



The Integration of Creativity as a 21st Century Skill in “Bahasa Inggris Life Today” Textbook for Grade XII

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the integration of creativity as a 21st-century skill within the learning activities of the "Bahasa Inggris: Life Today" textbook for Grade XII. Based on Trilling and Fadel's (2009) framework, this study operationalizes creativity into three core indicators: Think Creatively (TC), Work Creatively with Others (WCO), and Implement Innovations (II). By employing a descriptive qualitative methodology with a content analysis approach, the research systematically examines the textbook's task instructions across four units. The findings reveal that the textbook actively integrates creativity through 35 occurrences. It demonstrates a strong emphasis on Think Creatively (15 occurrences) through brainstorming tasks, and Work Creatively with Others (19 occurrences) via collaborative writing cycles and peer feedback sessions. However, a significant limitation was identified in the Implement Innovations

criterion, with only one task prompting students to publish their work for an authentic external audience. This study concludes that while the textbook serves as a valuable resource for developing students' ability to generate ideas and collaborate, it falls short of completing the full creative process. Future iterations would benefit significantly from redesigning tasks to include real-world publication components, ensuring students' creative outputs have genuine impact beyond the classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of contemporary education, fostering 21st-century skills has become an imperative mandate for educational systems worldwide. Among these transferable competencies, creativity stands out as a core engine for innovation, problem-solving, and critical thinking. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, creativity is no longer viewed merely as an artistic or supplementary endeavor; rather, it is recognized as a fundamental cognitive process and a potent pedagogical tool that significantly boosts learners' motivation, language competence, and communication fluency. In countries like Indonesia, this global educational paradigm has been nationalized through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which officially integrates creativity as a core pillar of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Under this curriculum, Indonesian EFL learners are expected not only to absorb linguistic input but also to produce original, meaningful, and impactful expressions.

Given its central role in shaping daily classroom dynamics, the textbook serves as the primary agent for enacting these curriculum mandates, particularly in resource-limited or EFL-dominant settings where teachers rely heavily on structured instructional materials. Consequently, several empirical studies have sought to evaluate how effectively 21st-century skills and creativity are integrated into Indonesian English textbooks. For instance, research on textbooks designed for the previous 2013 Curriculum (K-13) by Rakhmawati and Priyana (2019) and Gunawan et al. (2022) revealed a noticeable inconsistency, where creativity often lagged far behind other skills like critical thinking. As the transition to the Merdeka Curriculum took place, recent studies on lower-level textbooks, such as those conducted by Nuraeni et al. (2024) for Grade VII and Anwar et al. (2024) for Grade X, similarly underscored a persistent underrepresentation of creative tasks, which accounted for less than 15% of the overall learning activities.

Despite the growing body of literature on textbook evaluation within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, a critical research gap persists. While prior investigations have extensively mapped out the implementation of 21st-century skills in junior high and early senior high school materials, the Grade XII textbooks remain significantly underexplored. This omission is problematic because twelfth-grade students stand at a critical educational crossroad, requiring advanced creative capacities to prepare for higher education or the

global workforce. Furthermore, most previous studies have restricted their analysis by treating creativity as a monolithic, single skill, merely quantifying its presence or absence without examining its multidimensional nature. Consequently, little is known about which specific operational aspects of creative thinking are being promoted or neglected in the final year of high school English materials.

To address this gap, a granular and comprehensive analytical framework is required to deconstruct how creativity is operationalized in learning materials. This study adopts the comprehensive creativity framework proposed by Trilling and Fadel (2009), which breaks down creative competence into three distinct, measurable indicators: Think Creatively (TC), Work Creatively with Others (WCO), and Implement Innovations (II). Grounded in the materials development principles of Tomlinson (2011) and the cognitive hierarchy of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, an effective EFL textbook must do more than just guide students to generate ideas individually (TC); it must scaffold them to collaborate on creative products (WCO) and push them to apply these solutions to authentic, real-world contexts beyond the classroom walls (II).

Therefore, this present study aims to analyze the systematic integration of creativity as a 21st-century skill within the explicit instructions of learning activities in the official Grade XII textbook "Bahasa Inggris: Life Today" published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. Specifically, this paper addresses the following research questions: (1) How is creativity integrated into the learning activities of the "Bahasa Inggris: Life Today" textbook for Grade XII? and (2) To what extent do these activities represent the three specific dimensions of creativity—Think Creatively, Work Creatively with Others, and Implement Innovations? By offering a detailed account of the distribution and nature of these creative prompts, this study aims to provide critical insights for curriculum developers, textbook authors, and EFL teachers regarding the alignment between 21st-century curriculum intentions and material realities at this crucial educational level.

METHOD

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design focusing on qualitative content analysis. Content analysis was selected as the methodological framework to systematically examine, interpret, and draw valid and replicable inferences from textual

data within its specific educational context. Rather than evaluating classroom implementation, this study strictly focused on the explicit curriculum represented within the written instructional materials to identify underlying patterns, themes, and categories of creativity integration.

The primary source of data for this study was the official English textbook for twelfth-grade students under the Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum, titled "Bahasa Inggris: Life Today" (2022 edition), authored by Susanti Retno Hardini et al. and published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The data consisted of the explicit instructions and task prompts found within the learning activities across all four units of the textbook. A comprehensive sampling approach was employed, meaning that every single learning activity, task, exercise, and project directive from Unit 1 to Unit 4 was included as a unit of analysis to ensure a thorough investigation of the material.

The primary instrument in this research was the researcher herself as the key human instrument responsible for data planning, collection, interpretation, and reporting. To maintain objectivity and systematicity, a secondary instrument was employed in the form of an indicator matrix adapted from Trilling and Fadel's (2009) 21st-century creativity framework. This matrix operationalized creativity into three concrete dimensions: Think Creatively (TC), Work Creatively with Others (WCO), and Implement Innovations (II). The data collection process followed systematic document analysis procedures, which involved a multi-step process: (1) familiarization through a comprehensive reading of Units 1 to 4; (2) identification of all learning activities containing student directives; and (3) systematic recording and organization of these tasks into the indicator matrix based on the expected student actions and task designs.

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which comprises three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data condensation stage, the textbook instructions were selected and simplified; tasks unrelated to creativity were excluded, while relevant tasks were coded into the three main creative dimensions. In the data display stage, the condensed data were organized systematically into frequency distribution tables complemented by narrative descriptions of representative task screenshots. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were

conducted by interpreting the distribution patterns to determine which specific aspects of creativity were prioritized or neglected, ensuring the accuracy of the final insights through rigorous and repeated data cross-checking.

RESULTS

The content analysis of the explicit task instructions in the Grade XII English textbook "Bahasa Inggris: Life Today" revealed a total of 35 occurrences of creativity integration across its four units. Based on Trilling and Fadel's (2009) framework, these occurrences were coded into three distinct indicators: Think Creatively (TC), Work Creatively with Others (WCO), and Implement Innovations (II). The factual distribution and frequency of these creativity indicators throughout the textbook are compiled and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Creativity Indicators in the Textbook

No	Creativity Indicator	Frequency of Occurrence
1	Think Creatively (TC)	15
2	Work Creatively with Others (WCO)	19
3	Implement Innovations (II)	1
Total		35

Operationalization of Creativity Indicators

The first indicator, Think Creatively (TC), appeared 15 times and was integrated across various language skills, particularly in the speaking and writing cycles. Factually, the textbook prompts individual creative actions such as brainstorming techniques, generating novel ideas, and expanding ideas into structured text. A representative example of a divergent TC prompt is found in Unit 1, Speaking Activity 3 on page 10. The instruction explicitly directs students to perform an independent creative task without pre-determined script structures, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Activity 3

Now it is your turn to do role play with your partners. Create your own short dialog about the best way to conserve energy from the given clues. Perform your dialog in front of the class.

Figure 1. Speaking Activity 3 Instruction in Unit 1

Activity 3

Now it is your turn to do role play with your partners. Create your own short dialog about the best way to conserve energy from the given clues. Perform your dialog in front of the class.

The second indicator, Work Creatively with Others (WCO), constitutes the most frequent dimension with 19 occurrences embedded structurally within the textbook's genre-based writing cycles across all units. The text data shows that students are recurrently directed to engage in peer review, co-author texts, and conduct collaborative interviews. A clear example of this peer-feedback mechanism is documented in Unit 4, Writing Activity 4 on page 193, where students must modify their creative work based on external group evaluations, as shown in Figure 2.

Activity 4: Redraft Text

Rewrite the text which has been reviewed by another group in the box below. Then submit your final text to your teacher.



Figure 2. Writing Activity 4 Instruction in Unit 4

Activity 4: Redraft Text

Rewrite the text which has been reviewed by another group in the box below. Then submit your final text to your teacher.

In contrast to the previous indicators, Implement Innovations (II) is the least represented dimension, appearing only once across the entire textbook. This single occurrence is located exclusively in the Presenting section of Unit 2 on page 86. The instruction directs students to extend their classroom podcast project to an authentic audience by publishing the product on digital social media platforms, as displayed in Figure 3.

- You may share the link of your podcast in your social media and publish it.
 - Other students and teachers comment on it.
- 

Figure 3. Presenting Activity Instruction in Unit 2

You may share the link of your podcast in your social media and publish it. Other students and teachers comment on it.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that while the Grade XII English textbook "Bahasa Inggris: Life Today" integrates all three dimensions of creativity proposed by Trilling and Fadel (2009), the distribution of these indicators is heavily disproportionate. The textbook exhibits a structural bias toward collaborative processes, yet it falls short of completing the full creative cycle by neglecting the real-world application of ideas. This uneven representation suggests that while the material aligns with the thematic aspirations of the Merdeka Curriculum, its practical tasks restrict students from experiencing the comprehensive spectrum of 21st-century creative competencies.

Regarding the Think Creatively (TC) dimension, its frequent occurrence (15 times) initially indicates a deliberate effort to foster individual divergent thinking across multiple language skills. However, a deeper critical examination reveals a repetitive pedagogical pattern where open-ended brainstorming prompts are immediately channeled into highly restrictive, predefined organizational matrices, such as character or statement maps. By instantly pairing divergent ideation with rigid convergent structures, the textbook inadvertently narrows the cognitive space required for authentic creative exploration. This finding substantiates the arguments of Marashi and Dadari (2012), who asserted that strictly convergent tasks diminish creative output quality compared to fully open-ended tasks. Although this represents an improvement in frequency compared to the 2013 Curriculum textbook analysis by Rakhmawati and Priyana (2019), the structural encapsulation of these activities limits their qualitative impact.

Conversely, the dominance of Work Creatively with Others (WCO), appearing 19 times, stands out as a major structural strength of the textbook. By systematically embedding a collaborative writing cycle—comprising peer review, group deliberation, and joint redrafting—across almost all units, the material effectively operationalizes collaborative creativity as an interactive social process. This consistent task design aligns with recent empirical evidence by Guo et al. (2024), which demonstrates that collaborative peer feedback encourages EFL learners to apply sophisticated social negotiation and planning skills to achieve shared textual goals. Nonetheless, the repetitive nature of this

genre-based writing cycle across multiple units creates a pedagogical monotony, with Unit 2's dynamic role-based podcast project being the only notable exception.

The most critical concern extrapolated from this study is the severe underrepresentation of Implement Innovations (II), which occurs only once across the entire textbook. A comparative side-by-side analysis of the four "Presenting" sections illustrates that in three out of four units, the creative journey terminates strictly within the physical boundaries of the classroom, turning potentially impactful student innovations into mere graded academic exercises. Unit 2 successfully breaks this boundary by directing students to publish their podcasts on social media, thereby validating the benefits of an authentic external audience as documented by Chen and Brown (2012). The failure to apply this authentic audience principle consistently across the remaining units leaves a major gap in the textbook's instructional efficacy.

This systemic omission of real-world implementation carries serious implications for twelfth-grade students who are on the verge of transitioning into higher education or the global workforce. The official mandate of the Merdeka Curriculum explicitly defines the 'Kreatif' dimension within the Profil Pelajar Pancasila as the capacity to generate original work that is not only meaningful but also useful and impactful (*berdampak*). Impact implicitly requires a reach beyond the classroom walls. By continuously stopping short of this final stage, the textbook trains students extensively in generating and discussing ideas with peers, but deprives them of the essential experience of launching a tangible digital or physical product that makes a genuine contribution to a wider audience.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the official Grade XII English textbook "Bahasa Inggris: Life Today" demonstrates a clear commitment to fostering student creativity, documenting 35 occurrences across its learning activities. The material effectively embeds individual ideation through Think Creatively (TC) tasks and establishes a consistent collaborative architecture through structured genre-based writing cycles representing Work Creatively with Others (WCO). However, a critical pedagogical imbalance exists. The textbook heavily privileges the conceptual and collaborative stages of creativity while severely neglecting its real-world application, as evidenced by the solitary appearance of the Implement

Innovations (II) indicator. By terminating most creative tasks within classroom presentations, the textbook stops short of completing the full creative arc required by Trilling and Fadel's (2009) framework, creating a meaningful gap between material design and the impactful output demanded by the Merdeka Curriculum.

Several limitations must be addressed regarding the scope of this study. First, this investigation strictly focused on the explicit written instructions of learning activities within a single twelfth-grade textbook, thereby excluding other latent textbook elements such as reading passages, visual illustrations, or formal assessment sheets. Second, because this research utilized a qualitative content analysis methodology centered on the textbook as a standalone document, it did not capture the actual classroom enactment. Consequently, it remains undetermined how teachers adapt these tasks or whether their spontaneous pedagogical interventions mitigate the documented lack of innovation-level activities.

Based on these insights, targeted recommendations are offered to enhance future ELT materials and research. EFL teachers utilizing this material are highly encouraged to bridge the pedagogical gap by modifying the "Presenting" sections in Units 1, 3, and 4 to include authentic audiences, such as directing students to publish their final texts on class blogs, school newsletters, or public social platforms. Textbook writers and publishers should use these findings as evidence-based feedback to redesign future revisions by consistently embedding real-world digital or physical sharing components across all units. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to expand this inquiry by evaluating textbooks across Grades X and XI, analyzing non-instructional textbook components, or conducting empirical classroom observations. Future studies could also deploy alternative theoretical lenses, such as Torrance's (2008) core dimensions, Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) systems model, or Tin's (2013) language creativity framework to yield broader perspectives.

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