Assessing English Coursebooks for Young Learners: A Critical Analysis Using Tomlinson's Framework

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Abstract

This study evaluates an English coursebook for second-grade students, *My Next Words*, using Tomlinson's (2011) framework, which emphasizes meaningful input, engagement, affective involvement, and learner autonomy. The analysis focused on the coursebook's ability to align with young learners' developmental needs, cognitive processes, and social interactions. Findings reveal that the coursebook excels in engaging learners through repetitive activities, songs, and colorful illustrations that support vocabulary retention. However, limitations were identified in areas such as personalization, cultural inclusivity, and opportunities for learner autonomy. The lack of open-ended tasks and minimal scaffolding in grammar activities restricts learners' ability to explore language creatively. Additionally, the coursebook assumes a uniform classroom context, which reduces its applicability across diverse cultural settings. Recommendations include incorporating more scaffolded tasks, integrating culturally inclusive content, and designing activities that foster personalization and learner autonomy. By addressing these gaps, *My Next Words* may better support young learners' language acquisition and align with both developmental and pedagogical principles. This research contributes valuable insights into the evaluation and development of effective EYL coursebooks that cater to holistic language learning needs.

Keywords: *Coursebook Evaluation, Material Development, Young Learners*

Introduction

English, recognized as a global lingua franca, is widely regarded as the most preferred foreign language for learners worldwide. Beyond its inclusion as a core subject in secondary and higher education, English has also been mandated as a compulsory subject in primary education across numerous countries, including Indonesia (Neolaka et al., 2021). The teaching English for young learner is started with the belief that earlier exposure leads to better language acquisition (Tomlinson, 2008) by a lot of people. While this perspective remains a topic of debate among scholars, it undeniably forms the basis for the implementation of English for Young Learners programs. A common feature in the teaching practices of English for Young Learners is the reliance on coursebooks as instructional tools in the classroom (Hornay, 2021). According to

Hutchinson and Torres (1994), coursebooks have gained significant popularity in English Language Teaching (ELT) and serve a crucial function in facilitating the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Guerrettaz & Johnston (2013) also point out that since coursebook is a familiar thing found in the classroom, teachers perceive it as instrumental in structuring and organizing learning activities, shaping the curriculum, and reflecting classroom ideologies, among other functions.

Based on this premise, the materials included in a coursebook should align with the needs and preferences of the learners. Masuhara (2011) highlights that coursebooks must also address the requirements of teachers. In addition to catering to students and educators, Tomlinson (2008) argues that coursebooks should fulfill the expectations of school administrators, often in connection with the syllabus, examinations, language policies, and theories of language learning. However, a notable consideration is the prevalence of commercially produced materials. Despite being developed by professional writers, most commercially produced materials are ultimately shaped by the goals of publishers. While publishers aim to deliver high-quality resources that cater to user needs, they are also driven by the necessity to maximize profits through coursebook sales. As a result, the content often prioritizes market demands over the specific needs of the learners. As Richards (2001) notes that publishers are driven by financial incentives, which can result in materials that are well-designed but not always pedagogically relevant. As a result, while the materials produced are often well-designed and teacher-friendly, they may not align with the specific needs of the learners (Hornay, 2021). This misalignment explains why, despite the wide variety of coursebooks available on the market, many language educators struggle to identify resources that are truly suitable for their teaching contexts.

In this case, if we refer to the characteristic of good coursebook for young learners, Ghosn (2013; 2018) argues that materials for young learners must prioritize holistic development. She further explains that young learners learn most effectively through experimentation, exploration, play, and acquiring language via meaningful interactions with others, rather than relying on formal coursebooks. Therefore, coursebooks designed for young learners should reflect these characteristics and avoid being modeled after those intended for older learners. Elements like pictures, songs, and chants are more appropriate for inclusion in coursebooks for children. Additionally, the activities featured in these coursebooks should align with theories on how children learn foreign languages. This alignment is essential, as the integration of theory and practice is widely regarded as a key factor in supporting children's acquisition of the target language.

To evaluate the quality and effectiveness of EYL coursebooks, several frameworks have been proposed, including Tomlinson's (2011) principles for language materials. Tomlinson emphasizes that effective materials should provide meaningful input, foster learner engagement, and promote affective involvement, all of which are essential for young learners' language acquisition. By using Tomlinson's framework as a lens, this study seeks to critically assess an English coursebook for young learners and explore its alignment with these principles.

Despite the growing number of coursebooks available for young learners, many are still critiqued for their lack of developmental appropriateness, limited opportunities for personalization, minimal scaffolding, and superficial cultural representation. While frameworks such as Tomlinson's (2011) have been widely used to evaluate language materials, their application has mostly focused on globally prominent coursebooks and adult learners. However, few studies have critically applied this framework to materials used in Indonesian EYL contexts, especially in regional areas like Aceh, where coursebooks are often adopted without prior localized evaluation. In particular, research is limited on how such materials support or fall short in fostering meaningful input, engagement, affective involvement, and learner autonomy among young learners.

This study is situated within the context of English language teaching in Indonesian primary schools, where English is taught as a foreign language. Learners come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and English instruction typically takes place within multilingual classroom environments. The coursebook *My Next Words*, which is commercially produced and used in this setting, reflects general, globalized content that may not always align with local realities. Therefore, evaluating its suitability in this specific context is crucial, particularly in terms of cultural relevance, personalization, and learner engagement. This analysis highlights the importance of adapting materials to fit the unique cultural and educational landscape in Indonesia. The study seeks to answer the following question:

1. To what extent does the chosen English coursebook for young learners align with the principles of language materials, particularly in terms of meaningful input, engagement, and affective involvement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language learning in young learners significantly differs from that of adults (Neolaka et al., 2021), as it is profoundly influenced by cognitive, social, and developmental factors that shape how they acquire, process, and use the language (Cadime et al., 2025; Newport, 2020). Unlike adults, who come to the language-learning process with

established cognitive frameworks and extensive linguistic experience, young learners are still in the early stages of developing these foundational abilities (Lightbown & Spada, 2021; Pinter, 2017). This ongoing development impacts not only how young learners engage with new languages but also the types of input and interaction that best facilitate their learning.

According to Piaget's (1972) theory of cognitive development, young children move through specific stages that influence how they acquire and process language. In the preoperational stage (ages 2-7), children develop symbolic thinking, enabling them to use words as representations, though their thinking remains egocentric and intuitive. As they move into the concrete operational stage (around ages 7 to 11), their ability to think logically about concrete events improves, enabling them to engage in more structured language tasks, such as understanding grammatical rules and solving linguistic problems. This progression through cognitive stages shapes the ways in which children comprehend and produce language, influencing the types of learning activities and materials that are appropriate for different age groups. Therefore, language materials need to provide hands-on, visual, and context-based activities to support their learning. For example, coursebooks at this stage should include clear examples**,** real-life scenarios**,** and visual aids to help learners connect language to tangible experiences. Interactive tasks such as group work and role-play, which allow for both social interaction and logical reasoning, are crucial at this stage. Studies show that when language materials are designed to match the developmental needs of children, especially in the use of visual aids and interactive tasks, it leads to better comprehension and retention (Haq & Madany, 2025; Nguyen & Pham, 2024; Pateşan et al., 2018; Takacs et al., 2015).

In addition to Piaget's emphasis on cognitive development, Vygotsky's (1978) Social Interaction Theory highlights the pivotal role that social context and collaboration play in language learning. Vygotsky argued that learning is a fundamentally social process and introduced key concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, which are essential for understanding how children acquire language. The ZPD refers to the range of tasks that a learner cannot complete independently but can achieve with guidance from a more knowledgeable other, such as a teacher or a peer. This guidance, or scaffolding, helps bridge the gap between what the learner knows and what they are capable of learning with assistance (Gibbons, 2015). Coursebooks designed for young learners should integrate opportunities for social interaction and scaffolding. Activities such as role-plays, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving, where learners engage in real-life scenarios with teacher and peer guidance, can encourage interaction and scaffold learning with teacher and peer guidance. These strategies are reflected in many modern teaching resources. One example is the *Oxford*

Discover series, which fosters peer collaboration through group work and discussions, offering teachers support through structured notes. In contrast, other coursebook, such as the *Let's Go* series, though widely used for young learners, tend to fall short in this area, potentially leading to superficial engagement in social interaction (Brown & Lee, 2018). Without clear scaffolding, grouping students together does not automatically result in meaningful learning (Gillies, 2016).

To further evaluate language materials for young learners, Tomlinson's (2011) framework provides a comprehensive set of criteria that focus on several important principles: meaningful input**,** engagement**,** affective involvement**,** and learner autonomy. These principles are particularly relevant for young learners, as they align with their cognitive and emotional development. Research applying Tomlinson's framework to the evaluation of young learners' materials has shown that it is effective in assessing both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning. For instance, a study by Syahid et al. (2024) has used Tomlinson's principles to evaluate its effectiveness in facilitating language acquisition. Their study found the course material met 15 of the 16 Tomlinson's criteria, including captivating images and topics, a clear, scaffolded layout that increased learner confidence, realistic real-world texts and communicative exercises, and a variety of practice activities that catered to different learning styles. However, it lacked in facilitating self-investment, as it did not have aspects that encourage students to take greater responsibility for their learning.

In addition to Tomlinson's (2011) framework for evaluating language teaching materials, other frameworks, such as Littlejohn's (2011) framework, also offer valuable tools for material evaluation. Littlejohn's approach emphasizes a systematic analysis of both the content and the processes involved in teaching materials. His framework is structured to look at three levels: what is there, what is required of users, and what is implied, focusing on the degree of cognitive demand placed on learners and the types of activities provided in the material.

One key difference between Littlejohn's and Tomlinson's frameworks is that Littlejohn's tends to focus more on task types, cognitive demands, and methodology, while Tomlinson places a stronger emphasis on affective engagement, meaningful input, and the psychological involvement of learners. Littlejohn's criteria are more suited to analyzing the structure and organization of tasks within a textbook, whereas Tomlinson's approach digs deeper into whether learners are emotionally and cognitively engaged in the materials. For comparison, studies using Littlejohn's framework, such as McDonough et al. (2013), have effectively demonstrated its utility in evaluating the overall task structure of materials but have noted limitations in assessing learner engagement and the emotional appeal of materials. On the other

hand, studies that use Tomlinson's framework, such as Pinter (2017) and Ghosn (2013; 2018), have found it effective in highlighting the emotional and cognitive impact of course materials on young learners, focusing not just on what the materials teach, but on how they teach and engage the learners. Some research (e.g., Al-Amri, 2020; Lin et al., 2015) has extended this discussion by emphasizing the potential of digital tools—such as interactive storytelling apps, gamified vocabulary platforms, and augmented reality (AR)—in enhancing young learners' engagement, motivation, and language acquisition. These tools provide multimodal input, opportunities for autonomous exploration, and context-rich environments that support both affective and cognitive development. The absence of such digital integration in *My Next Words* highlights a gap between current pedagogical trends and the traditional print-based format of the coursebook.

Research on young learners' language acquisition highlights the importance of creating materials that not only engage learners cognitively but also cater to their emotional and personal experiences (Pinter, 2017; Ghosn, 2013; 2018). Effective materials should encourage students to connect with the content in a way that reflects their real-life context, which enhances motivation and supports long-term language retention. However, despite the emphasis on engagement and cognitive appropriateness, much of the research on language materials for young learners has focused more on the structural and cognitive complexity of tasks rather than how these materials allow for personalization and opportunities for learner autonomy. For young learners, the ability to relate language tasks to their personal experiences or to exercise some control over their learning process is critical for deep learning (Van Lier, 2007). Yet, the question of how well coursebooks provide these opportunities remains largely unexplored.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative content analysis approach to evaluate the effectiveness of young learners' English coursebook materials using Tomlinson's (2011) framework for language materials development. The study aims to assess how well the coursebook fosters meaningful input, engagement, affective involvement, and learner autonomy, with an additional focus on how opportunities for personalization and social interaction are incorporated into the materials.

The coursebook *My Next Words* was selected for this study based on its widespread use in several primary schools in Aceh, Indonesia. It is a commercially available coursebook adopted by local institutions due to its accessibility, affordability, and alignment with general English curricula for young learners. The book has been commonly used in early English instruction programs in both public and private

elementary schools in the region. Additionally, its design—featuring colorful visuals, structured vocabulary units, and familiar themes—has made it a popular choice among teachers for Grade 2 learners. The decision to analyze this coursebook was therefore grounded in its local adoption, practical relevance, and representativeness of commonly used EYL materials in the Acehnese educational context.

DATA COLLECTION

In this study, data collection consisted of the content of an English coursebook for young learners of second-grade students, using Tomlinson's (2011) framework for evaluating language learning materials. The primary data were from a selected unit from the coursebook, chosen to provide a representative sample of the various types of content and activities that the book offers. The selected unit was chosen purposively based on its comprehensive coverage of key language skills and activity types commonly found throughout the coursebook. This unit includes vocabulary development, listening and speaking tasks, and simple reading activities making it representative of the book's overall instructional approach. the chosen unit reflects a typical structure and content balance found across other units, allowing for a meaningful evaluation based on Tomlinson's framework. It was selected to ensure that the analysis could capture the book's strengths and limitations across multiple skill areas, rather than focusing on isolated or atypical content.

The data analysis was the analysis of the coursebook, where the selected unit was examined according to Tomlinson's criteria. These included meaningful input, affective involvement, engagement, and learner autonomy. Each section of the coursebook was critically evaluated to determine how well it aligned with the developmental needs of young learners, with particular attention to how the material encouraged social interaction and supports cognitive development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
RESULTS
MEANINGFUL INPUT

The book employs colorful and detailed illustrations, which aids in the comprehension of abstract concepts by connecting language to visual stimuli. For instance, it features a matching activity where learners link vocabulary words to corresponding images, such as animals or everyday objects (Figure 1). This aligns with Piaget's theory, which emphasizes the importance of concrete examples for children in the preoperational and early concrete operational stages. Furthermore, the inclusion of picture-based story sequences helps learners infer meaning and context without relying solely on text. These visuals act as scaffolds, supporting learners' understanding of the narrative

structure. Vocabulary is also consistently recycled throughout the book. For example, the key vocabulary introduced reappears in practice activities in subsequent units, reinforcing learning through repeated exposure. This aligns with Tomlinson's principle that meaningful input should be presented multiple times in varied contexts.
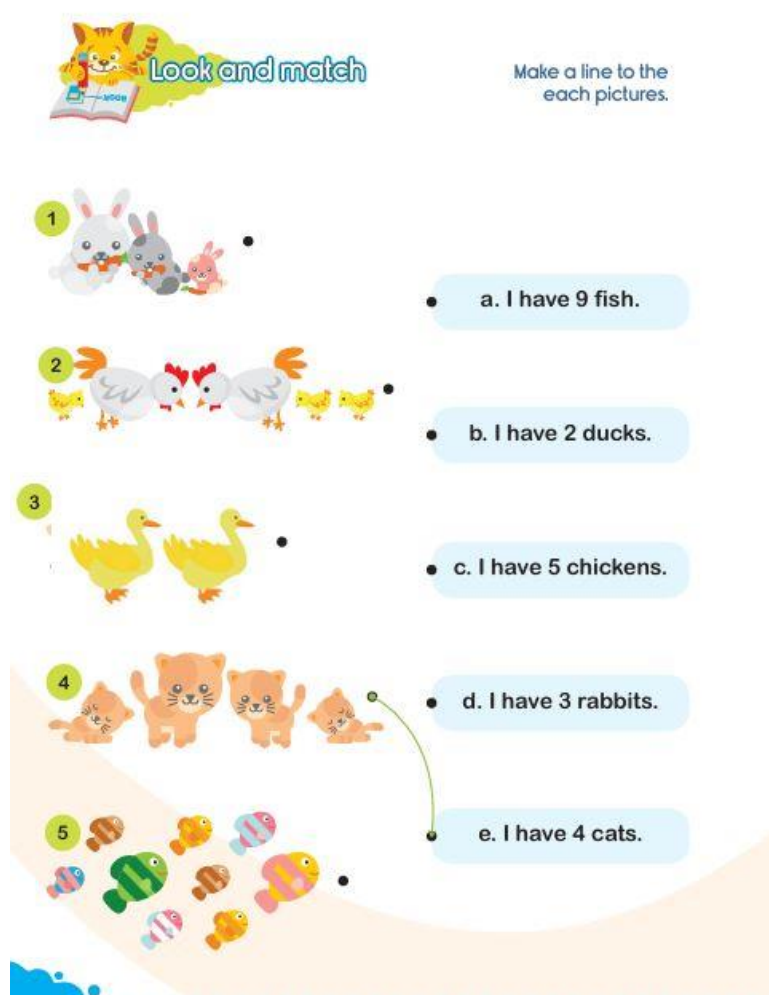

FIGURE 1. A matching activity in *My Next Words*

Nonetheless, many activities focus on isolated vocabulary or phrases without embedding them into authentic, real-world scenarios. For instance, a vocabulary drill asks students to fill in missing letters to complete words (e. g., _ap_le for "apple") (Figure 2). While this reinforces spelling, it fails to provide any context for the word's use in communication, reducing the language to rote memorization rather than meaningful learning. There are limited tasks that simulate real-life interactions, such as buying items at a market, describing their surroundings, or talking about their family. Moreover, the book often presents language superficially, without exploring its use in depth. For example, it introduces action verbs (e. g., "run," "jump," "dance"), the accompanying task merely asks learners to match words with pictures. There is no extension activity encouraging learners to construct sentences, describe actions, or use

the verbs in a communicative task. In addition, the book relies heavily on word-focused and sentence-focused exercises, with few examples of longer texts, such as stories, poems, or dialogues, that provide richer and more meaningful input. For example, a "Find the Words" puzzle encourages learners to locate vocabulary in a grid. While enjoyable, it does not expose learners to how these words are used in connected speech or writing. The inclusion of authentic text types, such as postcards, diary entries, or short letters, could make the language more relatable and useful for real-life purposes.
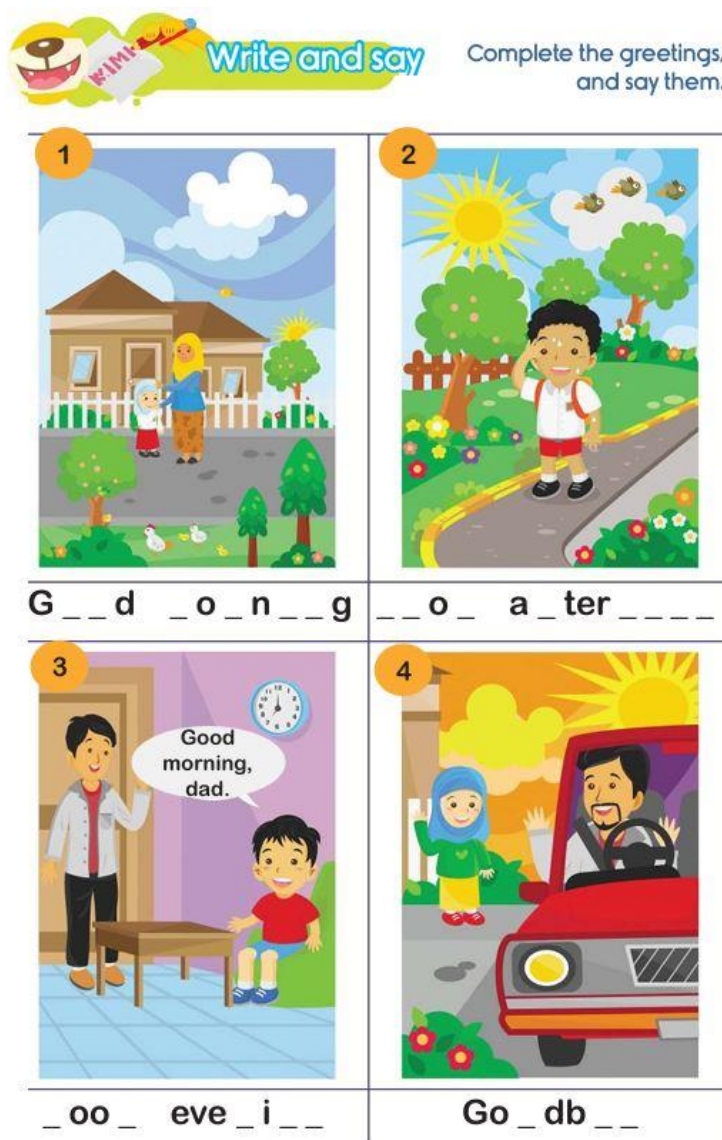

FIGURE 2. A vocabulary drill in *My Next Words*

ENGAGEMENT

The book employs various interactive exercises, such as, the inclusion of songs and chants adds auditory and rhythmic elements to the learning process (Figure 3). These

features make lessons memorable and enjoyable, especially for auditory learners. For example, a chant teaching days of the week helps learners internalize the content through repetition and melody, fostering long-term retention. Tasks are presented with simple and direct instructions, reducing cognitive load and helping learners focus on the activity itself. For example, the "Listen and Repeat" exercise is clearly outlined, ensuring learners understand what to do without needing excessive explanation.

FIGURE 3. The inclusion of songs and chants in *My Next Words*

However, the book provides few opportunities for group work or pair-based activities. For instance, learners are asked to fill in missing letters of vocabulary words individually. While this reinforces spelling, it does not promote communication or shared problem-solving. Adding tasks like role-playing dialogues, group projects, or peer-to-peer activities could foster deeper engagement and align with Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory. This lack of collaborative learning also limits opportunities for social interaction, which is particularly important for second-grade learners as they are in a stage of developing teamwork and communication skills. Many activities are also

decontextualized and focus solely on linguistic accuracy rather than meaningful communication. For example, learners are not asked to apply the language they learn in ways that connect to their personal experiences or practical contexts, which diminishes the relevance and engagement of the content. For example, after teaching classroom vocabulary, learners could be encouraged to describe their own classroom setup or favorite items in their school bag. This would help them see the relevance of English in their everyday school environment. Several activities, such as listening or repeating words, place learners in a passive role rather than encouraging active participation. For instance, the "Listen and Repeat" task has learners mimic pronunciation without adding an interactive or creative component, such as making their own sentences or asking and answering questions using the target vocabulary. For elementary students, transforming this into a playful activity, like a role-play where they practice introducing themselves or describing their favorite toy, could make learning more engaging and age-appropriate. Furthermore, the book does not incorporate multisensory approaches that are particularly effective for young learners. Adding tactile or hands-on activities, such as cutting, sorting, or arranging pictures related to vocabulary, would cater to their developmental stage and make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable.

AFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT

Affective involvement thrives when learners can relate emotionally to the material and see their own lives reflected in it (Ghosn, 2013; 2018). Personalization is a core strategy for achieving this, as it allows learners to express their own experiences, fostering intrinsic motivation and emotional connection. However, the *My Next Words Grade 2 Student Book* provides limited opportunities for personalization. For instance, in a vocabulary activity, learners are asked to match or identify classroom objects but are not asked to relate the items to their own belongings (Figure 4). While this reinforces vocabulary acquisition, it does not invite learners to describe objects they personally use or their classroom experiences. For elementary students, personalization could be as simple as asking them to identify their favorite classroom item and share why they like it. This type of task aligns with their developmental stage, which is heavily focused on building self-awareness and sharing personal perspectives. Personalization acts as scaffolding, helping learners connect new language inputs with their existing schemas. Without such scaffolding, tasks risk becoming mechanistic and fail to tap into learners' emotions or prior knowledge. At this age, learners benefit greatly from activities that allow them to express their feelings and preferences, such as creating drawings of their school environment or family and labeling these with the target language. By integrating such tasks, the coursebook could bridge the gap between the structured material and the learner's personal world.

FIGURE 4. A vocabulary activity in *My Next Words*

Furthermore, stories are also a powerful tool for affective involvement because they evoke a wide range of emotions, such as empathy, excitement, or curiosity, which enhance memory and engagement (Tomlinson, 2011; Ghosn, 2013). While the book includes a narrative about friendship, its emotional scope is limited. The story is brief, with a straightforward moral lesson, and does not delve into complex emotions o r challenges that could stimulate deeper engagement. While simplicity is appropriate for elementary student, stories could still include relatable moments of conflict, such as a misunderstanding between friends or an adventure that involves problem-solving. This would not only engage learners emotionally but also teach them to navigate everyday situations through language. Learners are more receptive to input when they are emotionally engaged and motivated. Stories that introduce challenges, conflicts, or relatable characters help lower the affective filter, making the material more memorable and impactful. For elementary learners, the introduction of recurring

characters or a series of connected stories throughout the coursebook could provide consistency and familiarity, enhancing emotional attachment. For instance, a story about a curious child exploring their school or neighborhood could reflect the learners' own lives and evoke curiosity and excitement. The simplistic nature of the story in the coursebook fails to leverage this potential. Instead of only moral lessons, stories could be accompanied by reflective questions, such as "*What would you do if you were the character?*" or "*How would you help your friend in this situation?*" These would encourage learners to think critically and emotionally engage with the material, making it more impactful.

LEARNER AUTONOMY

Learner autonomy refers to the capacity of students to take control of their own learning process, fostering independence and self-regulation. It involves providing opportunities for learners to make decisions, reflect on their progress, and engage with materials beyond teacher-led instruction. According to Tomlinson (2011), materials that promote autonomy allow learners to experiment, personalize, and evaluate their learning outcomes. The book includes a commendable effort to promote self-assessment through features like self assessment section, where learners evaluate their understanding of previously covered material (Figure 5). While this encourages self-reflection, it is limited in scope. The assessment primarily focuses on correct answers rather than fostering deeper reflection on strategies, challenges, or goals. When learners engage in self-assessment, they should also reflect on how they approached tasks, what strategies were effective, and what areas need improvement. Simply checking correct or incorrect answers does not engage learners in this critical process of metacognition. At the grade 2 level, scaffolding such reflection is vital. For example, providing visual prompts, such as happy or sad faces for learners to circle, along with space for a brief sentence like, "I like this because ___," could make reflection more accessible while fostering ownership of their learning.

FIGURE 5. A self-assessment section in *My Next Words*

In addition, personalized learning is a cornerstone of autonomy, as it allows learners to integrate their interests and experiences into the learning process. While the book covers general topics like family and daily routines, the tasks are predominantly prescriptive and lack opportunities for personalization. For instance, a task asks learners to fill in missing words in a dialogue but does not prompt them to create their own dialogues. To address this, the coursebook could incorporate creative tasks, such as *"Write a dialogue with a friend about what you do on the weekend,"* or *"Draw and label your family members using the words you learned."* Activities like these would allow learners to make connections between their personal lives and the language they are acquiring, fostering a sense of relevance and autonomy. Tomlinson (2011) argues that materials should enable learners to bring their own experiences into the learning

process, thereby making the language personally meaningful. When tasks lack personalization, learners miss out on the opportunity to see the relevance of language to their lives, which is crucial for fostering autonomy.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provide significant insights into the evaluation of *My Next Words* while also contributing to broader debates on English for Young Learners (EYL) materials development and pedagogical practices. The analysis highlights several recurring challenges and opportunities that are critical for informing the development of future coursebooks and shaping educational policy. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing cultural inclusivity, learner-centered design, and developmental appropriateness in the creation of EYL materials.

One of the most pressing issues identified is the lack of cultural inclusivity in the coursebook, which assumes a uniform classroom context that may not reflect the diverse backgrounds of learners. This limitation risks alienating students who cannot relate to the examples and scenarios presented, such as reliance on chalkboards or certain vocabulary that might not resonate universally. By integrating multicultural content and scenarios that reflect diverse experiences, future coursebooks can better meet the needs of learners while introducing them to global perspectives. This aligns with Ghosn's (2013; 2018) emphasis on holistic development, where learning materials connect the local with the global to foster both linguistic and cultural growth.

The findings also highlight the need for a more learner-centered approach in EYL materials. Tasks in *My Next Words* often lack opportunities for personalization and creativity, which are essential for fostering deeper engagement and emotional connection. Personalized activities, such as encouraging learners to write about their favorite family members or create dialogues based on their interests, could transform the coursebook into a more relevant and empowering tool for young learners. Tomlinson (2011) argues that when learners can integrate their own experiences into their studies, they are more likely to find the language meaningful and retain it long-term. In addition, incorporating open-ended tasks allows learners to exercise autonomy and creativity, aligning with Pinter's (2017) recommendations for EYL material design.

The study's findings further reveal that many activities in the coursebook fail to align with developmental theories such as Piaget's stages of cognitive development or Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Scaffolding, an essential feature of effective learning materials, is either absent or underutilized, preventing learners from transitioning from basic drills to meaningful language use. For instance, vocabulary

exercises in the coursebook lack follow-up tasks that extend learning into real-world contexts. Addressing this gap requires integrating progressively challenging activities, such as guided role-plays or collaborative problem-solving tasks, which can provide learners with the support they need while encouraging active language use. These approaches not only enhance language acquisition but also foster social and cognitive development, as emphasized by Vygotsky's focus on interaction-driven learning.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the evaluation of *My Next Words* and point to broader concerns within the commercialization of EYL materials. Publishers often prioritize marketability over pedagogical soundness, resulting in materials that emphasize visual appeal and surface-level engagement at the expense of meaningful, communicative language use. Richards (2001) notes that such commercial pressures often lead to coursebooks designed to satisfy general market needs rather than the specific developmental and linguistic requirements of learners. This highlights the need for stricter evaluation guidelines at the policy level, ensuring that coursebooks approved for classroom use meet evidence-based standards for language acquisition and cognitive development. Additionally, collaboration between educators, researchers, and policymakers can promote the creation of materials that are contextually relevant and pedagogically sound.

In a broader pedagogical context, the study underscores the necessity of balancing engagement with cognitive depth in EYL materials. While the inclusion of songs, chants, and colorful visuals in *My Next Words* caters to auditory and visual learners, these elements are often disconnected from more complex tasks that develop higher-order thinking skills. Material developers should aim to integrate engaging features with activities that encourage critical thinking, creativity, and real-world application, thereby ensuring a more comprehensive learning experience. Furthermore, the absence of digital tools in the coursebook reflects a missed opportunity to engage tech-savvy young learners. Digital resources, such as interactive storytelling apps or role-play simulations, could enhance the versatility and accessibility of EYL materials, making them more appealing and effective for diverse learners.

The findings also provide actionable insights for teachers using EYL coursebooks. Educators should view coursebooks as flexible resources rather than rigid curricula, adapting tasks to include learners' interests and cultural contexts. Professional development focused on differentiation strategies and scaffolding techniques can further equip teachers to address the limitations of existing materials. By incorporating supplementary resources and creating opportunities for reflection, creativity, and collaboration, teachers can maximize the potential of even commercially driven coursebooks.

CONCLUSION

This study has critically assessed the *My Next Words* coursebook for young learners using Tomlinson's (2011) framework, offering insights into its alignment with principles of meaningful input, engagement, affective involvement, and learner autonomy. The findings reveal that while the coursebook excels in engaging learners through vibrant visuals, repetitive vocabulary activities, and auditory elements such as songs and chants, significant limitations hinder its potential to fully support holistic language development for young learners. These limitations include a lack of personalization, insufficient scaffolding, and minimal opportunities for learner autonomy and real-world application.

One of the most critical observations is the disconnect between the coursebook's content and the diverse cultural and linguistic contexts of its users. This issue underscores the need for future EYL materials to adopt a culturally inclusive approach that resonates with learners' realities while introducing them to global perspectives. By bridging local and global contexts, coursebooks can foster both linguistic competence and cultural awareness, aligning with Ghosn's (2013; 2018) advocacy for holistic material development.

Additionally, the study highlights the necessity of integrating developmentally appropriate tasks that align with cognitive theories such as Piaget's stages of development and Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. Coursebooks should prioritize interactive, scaffolded tasks that encourage learners to progress from basic drills to meaningful communication. Opportunities for creativity, critical thinking, and personalization are pivotal for engaging learners affectively and fostering autonomy, enabling them to see the relevance of language in their daily lives.

The implications of this study extend beyond the evaluation of a single coursebook, contributing to broader debates on EYL materials development and pedagogical best practices. It calls for a shift in focus from market-driven priorities to evidence-based approaches that prioritize the needs of learners. Policymakers, educators, and material developers must collaborate to establish standards that ensure coursebooks are not only engaging and visually appealing but also pedagogically sound and inclusive. Furthermore, this study advocates for the incorporation of digital tools to meet the demands of modern classrooms and enhance interactivity, particularly for tech-savvy young learners.

In conclusion, while *My Next Words* provides a solid foundation for vocabulary acquisition and engagement, its limitations highlight the need for coursebooks that

balance linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions of language learning. By addressing these gaps, future materials can better support young learners' holistic language acquisition, preparing them for meaningful communication in a globalized world. This research contributes to the growing discourse on EYL material design, urging stakeholders to prioritize inclusivity, developmental alignment, and learner autonomy in the creation of effective educational resources.

Importantly, this is the first study to apply Tomlinson's (2011) framework to evaluate the *My Next Words* coursebook in the Indonesian young learner context, particularly within primary schools in Aceh. This localized perspective offers original insights into the cultural and pedagogical suitability of widely used commercial materials, filling a gap in current EYL evaluation literature.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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