

## Evaluating the Contents and Activities of a 6th Grade English Textbook in Bilingual School Context

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### ABSTRACT

Textbooks play a crucial role in shaping language learning experiences, particularly in bilingual school contexts where learners engage with more than one language simultaneously. This study aims to evaluate the content structure and learning activities of a sixth-grade English textbook used in a bilingual school, with a specific focus on skill integration and communicative development. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to examine Unit 3 “Chocolate” of the *Our World 6* textbook. The analysis focuses on learning objectives, activity sequencing, skill integration, grammar presentation, and the communicative demands placed on learners. The findings reveal that the textbook demonstrates a clear and systematic content structure, beginning with learning objectives and schema-activating questions, followed by contextualized input and progressively communicative tasks. The learning activities integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through songs, texts, pair and group work, grammar practice, and project-based tasks. Although some activities remain form-focused, they function as scaffolding for younger learners and are balanced by meaningful interaction and real-life contexts. Overall, the study concludes that the textbook effectively supports communicative competence and integrated skill development, making it appropriate for sixth-grade learners in a bilingual school setting. The findings contribute to textbook evaluation research and offer insights for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers in selecting and developing English textbooks for bilingual education.

**Keywords:** English textbook, skill integration, bilingual school context

### ABSTRAK

Buku teks memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk pengalaman belajar bahasa, terutama dalam konteks sekolah bilingual di mana siswa berinteraksi dengan lebih dari satu bahasa secara bersamaan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk

mengevaluasi struktur konten dan aktivitas belajar dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggris kelas enam yang digunakan di sekolah bilingual, dengan fokus khusus pada integrasi keterampilan dan pengembangan komunikatif. Menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menerapkan Analisis Diskursus Kritis untuk menganalisis Unit 3 “Chocolate” dari buku teks *Our World 6*. Analisis ini berfokus pada tujuan pembelajaran, urutan aktivitas, integrasi keterampilan, penyajian tata bahasa, dan tuntutan komunikatif yang diberikan kepada siswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa buku teks tersebut memiliki struktur konten yang jelas dan sistematis, dimulai dengan tujuan pembelajaran dan pertanyaan pemicu skema, diikuti oleh masukan kontekstual dan tugas-tugas komunikatif yang progresif. Aktivitas pembelajaran mengintegrasikan keterampilan mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis melalui lagu, teks, kerja berpasangan dan berkelompok, latihan tata bahasa, dan tugas berbasis proyek. Meskipun beberapa aktivitas masih berfokus pada bentuk, mereka berfungsi sebagai penyangga bagi siswa yang lebih muda dan diimbangi dengan interaksi yang bermakna dan konteks kehidupan nyata. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa buku teks tersebut secara efektif mendukung kompetensi komunikatif dan pengembangan keterampilan terpadu, sehingga cocok untuk siswa kelas enam di lingkungan sekolah bilingual. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada penelitian evaluasi buku teks dan memberikan wawasan bagi guru, perancang kurikulum, dan pembuat kebijakan dalam memilih dan mengembangkan buku teks Bahasa Inggris untuk pendidikan bilingual.

**Kata-Kata Kunci:** Textbook Bahasa Inggris, integrasi kemampuan, konteks sekolah bilingual

## INTRODUCTION

Textbooks hold a central place in language education, functioning not only as repositories of linguistic input but also as instruments that guide instructional practices and shape learners' experiences (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2022). In many educational contexts, particularly in EFL systems, textbooks are considered the most influential teaching materials, providing structure, continuity, and clear pedagogical direction for both teachers and students. (Robitaille & Travers, 1992) express the view that textbook content and how such textbooks are used impact directly on students' learning. As noted across various studies, textbooks assist teachers in planning lessons, organizing learning activities, and presenting content systematically, thus supporting effective classroom instruction (Sainyakit, 2022). Their role extends beyond content delivery; textbooks carry embedded cultural perspectives, skill expectations, and pedagogical assumptions that can significantly affect learning outcomes.

In bilingual schools—where students navigate two languages simultaneously the quality and suitability of English textbooks are especially crucial. Bilingual learners require materials that not only present accurate and age-appropriate linguistic input but also integrate activities that promote comprehension, communication, and cross-linguistic transfer. Consequently, evaluating the content and activities of English textbooks used at the elementary level becomes an essential undertaking to ensure alignment with learners' needs and institutional goals.

Previous studies in textbook analysis highlight several dimensions of concern. Research has shown that textbooks influence the development of character values, cognitive skills, and intercultural awareness. For example, (Andini & Zuhriyah, 2022) investigation into a sixth-grade English textbook demonstrated that textbooks often embed character-education values, such as honesty, responsibility, creativity, and cultural awareness, both explicitly and implicitly. Other scholars emphasize the importance of integrated skill development within textbook content, stressing that effective textbooks should present balanced listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks across chapters to promote holistic language learning .

Several recent analyses also highlight issues such as skill imbalance, inadequate assessment components, and limited representation of social or cultural diversity. For instance, gender representation research conducted in Vietnam illustrates that textbooks may unintentionally reinforce traditional gender norms, shaping learners' perceptions of social roles (still in the shadow). Similarly, the reading-skills analysis of English textbooks in the Korean EFL context found sharp increases in reading difficulty between grade levels, raising concerns about the continuity and progression of textbook content. In addition, research exploring soft-skills integration in Grade 6 English textbooks in Saudi Arabia revealed uneven inclusion of social, personal, and cognitive skills, suggesting that existing materials may not fully support students' holistic development (Abdulhadi & Alakshan, n.d.).

Textbooks used in bilingual school settings must therefore be evaluated not only for linguistic adequacy but also for their pedagogical, cultural, and cognitive dimensions. The textbook *Our World 6* (Crandall & Cory-wright, n.d.), for example, features thematic units, vocabulary chapters, cultural readings, and activity-based tasks designed to foster communicative competence through real-world topics . However, without systematic evaluation, it is unclear whether such content aligns with the goals of bilingual education, supports balanced skill development, and promotes meaningful engagement for sixth-grade learners.

Given this context, the present study aims to evaluate the content and activities of a sixth-grade English textbook used in a bilingual school environment. This evaluation draws upon established analytical dimensions identified in previous textbook research—such as skill integration, cultural representation, cognitive demand, and value-embedded content—to determine the extent to which the textbook supports learning in bilingual classrooms.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. How is the contents structure and activities of the sixth-grade English textbook within a bilingual school context.
2. What are the types and quality of learning activities provided in the textbook, particularly regarding skill integration and communicative development.

Through this analysis, the study seeks to contribute deeper insights into textbook quality and pedagogical suitability, offering recommendations for improving textbook selection and development in bilingual elementary education settings.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## **Textbook Evaluation in EFL and Bilingual Contexts**

Textbook evaluation is most effective when it begins with a clear understanding of learners' actual needs. A study showed that even widely adopted textbooks often fail to respond to what students and teachers truly expect from classroom materials (Rashidi & Kehtarfard, 2014). Their needs-analysis approach emphasizes matching textbook content, skills coverage, and task types with the real demands of the learning context. For a bilingual 6th-grade classroom, this perspective highlights the importance of checking whether the textbook supports the skills students require for academic learning, everyday communication, and school-based bilingual activities.

### **Quality of Activities**

A second theme in recent studies is the quality of activities provided in textbooks. Research by Hoang and Crosthwaite on multiword units illustrates that textbooks vary widely in the kind of input they provide (Hoang & Crosthwaite, 2024). Texts and listening passages with rich, natural phrase combinations better prepare learners for real communication than materials built on isolated vocabulary lists and short sentences. Similarly, Luo's analysis of English-as-a-Lingua-Franca (ELF)-oriented textbooks shows that tasks encouraging genuine communication, such as role plays, interaction-focused exercises, and intercultural prompts help students develop the strategies needed for speaking with a range of English users (Luo, 2023). Together, these findings suggest that activity design should promote authentic input, strategic communication, and meaningful language use rather than mechanical practice.

Readability is another important concern when evaluating a textbook for bilingual learners. Standard readability formulas do not always capture the real difficulty of texts for bilingual readers (Sarin & Garraffa, 2023). Factors such as background knowledge, cultural familiarity, the presence of cognates, and learners' exposure to certain vocabulary can strongly influence comprehension. A text that seems appropriate according to a formula may still be challenging if it assumes cultural knowledge the learners do not share. This highlights the need to look beyond numerical readability scores and consider the broader linguistic and cultural demands of each reading passage.

Work on lexical development further supports the need for textbooks that build strong connections between words and concepts. Zhang and colleagues show that bilingual learners often activate concepts more easily in their first language, which affects how they acquire and retrieve vocabulary in their second language (Damian, 2025). This finding suggests that materials should offer repeated exposure to essential vocabulary through pictures, contextualized tasks, and cross-skill recycling so that students develop deeper conceptual links in the target language. Activities that rely too heavily on translation drills may not effectively strengthen these connections.

### **Language Used**

The language used in textbook instructions also plays an important role. Many textbooks still assume a narrow native-speaker model and rely on fixed, idealized English (Chan et al., 2020). In practice, this may limit students' understanding of how English is actually used in

multilingual settings. Textbooks that include strategy-based instructions, diverse English varieties, and opportunities for clarification or negotiation of meaning offer more realistic preparation for communicative use. For bilingual schools, where English functions as a tool for learning and interaction, this type of instructional language can help students participate more confidently in classroom activities.

Finally, multimodality has become a key consideration in textbook evaluation. A study of textbook covers and visuals shows that images influence how students perceive English and how they relate to the material (Schools & Cahyati, n.d.). Visuals that reflect learners' local context and present relatable figures can make the material feel more accessible, while those that show distant or unfamiliar settings may unintentionally distance students from the content. Effective visuals can also support comprehension by providing contextual clues, labels, or meaningful illustrations connected directly to the language focus of the lesson.

Taken together, these studies suggest several priorities for evaluating a 6th-grade English textbook in a bilingual school. A strong textbook should align with learners' needs, offer activities rich in authentic language, present reading materials that are culturally and linguistically accessible, strengthen conceptual links for vocabulary learning, model realistic and strategy-based English, and use visuals that support comprehension and student identity. These principles form a solid foundation for examining whether a textbook truly supports bilingual learners and fits the instructional goals of the school context.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the main analytical framework for evaluating the sixth-grade English textbook used in a bilingual school. CDA was selected because it allows the researcher to examine not only the surface features of the content and activities but also the underlying assumptions, values, and power relations embedded in the textbook. Textbooks are not neutral teaching tools; they shape how knowledge is organized and how students perceive language, identity, and communication. Therefore, CDA helps reveal how meanings are constructed, how skills are prioritized, and how learners are positioned within the book's pedagogical discourse.

The analysis followed a textbook evaluation approach focusing on content structure, activity types, integration of skills, and the communicative demands placed on learners. Combining CDA with textbook analysis made it possible to examine both the linguistic and pedagogical dimensions of the material in a holistic way.

The primary data for this study was the sixth-grade English textbook "Our World" of National Geographic learning focus on Unit 3: Chocolate, used as the core instructional material in a bilingual school. All units, reading passages, visuals, activity sets, and accompanying instructions were included in the analysis. The textbook was examined in its entirety to ensure that patterns could be identified across units rather than from isolated examples

## **RESULT**

The findings indicate that the sixth-grade English textbook *Our World* demonstrates a clear, systematic, and pedagogically sound content structure suitable for a bilingual school context.

Each unit consistently begins with learning objectives and provocative questions, which function as schema-activation tools and guide students' learning focus. This structured sequencing aligns with textbook evaluation principles that emphasize clarity of objectives and logical progression of activities to support learning outcomes.

Vocabulary learning is introduced through reading texts accompanied by pictures, allowing learners to associate meaning with visual context. This multimodal input supports comprehension for bilingual learners and reflects the view that textbooks should provide meaningful input before requiring output. Similar findings have been reported in textbook evaluation studies, which stress that vocabulary presented in context enhances learners' understanding and retention (Budiman et al., n.d.).

The textbook further integrates pair and group-based "ask and answer" activities, songs, and listening tasks. These activities promote early interaction and exposure to authentic language use. The inclusion of songs, followed by comprehension questions, supports listening skills while maintaining students' engagement. This confirms earlier research highlighting that interactive and varied activities help sustain learner motivation and reduce anxiety in bilingual classrooms (Ellah & Sciences, 2025).

Grammar content, such as past progressive and cause-and-effect structures using simple past and modals, is introduced after contextual exposure through texts, songs, and pictures. Although grammar explanations are explicit, they are supported by contextualized practice, including sentence construction based on pictures and personal experiences. This reflects an eclectic approach, where form-focused instruction is combined with communicative and meaning-based activities, as recommended in textbook design literature (Laepe et al., 2022).

Reading activities include comprehension questions, chart completion, identifying irrelevant sentences, and retelling texts in groups, which encourage both understanding and oral production. The unit concludes with wrap-up questions and a project-based task (making a chocolate recipe), allowing students to synthesize language skills and content knowledge. Overall, the content structure shows a coherent progression from input to guided practice and communicative output, supporting bilingual learners' gradual language development.

## **DISCUSSION**

Regarding the types and quality of learning activities, the textbook provides a balanced integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Skills are not presented in isolation; instead, students often listen to a song, read the lyrics, answer comprehension questions, discuss meanings with peers, and later apply similar structures in writing tasks. This integrated-skill approach reflects best practices in communicative language teaching and textbook development (Budiman et al., n.d.).

Communicative development is strongly supported through pair work, group discussions, retelling tasks, sharing written work, and collaborative projects. These activities require learners to negotiate meaning, express personal experiences, and respond to peers, which are essential components of communicative competence. Studies on textbook quality emphasize

that such interaction-based activities are crucial for developing real-life language use, particularly in bilingual settings (Ellah & Sciences, 2025).

The use of familiar and culturally relevant contexts, such as food, recipes, personal experiences, and special occasions, enhances the authenticity of communication. Writing tasks that ask students to describe true experiences and then share them in groups further strengthen the connection between language learning and students' real lives. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that meaningful contexts increase students' willingness to communicate and improve overall engagement (Laepe et al., 2022).

Although several grammar activities remain controlled, such as fill-in-the-blank and sentence completion tasks, these exercises function as scaffolding for younger learners. When combined with communicative tasks and projects, they reflect the eclectic nature of the textbook, which blends structural, communicative, and task-based elements. Previous studies confirm that an eclectic approach allows textbooks to address diverse learner needs and teaching contexts more effectively than a single-method approach

In summary, the textbook offers high-quality learning activities that integrate language skills and promote communicative development. The combination of contextualized grammar, interactive tasks, and project-based learning supports both linguistic accuracy and meaningful language use, making the textbook appropriate and effective for sixth-grade students in a bilingual school context.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to evaluate the content structure and learning activities of a sixth-grade English textbook used in a bilingual school context, with particular attention to skill integration and communicative development. The findings indicate that the textbook *Our World 6* presents a well-organized and coherent structure, beginning with clearly stated learning objectives and provocative questions that activate students' prior knowledge and guide learning. Activities are sequenced logically from contextualized input to guided practice and communicative output, supporting gradual language development among bilingual learners.

In terms of learning activities, the textbook provides a balanced integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students engage with language through multimodal input such as texts, pictures, and songs, followed by interactive tasks including pair work, group discussions, retelling activities, and project-based learning. These activities promote meaningful communication, encourage collaboration, and connect language use to students' real-life experiences. Grammar instruction, while sometimes form-focused, is contextualized and serves as scaffolding that supports learners' accuracy without undermining communicative goals.

Overall, the textbook reflects an eclectic pedagogical approach that combines structural, communicative, and task-based elements, which is particularly suitable for a bilingual school environment. Despite minor limitations related to controlled grammar exercises, the textbook demonstrates strong potential in fostering communicative competence and integrated skill

development. Therefore, it can be considered pedagogically appropriate for sixth-grade bilingual learners. Future research may extend this analysis by examining multiple units, incorporating classroom implementation data, or comparing the textbook with other materials used in similar bilingual contexts.

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