 units of the book

that are studied in the first semester. It is followed by viewing and speaking content with 29 and 28 activities, respectively. The first half of the book does not contain any visual representation-related activities and only 8 reading activities.

Although the number of writing-related activities places fourth with thirteen activities, those activities do not involve any text composing. The students are only expected to complete the missing word(s), with one to two words, or fill in a table with brief information. In the first unit of My Next Words Grade 1 (see Table 2.2 in Appendix), students must fill in the blanks with the correct word(s) to finish the greetings they learnt. In this unit, students trace many words. In the third unit, two activities require writing. (see Table 2.4 in Appendix). The first exercise is a self-introduction where pupils write their names. In "Let's do a survey," they write their friends' names from a short survey. Similar writing activities are also included in the second, fourth, and fifth units.

To introduce and provide students with sufficient communication skills, the newest academic aims in *Kurikulum Merdeka* focus more on integrating language skills. Unlike the conventional English teaching process that divides educational aims into smaller language skill units, *Kurikulum Merdeka* divides its English academic aims into three categories: listening—speaking, reading—viewing, and writing—representing. As the previous paragraph has discussed, writing, and representing are not thus far part of the English learning process for Phase A. Therefore, the designed goals for those aspects are not included in the academic aims of the textbook for Grade 1.

The activities included in the textbook show adequate integration between the language skills. Each student activity in the textbook is typically designed to develop at least two and at most four, language skills. A sample of activity that implements several language skills simultaneously is the "Listen and Say" activity in Unit One (see Table 2.2 in Appendix). The activity covers the speaking, listening, and viewing aspects. Students are expected to listen to and repeat their teacher mentioning the greetings while observing the visual text provided. In this activity, students not only master the pronunciations of the greetings but also understand how and when to use them based on the illustrations provided in the textbook.

Other activities that integrate several language skills together are "Let's do a survey" and "Play Game." Of the 7 units studied in the first semester, there are one game and five survey activities included. In those activities, students are expected to make use of their listening, speaking, and writing skills to do the surveys and games. Viewing and reading skills are also considered significant in understanding the games and the surveys, for the textbook provides limited instructions to do the mentioned activities.

Therefore, students are expected to figure out the rules by observing the visual texts provided.

The first-grade textbook shows a balance of distribution and integration of language skills. The contents included do not lean more on one or two language skills only. They also allow the students to practice their understanding of English through the activities provided. Additionally, with the numerous meaningful illustrations and activities that cover listening skills, students gain chances to practice their listening, reading, and viewing skills. Since in practising their speaking skills students are still depending on the questions that instructions that the teachers give them, teachers' assistance is still highly needed in the learning process in this phase given on this stage the main focus is introducing English as a language to the students.

Even though *My Next Words Grade 1* textbook shows a satisfactory integration of language skills to support the learning process, the number of activities that each unit has are unbalanced. Unit one of the book has the most activities with twelve activities in total while unit three has the least number of activities with only three worksheets. We speculate this might be due to the differences in language skills and themes that are the focus of each unit. For example, the first unit aims to introduce the students to different kinds of greetings and how to use them in both formal and informal situations. Thus, it can be concluded that more practices are needed to help the students understand the content better compared to Unit Three which only aims in assisting the students to introduce themselves and mention their and their friends' names confidently.

Nevertheless, the textbook provided by the MoECRT for first grade manages to demonstrate a fitting result in aiding the students to reach the English educational aims proposed by *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The average score of contents distribution of *My Next Words Grade 1* reaches 50 percent (see Table 2.1 in Appendix). The percentage is obtained by determining the number of activities related to each English language skill in each unit. This analysis allows for the calculation of the percentage of content dedicated to each skill within every unit. By averaging the content distribution percentages of all the language skills relevant to the phase, the overall compatibility score between the textbook and the academic aims is obtained. Paying attention to the compatibility percentage proposed by Puspito, et al., (2021), it can be concluded that the textbook can be categorised as compatible with the newest English academic aims in the new curriculum.

Regarding the strategies used to ensure that the textbook could assist the students in reaching the academic goals in *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it can be concluded that the writers provide more exercises when the topic is not easy to learn and also provide integrated language skill activities to

allow students to practice more what they have learnt in more meaningful ways. In addition to these, teacher's assistants are still required to make sure that students reach the academic goals of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

My Next Words Fourth Grade Semester 1 Compatibility with Kurikulum Merdeka's Academic Goals and the Strategies Used to Achieve Compatibility

The academic aims stated in *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Phase B (grades 3-4) include writing - representing visuals as part of students' learning process (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022). However, students in this phase are only exposed to materials to master the writing skill. Representing ideas and information via visuals is still not the focus of the learning process of this phase. This phase focuses on introducing how the spellings in written English might differ from how we pronounce them. At the end of Phase B, students are expected to be able to communicate their ideas and experience through not only arts but also copied writing. Responding to this, the *My Next Words Grade 4* textbook increases the number of writing-related activities for the students. The rise of writing-related activities can be seen below:

Table-3

Number of Activities Focusing on Language Skills in My Next Words Grade 4 Semester 1

Number of Activities Focusing on Language Skills					
Speakin g	Listenin g	Readin g	Viewin g	Writin g	Visual Representati on
21	12	33	40	20	0

In *My Next Words Grade 4*, students engage in writing activities that involve using tenses as the focus of the unit. They are required to construct simple sentences using the appropriate tenses and write longer texts based on provided model texts. These writing tasks demonstrate a progression in writing skills compared to the previous textbook, which has simpler writing activities. For instance, in the first unit, "What Are You Doing?", students complete sentences with the correct verbs and write sentences in the present progressive tense based on pictures. Additionally, in the third unit's activity "Look and Answer" (see Table 3.4 in Appendix) students read a short text, analyse a visual picture, and then write several sentences describing what they observe. Similar activities are found throughout the textbook units. There are 20 writing activities in this textbook.

Assignments that require the students to write a longer text based on the model passage are introduced in the sixth and seventh units of the textbook as "Let's Write" (see Table 3.7 and 3.8 in Appendix). This activity integrates reading, viewing, and writing skills in the process of doing the

assignment. Students have to read the model text first before finally writing and expressing their idea through their own text, for instance describing their bedroom. In the seventh unit, the students are asked to illustrate the picture provided in the activity. Thus, they also need to observe the illustration to be able to write the proper text that the assignment expects. The writing assignments in *My Next Words Grade 4* show an attempt to aid students to reach the goal to be able to communicate their ideas and produce simple descriptions relying on their ability to spell the vocabulary they have learnt without any assistance.

Along with the introduction of longer text activity, the textbook also provides more and longer texts to improve the students' reading skills. There are 33 reading activities in the Grade 4 Book and this is a significant increase compared to the reading activities in the Grade 1 Book. Contrasted to the reading practices in the first-grade textbook that do not include many words and also rely more upon the texts that are being read by the teachers, the textbook for fourth graders is composed of texts that are consisted of at least one sentence. The aspect that does not change in the fourth graders' textbook is that the reading texts are always accompanied by thought-intriguing illustrations. Thus, the students are not only reading the text but also viewing and observing the image to understand the passage's context better.

My Next Words Grade 4 demonstrates a steady attempt in incorporating numerous illustrations that are served as visual texts to support the learning process. In fact, the number of viewing-related activities also shows a rapid increase and actually stands as the language skill with the highest activity number. Throughout the first semester, 40 activities incorporate viewing skills as one of the language skills needed to finish the assignment. We can also infer this as an attempt to advance the students' viewing skills. They are expected to observe more, not only to complete the assignments but also to understand the instruction to do the activities as they provide little to no written instructions on the activities. Students have to view the visuals to know what to do in an activity.

The limited instructions provided for game activities in the textbook can present difficulties for students. The textbook includes four game activities in total, found in the second, fifth, and sixth units. However, the written instructions for these games are exceptionally limited. For instance, in the first game activity of Unit Two, the only instruction given is the line "Guess my number." However, it is accompanied by an illustration of two girls playing the game. Similarly, the second game activity in the same unit lacks any written instructions altogether. While this approach may be intended to encourage students to explore and figure out the game themselves, it can lead to confusion as students may interpret the game differently.

Some students may rely heavily on their teachers to explain how to play the games, highlighting the continued importance of teachers in this learning phase.

There is a decrease in speaking and listening-related activities and some units have an uneven distribution of activities. There are only 21 speaking activities and 12 listening activities.

Conducting the same analysis as explained before on pp. 6-7 and by paying attention to the compatibility percentage proposed by Puspito et al., (2021) above, we can conclude that *My Next Words Grade 4* aligns with 59% compatibility to the English learning goals of *Kurikulum Merdeka* Phase B (see Table 3.1 in Appendix). It aligns with the curriculum goals and contains materials that reflect current and future needs (Ulumudin, et al., 2017).

With regard to the strategies used in the fourth-grade textbook, all strategies used in the first-grade textbook are also used in this textbook. Another strategy that is used to ensure that students can achieve the academic goals of the curriculum is the use of visual texts to help students do the activities easier and understand written texts easily.

Compatibility with The Current English Teaching Approaches

The English teaching methods/approaches have undergone significant changes along with the development of science and technology. The change in teaching approaches is also affected by the change in skills that the students need to compete with others in this era. Major events worldwide also play a significant role in deciding the teaching method/approach that will be the trend in a certain period. For instance, while technology has been widely employed in the teaching process in schools for years, a rapid increase in technology use in English teaching has been shown during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak (Deerajiset, 2022). The use of online platforms in teaching English has become a trend that is widely spread and used at different education levels around the world, including in Indonesia.

However, several conventional English teaching methods and approaches are also still used and applied in many schools in Indonesia. Though they are mostly considered outdated, educators still find them applicable in the current context of English learning by combining the methods/approaches to result in what we call Eclectic Method/Approach. For example, Communicative Language Teaching is often combined with group project activity in English classes since teachers believe it allows the students to practice their oral English skills by communicating and delivering their ideas to their peer group members (Feriovi & Abbas, 2022).

The GBA also regained its popularity in the recent curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's

Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022). Although it did not show significant results when it was used in the previous curriculum due to limited English exposure and opportunities for language use outside the classroom (Budairi, 2015), the GBA is now seen as a promising approach in developing students' communication skills with people from different countries and cultures. With increased English exposure from various media and the growing importance of English education in early childhood in Indonesia (Siregar, 2018), students are more likely to practice and apply the written and oral skills they learn in class to real-life social contexts, reducing the likelihood of past implementation failures. The inclusion of the GBA in *Kurikulum Merdeka* aligns with the upcoming Industry 5.0 era and aims to enhance students' abilities and confidence in English communication.

My Next Words textbooks also show the implementation of the GBA in the textbooks' contents. Each unit presents different themes and provides a set of language components that can be used in a particular social context related to the theme. To illustrate, in the first unit of *My Next Words Grade 1*, students are taught how to greet their friends, parents, and teachers using different types of greetings. The book also provides two different manners to greet someone. Students can also learn how to respond to the greeting in the same unit. Thus, they can practice those oral expressions when they meet their friends, teachers, or any people they meet in and outside the school context.

Similarly, in the third until the seventh units of the fourth grader textbook, the units teach the parts of the house. Those units include identifying prepositions, activities in the house, things in each room, and the use of the modal 'can.' The main goals of the third to seventh units are to provide students with the ability to produce sentences using the vocabulary and grammar featured in the units and describe their house as well as activities that they can do at home. Thus, the students can apply the knowledge in daily conversations with family members and friends to discuss their house and daily activities. Since students are already expected to be able to produce written text in Phase B, they practice contextual communication both orally and in writing.

The GBA is evident in the implementation of a four-step approach in the learning process. These steps include (1) Building Knowledge of the Field, (2) Modelling the Text, (3) Joint Construction of the Text, and (4) Independent Construction of the Text (Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*, 2022). Each unit in *My Next Words* Grades 1 and 4 begins with an introduction on the first page, presenting the material through illustrations and dialogues. This introduction serves as a visual text, helping to build students' background knowledge. For instance, in

the sixth unit of *My Next Words* Grade 4, the first page to the third activity acts as an introduction to the material (see Table 3.7 in Appendix). Activity Three "Look and Say," provides a model text for the students. The second and third steps are implemented throughout the unit until the students are ready to produce their own text in the eighth activity, "Let's Write."

In Phase A, the amount of building knowledge section is relatively higher which is in line with what the curriculum proposes that the students in Phase A are still in the introduction stage of English as a communicative language. For instance, the activities in Unit 6 of *My Next Words Grade 1* textbook contain similar listening-related activities in an attempt to introduce the students to colours and numbers. Thus, repetition of the same material is needed to make sure students fully comprehend the materials. Additionally, the constant repetition of the same material (in different forms of learning activities) is well justified since it follows the ideal form of the new curriculum that is needed to make up for the learning lost during the post-Covid-19 outbreak (Li et al., 2021). The new curriculum written during the pandemic era is expected to have less material to give room to the students, so they can appreciate and engage with the materials more. The use of colourful illustrations in both books is also an excellent strategy to stimulate students' interest.

Although the textbooks do not incorporate internet sources or connected devices in the learning process, they effectively apply the GBA proposed by *Kurikulum Merdeka*. They align with the content requirements of the pandemic curriculum, featuring seven short units in the first semester. Through repetition in student activities, the textbooks engage students and facilitate their written communication in various social contexts. While not utilizing technology or the internet to teach English, the Ministry of Education's textbooks for *Kurikulum Merdeka* Phases A and B strive to meet current content standards and academic goals. They provide opportunities for students to practice English offline with their classmates.

CONCLUSION

The study findings indicate that the first semester units of *My Next Words* Grade 1 and Grade 4 textbooks align with the revised English academic goals in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for first- and fourth-grade students. These textbooks employ various strategies to support primary students in attaining the educational objectives in the English subject. Notably, they utilise meaningful illustrations and incorporate activities that target specific language skills in each phase. *My Next Words* Grade 1 emphasises listening, speaking, and viewing activities, while Grade 4 places more emphasis on viewing, reading, speaking, and writing tasks. However, both textbooks

consistently provide listening and speaking activities, as the curriculum emphasizes mastery of oral communication skills in Phases A and B. Furthermore, the activities in the textbooks integrate multiple language skills rather than focusing solely on one skill.

A similar pattern of results was obtained by Dharma et al. (2018), Khairunnisa & Mayrita (2019), and Yuniarto (2021) that said that the textbooks issued by the MoECRT used in schools contain sufficient and compatible contents with the academic aims of the applied curriculum designed for the subject in question. The multiple language skills integration in the textbooks to support students' English learning process is also found in a study conducted by Dharma, et al. (2018) on English textbooks used in SMK in Sintang. This shows that implementing integrated language skills in a textbook has been practised in the English textbooks designed for the previous curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum.

While *My Next Words* Grade 1 and Grade 4 align with *Kurikulum Merdeka*'s GBA, they should incorporate current English teaching approaches. These include the use of E-learning and the use of Internet-based resources. To enhance engagement, motivation, and language development for young learners, digital integration should be included in the textbooks (Juliana, 2022). This aligns with *Kurikulum Merdeka*'s focus on stimulating students' interest after COVID-19 while ensuring that the textbooks remain up to date.

Thus, integrating external resources from the Internet and available online platforms with a GBA implemented in *My Next Words* Grade 1 and 4 will improve students' learning experience and the quality of the textbooks. The online platform added to the textbook can provide additional resources, interactive activities, and opportunities for collaborative learning that complement the textbooks' contents. Additionally, the online platform can provide resources for teachers. They can be used during the game activities included in the textbooks; and therefore, can support the effective implementation of the GBA and the use of online learning. Thus, implementing external resources from online platforms in the next edition of *My Next Words* Grades 1 and 4 is a good strategy to improve the quality of the English textbooks in aiding students to fulfil the goals proposed by *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Phases A and B of the English subject.

Despite those findings and suggestions, this study is not concerned with the textbooks' effectiveness and impacts on students. The analysis is focused on the textbooks' contents only without considering students' acceptance of the materials. Henceforth, future research might need to analyse the effectiveness of the suggested textbooks' contents for *Kurikulum Merdeka* in aiding students to

achieve the academic aims outlined in the new curriculum for the English subject.

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APPENDICE

1. Kurikulum Merdeka English Subject Academic Aims

Table 1

Kurikulum Merdeka *English Subject Academic Aims*

Phase A (Grade 1-2)		
Listening-Speaking	Reading-Viewing	
By the end of Phase A, students use basic English to interact in social and classroom situations such as introducing themselves, sharing personal information, greeting and bidding farewell. They respond to simple instructions (with support from visual cues) with action-related language or answer to short, simple questions with simple words, phrases or sentences. They identify key points of information in visually supported oral presentations containing familiar vocabulary. They use visual texts to help them communicate.	By the end of Phase A, students respond orally to short, simple, familiar texts in the form of print texts read by teachers. They show understanding of texts being read to or pictures/illustration being shown, using non- verbal communication.	
Phase B (Grade 3-4)		
Reading-Speaking	Reading-Viewing	Writing-Visual Representation
By the end of Phase B, students use English to interact in a range of predictable social and classroom situations using certain patterns of sentences. They change/substitute some sentence elements to participate in classroom routines and learning activities, such as expressing feelings, expressing needs and requesting help. They identify key points of information in visually supported oral presentations containing familiar vocabulary. Using visual cues, they follow a series of simple instructions related to classroom procedures and learning activities.	By the end of Phase B, students understand everyday vocabulary with support from pictures/illustration. They read and respond to a range of short, simple, familiar texts in the form of print or digital texts, including visual, multimodal or interactive texts.	By the end of Phase B, students communicate their ideas and experience through drawings and copied writing. With teachers' support, they produce simple descriptions and procedures using simple words/phrases and pictures. They use invented spelling in writing simple vocabulary related to their class and home environments.

Note. From "The Regulation of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia number 008/H/KR/2022 on Early Childhood Education, Primary School, and Secondary School's Academic Aims on *Kurikulum Merdeka*" by Kemendikbud Ristek, 2022, pp. 154-156. Copyright 2022 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia.

2. My Next Words Grade 1 Textbook

Table 2.1 My Next Words Grade 1 *Textbook Average Percentages of Language Skills Contents*

Unit	Language Skills Percentages					
	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	Visual Representation
1	83%	67%	8%	50%	17%	0%
2	40%	40%	20%	60%	40%	0%
3	67%	67%	33%	100%	67%	0%
4	67%	83%	17%	50%	50%	0%
5	50%	40%	20%	60%	40%	0%
6	57%	100%	14%	71%	0%	0%
7	14%	71%	14%	43%	0%	0%
Average	54%	67%	18%	62%	30%	0%
Total	50%					

The total percentage of the textbook contents is obtained by finding the mean of the content distribution of all language skills that are the focus of the phase.

Table 2.2 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 1 Unit 1*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
1 : How are you?	Look and Say	V			V		
	Listen and Say	V	V		V		
	Greet your classmates	V	V				
	Let's play ball	V	V				
	Let's do a survey	V	V				
	Listen to the story	V	V		V		
	Let's do a survey	V	V				
	Listen to the story	V	V		V		
	Look and Tick			V	V		
	Write and Say	V			V	V	
	Trace the word					V	
Let's sing	V	V					
Total	12	10	8	1	6	2	0
Percentage		83%	67%	8%	50%	17%	0%

Table 2.3 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 1 Unit 2*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
2: Hi, I am Kimi. Meow.	Let's Play game	V	V				
	Read and Match			V	V		
	Let's put your picture				V	V	
	Play game	V	V				
	Trace and Write				V	V	
Total	5	2	2	1	3	2	0
Percentage		40%	40%	20%	60%	40%	0%

Table 2.4 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 1 Unit 3*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
3: My name is Joshua	Write your name				V	V	
	Let's do a survey	V	V		V	V	
	Game	V	V	V	V		
Total	3	2	2	1	3	2	0
Percentage		67%	67%	33%	100%	67%	0%

Table 2.5 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 1 Unit 4*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
4: My Number is ten	Say and Colour	V			V		
	Take the card and say	V	V	V	V		
	Let's do a survey	V	V			V	
	Let's sing	V	V				
	Listen and check		V		V	V	
	Listen and write		V			V	
Total	6	4	5	1	3	3	0
Percentage		67%	83%	17%	50%	50%	0%

Table 2.6 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 1 Unit 5*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
5: I Have Four Books	Look and Say	V			V		
	Point and Say	V			V		
	Listen and Write		V			V	
	Listen and Draw		V			V	
	Listen to the story		V		V		

	Let's do a survey				V	V	
	Look and Write	V			V	V	
	Read and count	V		V			
	Count and Match			V	V		
	Let's Sing	V	V				
Total	10	5	4	2	6	4	0
Percentage		50%	40%	20%	60%	40%	0%

Table 2.7 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 1 Unit 6*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	Visual Representation
6: My Garden is Colorful	Look and Say	V	V	V	V		
	Word Chains	V	V				
	Listen and Color		V		V		
	Listen and Color		V		V		
	Point and Say	V	V		V		
	Listen and Color		V		V		
	Let's Sing	V	V				
Total	7	4	7	1	5	0	0
Percentage		57%	100%	14%	71%	0%	0%

Table 2.8 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 1 Unit 7*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	Visual Representation
7: My Garden is Colorful	Listen and Draw		V				
	Cut and Stick						
	Listen and Color		V				
	Look and Tick				V		
	Point and Say	V	V		V		
	Listen and Tick		V	V	V		
	Listen and Tick		V				
Total	7	1	5	1	3	0	0
Percentage		14%	71%	14%	43%	0%	0%

3. My Next Words Grade 4 Textbook**Table 3.1** *My Next Words Grade 4 Textbook Average Percentages of Language Skills Contents*

Unit	Language Skills Percentages					
	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	Visual Representation
1	50%	50%	50%	83%	50%	0%
2	67%	33%	33%	83%	17%	0%
3	44%	22%	89%	89%	56%	0%
4	33%	33%	100%	100%	50%	0%
5	50%	25%	100%	100%	50%	0%
6	50%	13%	88%	100%	38%	0%
7	50%	25%	75%	100%	75%	0%
Average	49%	29%	76%	94%	48%	0%
Total	59%					

The total percentage of the textbook contents is obtained by finding the mean of the content distribution of all language skills that are the focus of the phase.

Table 3.2 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 4 Unit 1*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	Visual Representation
	Let's Sing	V	V				
	Look and Say	V		V	V		

1 : What Are You Doing?	Talk about your friend's activity	V	V		V		
	Look and Write				V	V	V
	Listen and Write		V			V	V
	Look and Write				V	V	V
Total	6	3	3	3	5	3	0
	Percentage	50%	50%	50%	83%	50%	0%

Table 3.3 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 4 Unit 2*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
2: There Are 67 English Books	Look and Say	V		V	V		
	Look and Answer	V			V		
	Game	V	V				
	Look and Match				V		
	Look and Match			V	V	V	
	Game	V	V		V		
Total	6	4	2	2	5	1	0
	Percentage	67%	33%	33%	83%	17%	0%

Table 3.4 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 4 Unit 3*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
3: My Living Room is Beside Kitchen	Look and Say	V		V	V		
	Let's Search			V	V		
	Look and Write			V	V	V	
	Look and Mark the Boxes			V	V	V	
	Look and Answer			V	V	V	
	Let's Sing	V	V				
	Look and Say	V		V	V		
	Let's Talk	V	V	V	V	V	
	Look and Write			V	V	V	
Total	9	4	2	8	8	5	0
	Percentage	44%	22%	89%	89%	56%	0%

Table 3.5 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 4 Unit 4*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
4: Cici Cooks in The Kitchen	Look and Say	V		V	V		
	Listen and Circle		V	V	V		
	Let's Search			V	V		
	Let's Talk	V	V	V	V	V	
	Look and Answer			V	V	V	
	Look and Write			V	V	V	
Total	6	2	2	6	6	3	0
	Percentage	33%	33%	100%	100%	50%	0%

Table 3.6 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 4 Unit 5*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
5: Where is My Pencil	Look and Say	V		V	V		
	Let's Arrange The Words			V	V	V	
	Game	V	V	V	V		
	Look and Write			V	V	V	
Total	4	2	1	4	4	2	0
	Percentage	50%	25%	100%	100%	50%	0%

Table 3.7 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 4 Unit 6*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
6: The Stove is in The Kitchen	Let's Say	V		V	V		
	Let's Say	V			V		
	Let's Search			V	V		
	Look and Say	V		V	V		
	Game	V	V	V	V		
	Look and Write			V	V	V	
	Read and Answer			V	V	V	
	Let's Write			V	V	V	
Total	8	4	1	7	8	3	0
	Percentage	50%	13%	88%	100%	38%	0%

Table 3.8 *The Content of My Next Words Grade 4 Unit 7*

Unit	Activity	Language Skills					Visual Representation
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Writing	
7: I Can Make Fried Egg in The Kitchen	Look and Say	V			V		
	Look and Write			V	V	V	
	Let's Do Survey	V	V	V	V	V	
	Let's Write			V	V	V	
Total	4	2	1	3	4	3	0
	Percentage	50%	25%	75%	100%	75%	0%