

Coursebook Evaluation and Critical Thinking Integration: A Study of Two Indonesian EYL Textbooks

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Abstract. This study evaluated two English coursebooks used in Indonesian junior high schools: *English for Nusantara*, used at SMPN 4 Cikupa Tangerang, and *New Frontiers 1*, an international coursebook adopted by SMP IT Laa Tahzan Citra Tangerang. The evaluation focused on the quality of the coursebooks in supporting language learning and teaching, and the integration of critical thinking skills. Using a qualitative descriptive research design with a content analysis, data were drawn from Units 1–3, totaling 54 tasks in *English for Nusantara* and 94 tasks in *New Frontiers 1*. Findings show that *English for Nusantara* aligns well with national curriculum goals and provides localized, culturally relevant content. However, it offers limited teacher support resources, minimal pronunciation coverage, and focuses heavily on lower-order skills, with interpretation and explanation making up 56% of tasks. In contrast, *New Frontiers 1* demonstrates stronger communicative and task-based features, comprehensive support materials, and greater integration of critical thinking skills, including evaluation (11%) and combined skills (7%). These results highlight the need for future coursebook development in Indonesia to balance local cultural relevance with critical thinking and 21st century competencies, preparing learners for both national and global communication demands.

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INTRODUCTION

In English Language Teaching (ELT), a coursebook is viewed as one of the most widely used teaching materials. It serves as a resource for both teachers and students, providing plenty of benefits, such as, structured language input, organized practice, and pedagogical guidance (Harmer, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In addition, Cunningsworth (1995) stated that a coursebook contests multiple roles in ELT, which are a source of language presentation, a practice tool, a reference, a syllabus, and even a support for inexperienced teachers. In many contexts, particularly in EFL countries like Indonesia, coursebooks are categorized as the primary instructional resource in classroom settings. They not only

outline the content (what?), but also the methods and instructions for teaching (how?) which assist teachers deliver the lessons in class (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Tomlinson, 2012). This indicates that well-designed coursebooks can enhance the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring students gain comprehensive language skills and topics which can provoke students' interest to learn (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In the context of English for Your learners (EYL), coursebooks are of paramount importance because they provide age-appropriate language exposure, activities, and visual support to scaffold learning (Cameron, 2001). Yet, with the plethora of coursebooks available, it can sometimes be demanding for teachers to select the one that best fits the needs of their classroom context.

Selecting a suitable coursebook for EYL is particularly challenging. Compared to adult learners, EYL learners differ significantly in cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development (Cameron, 2001). As such, a good EYL coursebook must provide age-appropriate visuals for young learners, motivating tasks, and activities that match children's shorter attention spans (Pinter, 2017). Additionally, it should integrate songs, games, and stories to make language learning meaningful and enjoyable. However, many textbooks either oversimplify the content, focusing only on rote learning and basic vocabulary, or overload children with material beyond their developmental stage (Tomlinson, 2012). In Indonesia, another issue arises from diverse educational settings. Public schools often rely on government-issued textbooks, for instance, *English for Nusantara*, aligned with national policies such as the Merdeka Curriculum, while private schools may use international coursebooks, for instance, *New Frontiers 1*, with different pedagogical orientations that fits their curriculum. This may lead to differences in the quality of education between public and private schools.

In the 21st century, schools must also be able to cater to the needs of students, such as developing critical thinking skills, so students can adapt to a rapidly changing global environment. Critical thinking is widely recognized as an essential 21st-century skill. Facione (2011) defines it as purposeful and self-regulatory judgment that involves interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2019) describe critical thinking as disciplined thinking that guides beliefs and actions through reasoning and reflection. These conceptualizations highlight both the cognitive processes and the dispositions necessary for deep, reflective learning. Developing critical thinking in the EYL context may seem ambitious, but it is increasingly necessary. Even young learners can engage in age-appropriate forms of analysis, inference, and evaluation when guided by appropriate tasks. By integrating critical thinking tasks into coursebooks, children not only acquire language but also learn to think about ideas critically and creatively. However, research suggests that many EYL textbooks still focus heavily on lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) such as remembering and understanding, with few opportunities for higher-order thinking (HOTS) like analyzing and evaluating (Shabrina et al., 2021). Without an explicit design for critical thinking, children may miss opportunities to develop cognitive skills alongside linguistic ones.

Due to the limitations in EYL coursebooks, it is necessary to conduct coursebook evaluation which aims to see the suitability of a coursebook with the needs of students. Coursebook evaluation can be defined as a procedure of where evaluation is made by the users (teachers) to check its potential values (Tomlinson, 2012). What determines the evaluation is the user's teaching experience, beliefs, and understanding meaning that context

is the key evaluation process (Graves, 2000). According to the time, evaluation can be implemented to see the potential performance of a new coursebook in the future use (pre-use evaluation), a coursebook which is being used (in-use evaluation), or a coursebook which has been used for a period of time (post-use evaluation) (Cunningsworth, 1995). To perform objectivity in the process of evaluation, a number of criteria have been proposed by some scholars. Cunningsworth (1995) classifies eight criteria of coursebook evaluation which consist of aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, methodology, teachers' book, and practical consideration. Different users may employ different criteria in assessing the coursebook due to the differences in classroom context which signifies that all of these criteria may not be fully included.

Addressing these research issues, this study focused on evaluating two EYL coursebooks used for junior high school in grade VII at SMPN 4 Cikupa Tangerang (public school) and SMP IT Laa Tahzan Citra Tangerang (private school). The public school implemented *English for Nusantara*, a textbook developed and distributed by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, while the private school adopted *New Frontiers 1*, an international textbook commonly used in private educational settings. These two textbooks represent distinct pedagogical approaches: *English for Nusantara* reflects the national curriculum's goals and priorities, emphasizing local cultural values and basic communicative skills, whereas *New Frontiers 1* aligns more closely with international standards, potentially offering a broader range of language input and instructional strategies. Comparing these two textbooks provides an opportunity to understand not only their alignment with EYL principles but also the broader implications for educational equity in Indonesia, where access to high-quality learning resources often differs significantly between public and private institutions.

Several studies have examined English coursebooks in Indonesia, but most have focused on evaluating a single textbook rather than comparing resources across different school contexts. For instance, Shabrina et al. (2021) analyzed the revised edition of the ELT coursebook published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology for Grade VII. Using the revised Bloom's Taxonomy framework, they evaluated the representation and frequency of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) in the textbook's instructional questions. Their findings revealed a heavy emphasis on LOTS, suggesting that the coursebook's activities were more oriented toward basic comprehension and recall rather than fostering analytical or evaluative thinking. Similarly, using the same framework, Fakhrillah and Suharyadi (2025) explored the extent to which exercises in *English for Nusantara* for grade VII contained HOTS and LOTS. The findings show that LOTS still dominated the exercises. Melisa et al. (2024) applied Tomlinson's framework to examine the quality of *English for Nusantara* for Grade VIII. Their results showed that the textbook successfully met several key criteria, such as cultural relevance, the promotion of communicative competence, and the inclusion of student-centered tasks. However, they also identified limitations, particularly the lack of authentic texts and insufficiently varied classroom activities to address diverse learner needs.

While these previous studies have provided valuable insights into the quality and critical thinking potential of Indonesian ELT coursebooks, few have directly compared public and private school textbooks in the EYL context. This is a significant gap, as private schools

frequently adopt international textbooks that may reflect different educational philosophies and provide richer resources than public schools. Such differences can influence how students develop not only core language skills but also higher-order thinking abilities, potentially leading to disparities in learning outcomes. Addressing this gap, the present study attempted to address two research questions: 1) what is the quality of the coursebooks *English for Nusantara* and *New Frontiers 1* in supporting language learning and teaching? and 2) how do the coursebooks *English for Nusantara* and *New Frontiers 1* integrate critical thinking skills? Based on these research questions, the aims of the research were to evaluate the quality of coursebooks in supporting language learning and teaching as well as how they manifest critical thinking skills in the EYL setting.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a content analysis to evaluate two EYL coursebooks for grade VII: *English for Nusantara* (public school) used at SMPN 4 Cikupa Tangerang and *New Frontiers 1* (private school) used at SMP IT Laa Tahzan Citra Tangerang. This research design was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive and systematic description of the coursebooks' features without manipulating variables, focusing on their content, structure, and pedagogical orientation (Creswell, 2003). The public school used *English for Nusantara*, which was distributed nationally by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. The private school used *New Frontiers 1*, an international textbook adopted to meet their institutional goals and to provide broader exposure to global English use. Grade VII textbooks were selected because they represent the transition phase from primary to secondary education, making them crucial for shaping students' foundational language skills and thinking abilities.

The primary data sources were units 1 – 3 from the coursebooks. The first coursebook, *English for Nusantara*, contains 54 tasks across the three units, while the second coursebook, *New Frontiers 1*, includes 94 tasks in the same range of units. Tasks include a variety of activity types, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing exercises, as well as collaborative and individual activities. In analyzing the coursebook content, all tasks from Units 1–3 in each textbook were collected, listed, and categorized based on skill focus, language objective, and task format. The coding process involved reading each task closely and assigning it to one or more critical thinking categories according to Facione (2011)'s (2011) framework. Both verbal text and visual materials (e.g., dialogues, instructions, narratives, tables, illustrations) were analyzed because visuals also contribute to meaning construction in EYL learning. The coding process was conducted manually and documented in a coding sheet to maintain systematic data organization. This process allowed the researcher to compare the distribution of critical thinking skills and evaluate how the textbooks supported language learning in a structured and replicable way.

The analysis involved two main stages. First, the coursebooks were systematically reviewed using Cunningsworth's (1995) framework to evaluate the quality of the coursebooks comprising aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, and methodology. Second, the tasks were coded according to Facione's (2011)

critical thinking categories (interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation) to identify the presence and depth of critical thinking integration. The use of these frameworks provided both a macro-level understanding of the coursebooks' quality and a micro-level insight into how specific tasks foster critical thinking among young learners.

The analysis proceeded in two stages. In the first stage, evaluating each coursebook towards the tasks was conducted using Cunningsworth's (1995) criteria, with detailed notes taken to identify their strengths and weaknesses. In the second stage, all tasks and exercises were coded according to Facione's (2011) six core critical thinking skills. Then, a comparative analysis was carried out to highlight the similarities and differences between the two textbooks, focusing on how each supported the development of core language skills and the integration of critical thinking within the young learners' English language learning (EYL) context.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, the coding process was conducted carefully and transparently. All tasks were coded using a predetermined analytical framework (Cunningsworth, 1995; Facione, 2011), and the coding decisions were documented in detail in a coding table to maintain consistency. The researcher re-checked the coding several times at different stages to reduce personal bias and ensure stable interpretations. In addition, the analytical procedures and coding categories were clearly described to enable transparency and potential replication in future studies.

FINDINGS

The Quality of Coursebooks in Supporting Language Learning and Teaching

To assess the quality of the coursebooks in supporting language learning and teaching, Cunningsworth's (1995) framework was used because it provides clear, practical criteria for examining different aspects of a coursebook.

1. English for Nusantara

a. Aims and Approaches

The coursebook aligns closely with the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing a flexible and student-centered approach to language learning. Its primary aim is to introduce English through meaningful, real-life contexts relevant to teenagers, such as home, school, and social environments. The book promotes the development of six integrated skills (listening, speaking, reading, viewing, and writing) while fostering confidence in using English for communication. In addition, the coursebook integrates character and competency development through Profil Pelajar Pancasila and four focus areas of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): environmental awareness, digital safety, health and wellness, and financial literacy. This reflects a dual emphasis on language proficiency and holistic education.

b. Design and Organization

The overall design demonstrates clear sequencing and logical progression, moving from receptive skills (listening and reading) to productive skills (speaking and

writing). Tasks are scaffolded to support gradual development, with visual aids such as charts and illustrations to facilitate understanding. Each unit begins with an activity to activate prior knowledge and ends with a review section for consolidation and reflection. However, implementation varies across schools due to inconsistent availability of teacher and student support materials.

c. Language Content

Grammar and vocabulary are presented at an age-appropriate level. Grammar instruction uses an inductive approach, where learners identify patterns before rules are explicitly explained. The focus is on high-frequency structures such as the simple present tense, adjectives, imperatives, and question forms. Listening and speaking activities reinforce grammar and vocabulary in communicative contexts. However, there is limited coverage of pronunciation, as the book provides minimal explicit phonetic guidance. This may affect learners' oral proficiency and listening comprehension.

d. Skills

The coursebook integrates the four primary language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) within a communicative framework. In listening, the coursebook is supported by audio materials and authentic dialogues (when available), it includes age-appropriate passages such as announcements, dialogues, narratives, and descriptive texts in reading, in speaking, the tasks range from guided practice to freer production tasks, and the writing tasks move from sentence-level construction to paragraph writing. In addition, viewing and presenting skills are included to develop learners' multimodal literacy. However, schools with limited technological resources face challenges in fully utilizing these features.

e. Topics

The topics are highly relevant to adolescents, covering areas such as personal identity, daily routines, school life, family, hobbies, food, and local culture. Broader global themes, including environmental awareness and health, are included through SDG-related content. The cultural representation is predominantly Indonesian, fostering national identity, with some inclusion of international perspectives to expand learners' worldview.

f. Methodology

The coursebook follows a communicative, learner-centered approach, encouraging pair and group work, discussions, problem-solving tasks, and project-based learning. This reflects the pedagogical principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. However, effective implementation depends on teacher preparedness and access to supplementary resources, such as audio recordings and teacher's guides. These are not always consistently available across different schools.

2. New Frontiers 1

a. Aims and Approaches

New Frontiers 1 is designed for young adults and adults at the beginner level and serves as the foundation of a six-level series. Its primary goal is to equip learners with practical English skills for real-world situations while fostering 21st century

competencies such as collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and intercultural awareness. The coursebook adopts a communicative, learner-centered, and task-based approach, integrating CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) elements and project-based learning. Language is taught in context, with grammar and vocabulary embedded in dialogues and authentic situations rather than through isolated drills. The book promotes active learning by engaging students in projects, group discussions, and reflection tasks that encourage learner autonomy. This flexible approach allows adaptation to different teaching styles and learner needs, aligning well with modern Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles.

b. Design and Organization

The coursebook demonstrates strong organization and comprehensive support materials, including a Student's Book, Teacher's Book, Workbook, audio resources, digital presentation tools, and videos. Each unit is clearly structured, beginning with learning objectives and progressing through thematic sections such as Vocabulary, Grammar, Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing, Pronunciation, Everyday English, and Project Work. The visual layout is clean and modern, with color-coded sections and consistent formatting that supports usability and accessibility, especially for visual learners and those at lower proficiency levels. Instructions are straightforward and reinforced with visual cues, reducing cognitive load. The Teacher's Book provides lesson plans, extra tasks, and adaptable teaching suggestions. The end-of-unit projects and reflection activities consolidate learning while promoting collaboration and independent study. Overall, the design reflects a pedagogically sound and visually appealing structure.

c. Language Content

The coursebook covers grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and appropriate language use comprehensively and in a balanced way. Grammar is contextualized in dialogues and real-life situations, progressing systematically from basic structures (e.g., to be, subject pronouns) to more complex forms (e.g., modal verbs, comparisons). Vocabulary is presented thematically, with reinforcement through word banks, review tasks, and repeated exposure across skills. Pronunciation receives explicit attention in each unit, addressing stress, intonation, and individual sounds, with audio support for accuracy and listening comprehension. Language register is addressed through models for both formal and informal interactions, helping students use English appropriately across contexts. This balanced coverage supports form-focused learning and communicative competence, aligning well with contemporary language teaching principles.

d. Skills

The book provides integrated practice in the four core skills. Listening tasks are authentic and goal-oriented, using dialogues and monologues to develop comprehension and listening strategies. Speaking receives strong emphasis, with tasks ranging from controlled drills to freer, real-world communicative activities such as role plays, interviews, and problem-solving discussions. Reading passages are engaging and relevant, supporting scanning, skimming, and reading for detail while serving as input for vocabulary and grammar development. Writing progresses from

sentence-level tasks to extended writing such as messages, emails, and short personal profiles. Writing is supported by models, structured steps, and vocabulary banks. End-of-unit projects integrate these skills, requiring students to combine listening, speaking, reading, and writing to complete meaningful tasks such as presentations or class surveys.

e. Topics

The topics are age-appropriate, relevant, and varied, covering everyday themes such as personal identity, daily routines, family, friends, free time, school, travel, food, and technology. These topics resonate with learners' experiences and communication needs, increasing motivation and engagement. The inclusion of culturally sensitive and global perspectives broadens students' understanding of the world while respecting local contexts. Project work and group discussions further support the development of both linguistic and intercultural competence.

f. Methodology

The methodology is communicative and task-based, aligning closely with Cunningsworth's principles of effective coursebook design. Language items are introduced contextually and inductively, encouraging learners to notice and apply forms in meaningful contexts. Unit structure supports a progression from receptive skills (listening and reading) to productive skills (speaking and writing). Pair and group work are integral, promoting interaction and communicative competence. Project-based tasks encourage learner autonomy and collaboration while catering to different learning styles through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities. The methodology is flexible and adaptable, making the coursebook suitable for diverse classrooms and learner profiles.

The Integration of Critical Thinking in the Coursebooks

To understand and assess critical thinking in the coursebooks, Facione's (2011) framework was used. The framework identifies critical thinking into six categories: (1) interpretation, (2) analysis, (3) Evaluation, (4) Inference, (5) Explanation, and (6) self-regulation.

1. English for Nusantara

The evaluation of *English for Nusantara* (Units 1–3) examined a total of 54 tasks, each classified according to Facione's (2011) six core critical thinking skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The distribution of these skills is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Critical Thinking Skills in English for Nusantara (Units 1 – 3)

Critical Thinking Skills	Frequency	Percentage
Interpretation	15	28%
Explanation	15	28%
Analysis	6	11%
Evaluation	2	4%
Explanation + Self-Regulation	2	4%
Interpretation + Explanation	3	5%

Inference	3	5%
Collaboration	1	2%
Interpretation + Analysis	1	2%
Evaluation + Explanation	3	5%
Analysis + Interpretation	1	2%
Analysis + Inference	1	2%
Evaluation + Self-Regulation	1	2%
Total	54	100%

The findings indicate that interpretation and explanation are the most dominant critical thinking skills, each appearing in 15 tasks (28%). This shows a strong focus on helping learners understand meaning, clarify ideas, and explain information. Examples include tasks where students introduce themselves, interpret visual cues such as pictures, and explain personal information about hobbies, daily routines, or family members. The analysis skill is represented in 6 tasks (11%), often appearing in activities that require learners to break down information into smaller parts, such as identifying relationships between words, recognizing text structures, or classifying details about people and objects. For instance, students analyze visual data (e.g., pictures of friends) and connect it with vocabulary related to physical and personality traits.

Higher-order skills such as evaluation and inference are minimally represented, with only 2 tasks (4%) dedicated to evaluation and 3 tasks (5%) focusing on inference. Evaluation tasks primarily involve assessing peer responses, such as checking the accuracy of a partner's description, while inference tasks require drawing logical conclusions from text or dialogue. Integrated skills, such as interpretation + explanation (5%) and evaluation + explanation (5%), appear in a few tasks that combine understanding with justification or reasoning. Self-regulation, which involves reflective thinking and monitoring one's performance, appears only in 2% of tasks, indicating a very limited emphasis on metacognitive skills. Overall, the textbook primarily promotes lower-order critical thinking skills, with the majority of tasks focusing on interpreting and explaining information rather than encouraging students to evaluate, infer, or regulate their own thinking.

2. New Frontiers 1

The analysis of New Frontiers 1 using Facione's (2011) critical thinking framework identified various CT skills embedded across the units and activities. The findings indicate the distribution of single CT skills and combinations of skills within the textbook. Table 1 presents the overall frequency and percentage of each CT skill and combination found.

Table 2. Distribution of Critical Thinking Skills in New Frontiers 1 (Units 1 – 3)

Critical Thinking Skills	Frequency	Percentage
Interpretation	19	20
Interpretation + Inference	5	5
Explanation + Interpretation	1	1
Evaluation	10	11
Inference + Interpretation	5	5
Explanation	29	31
Analysis + Interpretation	2	2
Interpretation + Explanation	6	7

Analysis	2	2
Evaluation + Interpretation	2	2
Evaluation + Explanation	6	7
Explanation + Evaluation	2	2
Explanation + Self-regulation	2	2
Interpretation + Evaluation	2	2
Explanation + Inference	1	1
Total	94	100

The data reveal that Explanation (31%) is the most prominent CT skill in *New Frontiers 1*. This indicates that many of the activities emphasize learners' ability to provide reasons, justify answers, and clearly express ideas in both spoken and written tasks. The second most frequent skill is Interpretation (20%), showing a strong focus on understanding and making sense of information, such as interpreting texts, visuals, and spoken inputs. Together, Explanation and Interpretation form the foundation of most activities in the textbook. Evaluation (11%) appears as the third most common skill, suggesting that students are often encouraged to assess the accuracy of information and make judgments based on criteria or standards.

Among the combined CT skills, the most frequent pairings are Interpretation + Explanation (7%), Evaluation + Explanation (7%), and Interpretation + Inference (5%), indicating a moderate presence of tasks that integrate multiple CT skills in a single activity. Less common skills include Analysis (2%), Evaluation + Interpretation (2%), and Explanation + Self-regulation (2%), demonstrating that higher-order CT processes such as breaking down information into components or monitoring one's own learning occur less frequently.

DISCUSSION

The Quality of Coursebooks in Supporting Language Learning and Teaching

1. English For Nusantara

The findings indicate that English for Nusantara is well-aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, promoting flexible, student-centered learning while integrating language development with broader educational goals such as character building and global awareness. This supports Tomlinson's (2012) view that coursebooks should foster both linguistic and personal growth. The coursebook's design and organization show clear sequencing and scaffolding, progressing from receptive to productive skills, which aligns with Cunningsworth's (1995) criteria for effective textbooks. Visual aids and review sections further support comprehension and reflection, consistent with Harmer's (2015) recommendations for scaffolding. In terms of language content, the coursebook uses an inductive grammar approach, encouraging discovery learning, which reflects Ellis's (2016) findings on effective grammar instruction. However, the lack of explicit pronunciation guidance contrasts with Gilakjani's (2012) emphasis on its importance for oral proficiency.

The integration of skills is a notable strength, combining listening, speaking, reading, writing, and multimodal viewing to develop communicative competence. This aligns with Brown and Lee's (2015) integrated-skills framework and Hafner and Miller's (2019) call for

multimodal literacy in the digital era. The topics are relevant and culturally balanced, promoting both local identity and global awareness. Finally, the methodology promotes active, collaborative learning through communicative tasks, in line with Richards (2015). Overall, English for Nusantara represents a progressive step in Indonesian EYL coursebook design. While its integration of language skills, cultural themes, and modern pedagogy aligns with global best practices, challenges in pronunciation coverage, resource distribution, and teacher preparedness remain. Addressing these issues is essential to maximize the coursebook's impact and ensure equitable English education across diverse contexts.

2. New Frontiers 1

The evaluation of New Frontiers 1 shows that it is a well-structured, communicative coursebook designed to meet modern language teaching needs. Its aims and approaches reflect contemporary trends by integrating 21st-century skills such as collaboration, creativity, and intercultural awareness. This aligns with Richards (2015), who emphasizes that coursebooks should go beyond linguistic competence to prepare learners for global communication. The use of CLIL and project-based learning also resonates with Coyle et al. (2010), who argue that contextualized learning fosters deeper engagement and critical thinking. These features distinguish New Frontiers 1 from traditional textbooks that rely heavily on drills, which Prabhu (1990) criticized for limiting communicative opportunities.

The design and organization of the coursebook are strong, with clear structure, comprehensive teacher support, and accessible layouts. These findings are consistent with Tomlinson (2012), who highlights the importance of visual clarity and supportive resources in maximizing usability. The presence of end-of-unit projects and reflection activities also reflects Ellis's (2016) view that coursebooks should promote learner autonomy. Regarding language content, the book provides balanced coverage of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and language use. Explicit attention to pronunciation is a notable strength, aligning with Gilakjani (2012), who stresses the importance of pronunciation for oral proficiency and listening comprehension. The contextualized approach to grammar and vocabulary reflects Nunan's (2015) recommendation that language items be taught through meaningful communication rather than isolated exercises. These strengths position the book as suitable for supporting both form-focused learning and communicative competence.

The skills integration is well executed, with speaking given particular emphasis through pair work, role plays, and problem-solving tasks. This supports Brown and Lee's (2015) argument that integrated-skills instruction enhances communicative competence. The end-of-unit projects requiring the combination of multiple skills reflect Hafner and Miller's (2019) call for multimodal literacy development. Such integration helps learners apply language in authentic, meaningful ways, which is critical for real-world communication. The topics are varied, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive, covering both local and global themes. Lastly, the methodology is communicative and task-based, providing flexibility for different classroom contexts. This reflects the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (Richards, 2015) and supports learner autonomy through collaborative projects. The inclusion of diverse activity types caters to multiple learning styles, consistent with Tomlinson's (2012) recommendation for varied pedagogical approaches. In sum, New Frontiers 1 demonstrates strong alignment with global best

practices in coursebook design. Its comprehensive content, clear structure, and emphasis on communication and critical thinking make it highly effective for supporting English language learning, particularly in private schools with sufficient resources. However, its reliance on technology and extensive teacher preparation may present challenges in less-equipped contexts.

The Integration of Critical Thinking in the Coursebooks

1. English for Nusantara

The findings reveal that interpretation and explanation are the most frequently represented skills, each appearing in 28% of the tasks. This suggests that the textbook places a strong emphasis on lower-order thinking skills (LOTS), where learners are guided to understand and articulate meaning rather than engage deeply in higher-order reasoning. Tasks such as introducing oneself, describing hobbies, or explaining family relationships are common examples of these skill areas. This result aligns with Arlansyah et al. (2023), who found that reading questions in English for Nusantara for Grade 7 mainly involved remembering and understanding, with very few tasks requiring analyzing or higher-order thinking. Similarly, Utami et al. (2019) reported that Indonesian EFL textbooks tend to emphasize LOTS, providing limited opportunities for students to develop deeper reasoning skills.

The analysis skill appears in only 11% of the tasks, often through activities that require categorizing vocabulary, identifying relationships between words, or recognizing patterns in texts. This limited presence of analytical tasks shows that while students may occasionally engage in mid-level reasoning, they are rarely pushed to break down complex information in a systematic way. This finding is consistent with Solihati and Hikmat (2018), who discovered that less than 17% of tasks in Indonesian textbooks promoted critical thinking, with analytical tasks among the least represented.

Higher-order skills such as evaluation (4%) and inference (5%) are minimally present. Evaluation tasks typically involve checking peer work or deciding whether responses are correct, while inference tasks require students to make logical assumptions from context. The scarcity of these skills indicates a lack of challenge for learners to critically assess information or form reasoned judgments. Furthermore, self-regulation, a metacognitive skill crucial for reflective learning, appears in only 2% of the tasks. This highlights a gap in encouraging students to monitor and regulate their own thinking, echoing findings from Utami et al. (2019), who noted that CT dispositions and self-regulatory practices are often overlooked in Indonesian textbooks.

Overall, the dominance of interpretation and explanation reflects a traditional, teacher-centered approach that prioritizes comprehension and recall over critical engagement. While such an approach may suit beginner learners, it limits the development of higher-order critical thinking skills essential for 21st-century education. This imbalance suggests that English for Nusantara could be enhanced by incorporating more tasks that require analysis, evaluation, inference, and reflection, thus aligning with international benchmarks for critical thinking integration in language learning.

2. New Frontiers 1

The findings show that Explanation (31%) is the most dominant critical thinking skill in New Frontiers 1. Many activities require students to justify answers, provide reasons, and express ideas clearly, both orally and in writing. This aligns with Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised Bloom's Taxonomy, where explanation is central to supporting learners in developing reasoning and communication skills. It also echoes Cunningsworth's (1995) principle that effective coursebooks should encourage learners to articulate their understanding and ideas, making learning more interactive and reflective.

Interpretation (20%) is the second most frequent skill, indicating that the textbook strongly emphasizes comprehension and meaning-making, such as interpreting texts, visuals, and audio inputs. When combined, Explanation and Interpretation account for more than half of all activities, reflecting a strong foundation in lower- to mid-level critical thinking skills. Evaluation (11%) ranks third, showing that students are encouraged to assess accuracy, compare ideas, and make informed judgments, although these tasks are less frequent. The presence of evaluation supports higher-order thinking, as suggested by Facione (2011), but its moderate frequency suggests that evaluative tasks are not fully integrated across units. This echoes Solihati and Hikmat (2018) observation that while some evaluative elements appear in Indonesian textbooks, they are sporadic and insufficiently embedded to foster sustained critical engagement.

The presence of combined skills, particularly interpretation + explanation (7%) and evaluation + explanation (7%), indicates some effort to design activities that foster integrated thinking processes, such as understanding, justifying, and critiquing simultaneously. These integrated tasks align with Ennis' (2011) view that critical thinking in language learning should involve multiple skills working together rather than in isolation. However, higher-order skills like Analysis (2%), Self-regulation (2%), and Evaluation + Interpretation (2%) occur infrequently. Analysis, which involves breaking down information and identifying relationships, is limited to a few tasks such as text organization or comparing ideas. Similarly, Self-regulation, which requires learners to reflect on their own learning processes, is minimally represented. This lack of metacognitive emphasis mirrors the concerns raised by Dhari and Maisarah (2025), who found that teachers often lack strategies to help students engage in self-reflective practices.

Overall, New Frontiers 1 provides a balanced introduction to critical thinking, with a strong emphasis on explanation and interpretation, moderate inclusion of evaluation, and limited opportunities for analysis and self-regulation. Compared to traditional textbooks that focus primarily on rote learning and comprehension, New Frontiers 1 shows progress toward integrating 21st-century skills, though there remains room to increase tasks that foster deeper reflection and independent learning. These findings resonate with (Utami et al., 2019), who argued that even when textbooks attempt to integrate critical thinking, they often do so unevenly, leaving gaps in fostering truly independent and reflective learners.

A Comparison of Two Coursebooks

English for Nusantara is closely aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on localized themes and holistic education. It introduces English through familiar, real-life contexts and integrates cultural values and sustainable development goals. However, its

effectiveness depends heavily on the availability of teacher resources and training, which vary across schools. In contrast, *New Frontiers 1* follows a global communicative and task-based approach, offering comprehensive support through teacher's guides, workbooks, audio, video, and digital tools. Its topics are broader and more diverse, encouraging intercultural awareness and real-world communication. This makes it highly adaptable to different classroom contexts. While *English for Nusantara* provides a strong foundation for beginners and reflects local needs, it has limited coverage of pronunciation and higher-level skills. *New Frontiers 1* offers balanced skill integration, clear grammar and vocabulary progression, and systematic pronunciation practice, making it more complete pedagogically.

The critical thinking analysis shows clear differences between the two books. *English for Nusantara* focuses primarily on lower-order skills, especially interpretation (28%) and explanation (28%). Activities often involve understanding information, describing routines, and explaining ideas. Higher-order skills like evaluation, inference, and self-regulation are rarely included, limiting opportunities for deeper thinking. *New Frontiers 1* also emphasizes explanation (31%) and interpretation (20%) but integrates evaluation (11%) and combined critical thinking tasks such as interpretation + explanation (7%) and evaluation + explanation (7%). This indicates that learners are encouraged not only to understand and explain but also to analyze, assess, and justify ideas, especially through project-based tasks.

In sum, *English for Nusantara* is effective for building basic language skills and reflecting local values but offers limited opportunities for developing critical thinking. *New Frontiers 1* provides a richer, more globalized learning experience, integrating 21st-century skills and higher-order thinking tasks. Together, these findings suggest that a blend of localized content and global critical thinking activities would create a more balanced textbook for Indonesian learners.

CONCLUSIONS

This study compared two English coursebooks to examine their quality and the extent to which they integrate critical thinking skills. *English for Nusantara* effectively reflects the Merdeka Curriculum by providing localized themes and culturally relevant content. It helps build foundational language skills and supports character education. However, its potential is limited by inconsistent access to teaching resources, minimal pronunciation instruction, and an overemphasis on lower-order thinking skills. On the other hand, *New Frontiers 1* offers a more comprehensive and globally oriented approach. Its communicative and task-based design, complete with extensive supplementary materials, encourages meaningful language use and balanced skill development. Importantly, it integrates a wider range of critical thinking skills, promoting not only comprehension and explanation but also evaluation and integration of ideas through project-based learning and reflective tasks. The comparison shows that *English for Nusantara* is well-suited for beginners in a local context, while *New Frontiers 1* provides richer opportunities for developing advanced skills and preparing students for global communication. These findings suggest that future coursebook development in Indonesia should aim to combine local cultural relevance with critical thinking and 21st-century competencies, ensuring that students are equipped to meet both national and international learning demands.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focused only on Units 1–3, which may not represent the full pedagogical scope of the textbooks. Examining additional units may yield a more comprehensive evaluation. Second, this study relied solely on content analysis; classroom implementation and teacher mediation were not observed. In practice, the extent to which critical thinking skills are developed also depends on teacher expertise, instructional strategies, and school resources. Future research may expand the analysis to include full textbooks across grade levels to track the progression of language and critical thinking development. Classroom-based studies that observe how teachers implement textbook tasks could also provide insight into how critical thinking is scaffolded in real instructional settings. Additionally, interviews or surveys with teachers and students may help reveal how teachers adapt tasks and how learners respond to critical thinking activities. Comparative research involving more diverse public and private schools may also highlight broader patterns of resource disparities and pedagogical approaches in Indonesian EYL contexts.

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