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Critical aspects in writing exercises: Raimes's framework for the "Work in Progress" book

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Abstract: Effective writing instruction is crucial for English language learners, yet textbooks often prioritize certain skills over others. This study analyzes the types of writing exercises presented in the "Work in Progress" textbook for tenth-grade students, evaluating their alignment with Raimes' framework for effective writing instruction. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach, the study systematically categorizes and examines the textbook's 38 writing exercises. Findings reveal a pronounced emphasis on Guided Writing exercises, which comprise nearly half of the total, followed by Controlled Writing exercises. Notably, the textbook lacks Dictation, Sentence Combining, and Translation exercises, potentially limiting the development of grammatical accuracy and syntactic variety. This study highlights the need for a more balanced approach to writing instruction, advocating for the inclusion of diverse exercises that address all key components of effective writing, as outlined in Raimes' framework. The findings provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of writing instruction materials.

Keywords: Writing exercises, English language education, Textbook analysis, Raimes's Framework, Writing proficiency, Qualitative content analysis

INTRODUCTION

In studying English, students must become proficient in four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The foremost objective of academic education is the enhancement of students' writing abilities (Al Khazraji, 2019). Writing is often considered the most challenging skill to master as it demands strict adherence to grammatical rules (Ma, 2021). Norris (2016) posits that students with a strong grasp of grammar can efficiently organize words and construct sentence structures. Writing exercises play a pivotal role in English language education, as they improve students' writing capabilities, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, self-assurance, and overall linguistic competence. Nevertheless, many students often perceive writing as a complex and labor-intensive mode of expression (Crossley & McNamara, 2016). The challenges encountered in writing tasks may be attributed to a variety of issues, including the appropriateness and efficacy of the exercises (Fareed et al., 2016).

In light of these challenges, it becomes imperative for educators to critically assess and evaluate the content of English textbooks to meet the diverse needs of students. As Fauziati (2010) notes, "The evaluation and selection of textbooks is a complex process." It is crucial for English language educators to choose suitable instructional resources that lay a strong foundation for English language acquisition. Consequently, both material developers and educators must ensure that the content provided to students is developmentally suitable, pertinent, and engaging. Since teachers are the primary users of these educational materials, they are encouraged to conduct thorough reviews. The right resources can significantly



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enhance the teaching and learning experience and contribute to a productive classroom atmosphere. The process of identifying and analyzing the needs of learners is an essential step in creating effective instructional materials tailored to the specific needs of the intended audience, as highlighted by Ramadhana et al. (2019) and Sumarsono et al. (2017)

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) highlight the significance of ELT materials, such as textbooks, in driving innovation, aiding teachers through transitions, and supporting pedagogical development. Cunningsworth (1995) expands on this by detailing how educational materials can act as tools for presenting new concepts, facilitating student practice, enabling communicative exchanges, and serving as references for grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as well as forming the basis of a syllabus. Richards (2001) further emphasizes the pivotal role of textbooks in language education, creating a substantial portion of the input learners receive and aiding in comprehending linguistic features and the social and cultural contexts inherent in language.

Textbook content analysis research encompasses a variety of aspects of educational material. Ayane and Mihiretie's 2024 study discovered that Ethiopian civics textbooks prioritize the social identity of being good citizens rather than the autonomous identity of being good individuals, noting that broader political and social challenges influence the cultivation of these attributes in students. Suwandi et al., in 2024, found that Indonesian language textbooks more frequently address knowledge than cognitive skills, which are the least represented elements of ecoliteracy, indicating the necessity for textbook revisions to enhance eco-literacy support. Mayrhofer's 2024 research identified linguistic patterns that construct gender in Austrian Religious Education textbooks, underscoring the imperative for educational materials to mirror gender diversity more accurately. These investigations underscore the significant deficiencies and potential enhancements in educational materials, especially the requirement for more equitable and thorough content.

Studies analyzing writing tasks in English textbooks, particularly within Japanese and broader educational contexts, have laid the groundwork for assessing and enhancing educational resources. Nonetheless, there is a discernible gap in these textbooks' emphasis on writing exercises. Kobayakawa's 2011 study scrutinized writing tasks in Japanese English textbooks, revealing a shortfall in guided and free writing tasks, which are critical for aligning with MEXT's educational objectives. In 2024, Sigiro evaluated the tenth-grade English textbook "Work in Progress," pinpointing its strengths and weaknesses through the lens of Cunningsworth's criteria. Furthermore, Fasikh's 2019 research delved into prevalent grammatical writing errors among junior high students, proposing specific pedagogical strategies to bolster writing proficiency. Despite the breadth of textbook research, the particular focus on writing exercises could be more extensive.

Raimes's framework (1983) analogizes the components of writing to the spokes of a wheel, with each spoke representing a different task that writers encounter during the writing process. Raimes articulates writing as the "clear, fluent, and effective communication of ideas," highlighting nine essential components: syntax, grammar, mechanics, word choice, organization, content, the writer's process, audience, and purpose. Previous research by Kobayakawa (2008, 2009) drew up criteria for the analysis of writing tasks using studies by Kitauchi (1985), Noda (1991), Rivers (1981), Tezuka (1997), Yamane (1993), Komuro (2001), Byrne (1979) and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983), have investigated and classified the techniques and exercises employed in controlled writing tasks. These tasks range from copying, substitution, and rewriting to completion, addition, alternation, question-answer, sentence combining, sentence expansion, and dictation.

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Expanding upon this research, the current study differentiates between controlled writing, which concentrates on the practice of pre-established language forms, and the attainment of formal linguistic precision and guided writing, which prioritizes the creation of meaning and fosters greater self-expression among students. Consequently, the writing activities in the textbooks have been categorized into four distinct groups: 1) Controlled writing, 2) Guided writing, 3) Translation, and 4) Free Writing. These four were sub-categorized further into 14 writing exercises.

Table 1. The Classification of Writing Exercises

No.	Categories of Writing	Writing Exercises
1.	Controlled Writing	(a) dictation
		(b) conversion
		(c) sentence combining
		(d) fill-in-the-blank without translation
		(e) question-answer
		(f) sentence ordering
		(g) addition
		(h) summary writing
2.	Guided Writing	(i) fill-in-the-blank without translation
		(j) question-answer
		(k) addition
3.	Translation	(I) a direct translation of a whole sentence
		(m) fill-in-the-blank with translation
4.	Free Writing	(n) free composition

Recent research has underscored the importance of incorporating diverse and engaging writing exercises in English as a Foreign Language classrooms. However, much of this research has primarily focused on evaluating the alignment of these exercises with curriculum standards and their overall impact on writing fluency, often neglecting a more nuanced analysis of their effectiveness in developing specific writing components. For instance, Fadlah found that while the "When English Rings a Bell" textbook demonstrated strong alignment with the 2013 curriculum, it heavily emphasized grammar exercises, potentially overlooking other crucial writing skills. Similarly, Zendrato et al. highlighted the need to move beyond mere curriculum alignment and consider the variety, engagement, and effectiveness of writing exercises in fostering holistic writing development. These studies underscore a critical need to shift the focus from simply including writing exercises to carefully selecting and designing them to target specific aspects of writing effectively.

While studies like Khan's have shown a positive correlation between increased writing practice and reduced grammatical errors among EFL learners, they often don't delve into the specific types of exercises that yield the most significant improvements across different writing components, such as vocabulary, organization, or audience awareness. This gap in the research is significant because it fails to provide educators with specific guidance on choosing and designing writing exercises that effectively address the multifaceted nature of writing as outlined in comprehensive frameworks like Raimes's. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a detailed analysis of the writing exercises in the "Work in Progress" textbook, specifically examining their alignment with Raimes's framework, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of syntax, grammar, mechanics, word choice, organization, content, process, audience, and purpose. By analyzing the exercises through this lens, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook's approach to

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writing instruction and offer recommendations for enhancing its effectiveness in promoting holistic writing development among Indonesian tenth graders.

This research aims to identify the critical aspects of writing exercises in the "Work in Progress" textbook and analyze their compatibility with Raimes's Framework. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) What are the critical aspects of analyzing writing exercises in the "Work in Progress" book?; (2) How compatible do writing exercises in the "Work in Progress" book align with Raimes's Framework?

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative content analysis approach to examine and categorize the writing exercises in the "Work in Progress" textbook, aligning them with Raimes's theoretical framework. Qualitative content analysis is a well-established method for systematically describing and interpreting textual data (Schreier, 2012) (Shelley & Krippendorff, 1984). This study will adopt a directed approach to content analysis, using Raimes's framework as a lens to guide the development of coding categories and the interpretation of findings. This approach allows for a focused analysis of the textbook's writing exercises, specifically examining how they align with key principles and practices advocated by Raimes.

Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

The primary data source for this study is the "Work in Progress" English textbook for tenth-grade students. The textbook was selected due to its widespread adoption in Indonesian secondary schools and alignment with the national curriculum. Additionally, previous research has been conducted on it, providing a foundation for the current study.

To collect the data, the researchers thoroughly reviewed each unit of the "Work in Progress" textbook, identifying and categorizing the writing exercises according to the classifications outlined in the theoretical framework.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data from the book were subjected to a qualitative content analysis. Each writing exercise was carefully examined and categorized according to the four groups, with particular attention paid to the alignment with Raimes's framework. The study involved the following steps: (1) Identification of all writing exercises in the "Work in Progress."; (2) A checklist was developed based on the categories outlined in Raimes's theoretical framework to systematically analyze and categorize the writing exercises in the "Work in Progress" textbook; (3) Each writing exercise was carefully examined and coded according to the established categories; and (4) The coded data was then analyzed to determine the critical aspects of the writing exercises and their alignment with Raimes's framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to identify the critical aspects of writing exercises in the "Work in Progress" textbook designed for tenth-grade students and evaluate their compatibility. Through Raimes's framework, the 38 writing exercises in the textbook uncovered a pronounced emphasis on specific facets of writing skill enhancement while possibly neglecting other areas.

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Critical Aspects in Analyzing Writing Exercises in the Work-in-Progress Book



Figure 1. The Percentage of Writing Exercises Aligned with Raimes's Framework

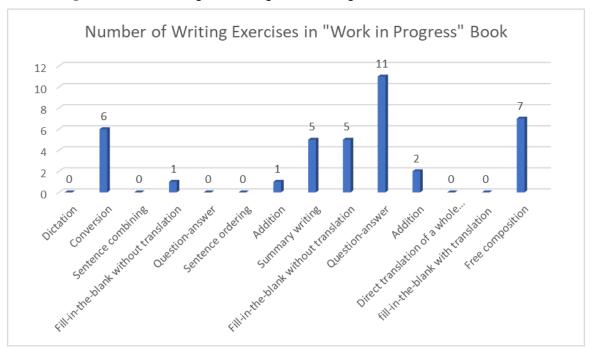


Figure 2. The Number of Writing Exercises in "Work in Progress" Book

Figures 1 and 2 show that Guided Writing exercises are the most common, comprising 18 out of the 38 total exercises, indicating a potential emphasis on structured writing and comprehension activities. Following Guided Writing are Controlled Writing exercises, with 13 instances, suggesting a focus on developing skills like paraphrasing and summarizing. Within Guided Writing, "Question-Answer" exercises are most prevalent (11 out of 18), while "Conversion" and "Summary Writing" dominate the Controlled Writing category with 6 and 5 exercises respectively. A significant observation is the complete absence of certain subcategories like "Dictation," "Sentence Combining," and both sub-categories under "Translation." This absence raises questions about the textbook's comprehensiveness in addressing the full spectrum of writing skills and warrants further investigation into the pedagogical reasoning behind these choices.

This analysis reveals a distinct pattern in the types of writing exercises employed in the "Work in Progress" textbook. Guided Writing exercises, particularly those focused on Question-

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Answer formats, are most prevalent, representing nearly half of all exercises. This suggests a pedagogical emphasis on structured writing activities that guide students in comprehending and responding to specific prompts. Controlled Writing exercises, especially "Conversion" and "Summary Writing," constitute the second most common category, indicating a focus on developing skills in paraphrasing, summarizing, and manipulating existing text.

This finding aligns with Kobayakawa's observation of a shortfall in guided and free writing tasks within Japanese English textbooks, suggesting a potential broader trend in EFL materials. While "Work in Progress" does include Guided Writing, the lack of "free writing" opportunities might need to be addressed to align more closely with MEXT's educational objectives, as highlighted by Kobayakawa.

The dominance of Guided and Controlled Writing, while highlighting a clear instructional approach, also reveals potential limitations. The complete absence of exercise categories like "Dictation," "Sentence Combining," and "Translation" raises concerns about the textbook's comprehensiveness in addressing the full spectrum of writing skills, echoing concerns raised by Zendrato et al. regarding the need for variety in writing exercises. This absence might stem from various factors, such as pedagogical choices prioritizing certain skills over others, or constraints related to curriculum requirements or textbook length. However, it contrasts with Fasikh's research, which advocates for diverse pedagogical strategies, including those absent in the analyzed textbook, to bolster writing proficiency.

Further research is needed to understand how these findings impact student writing development. Do students exposed primarily to Guided and Controlled Writing exercises demonstrate comparable proficiency in other writing skills, such as those requiring grammatical accuracy, compared to students who engage with a wider range of exercise types? Additionally, investigating the rationale behind the exclusion of certain exercise categories would offer insights into the underlying pedagogical beliefs shaping the textbook's design.

Although research has highlighted the importance of a balanced approach to teaching writing, emphasizing both linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness, the "Work in Progress" textbook appears to favor structured, guided exercises over more open-ended, communicative tasks. Addressing this imbalance could be a valuable avenue for future textbook development and pedagogical refinement, as highlighted by the sources cited in this analysis (YAYLI & Yaylı, 2018)(Helaluddin et al., 2020)(Baig et al., 2021)(Luo & Dai, 2023).

Compatibility of Writing Exercises in the "Work in Progress" Book with Raimes's Framework

The compatibility of "Work in Progress" with Raimes's Framework presents a mixed picture. While the textbook demonstrates strengths in certain areas, it also reveals potential weaknesses that warrant attention.

The "Work in Progress" textbook demonstrates a calculated approach to writing instruction, with a clear emphasis on structured activities. The abundance of Guided Writing exercises, particularly those focused on Question-Answer formats, suggests a dedication to developing students' comprehension skills and their ability to craft well-organized responses. This aligns strongly with Raimes's emphasis on "content" and "organization" as cornerstones of effective writing. Similarly, the textbook's focus on Controlled Writing, specifically "Conversion" and "Summary Writing," demonstrates a commitment to equipping students with the essential skills of paraphrasing and summarizing, aligning with Raimes's focus on adapting writing for different "purposes" and "audiences."

However, the textbook's compatibility with Raimes's Framework is challenged by notable omissions. The complete absence of "Dictation" and "Sentence Combining" exercises raises

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concerns about the attention given to "mechanics" and "syntax." These categories traditionally serve as building blocks for grammatical accuracy and varied sentence construction, skills crucial for any proficient writer. Additionally, while potentially a deliberate choice, the lack of "Translation" exercises represents a missed opportunity. Translation, even in a limited capacity, can act as a valuable bridge between a student's native language and the target language, fostering a deeper understanding of grammatical structures and expanding vocabulary.

While "Work in Progress" demonstrably values structured writing and comprehension, its over-reliance on these aspects could limit students' exposure to more open-ended, communicative writing tasks. Raimes advocates for a balance between structured and free writing to cultivate creativity and fluency, aspects potentially underexplored in the textbook. Addressing these limitations by incorporating a wider variety of exercises, including those that directly address mechanics, syntax, and potentially leverage the benefits of translation, would strengthen the textbook's alignment with Raimes's holistic approach to writing instruction.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examined the "Work in Progress" textbook, revealing a significant emphasis on Guided Writing exercises, which constitute nearly half of the 38 total exercises. While this approach, complemented by a focus on Controlled Writing, aligns with Raimes's emphasis on organization and content, it neglects other crucial writing skills. The absence of Dictation, Sentence Combining, and Translation exercises represents a critical gap, potentially hindering students' development of grammatical accuracy and syntactic variety. This limited scope underscores the need for a more comprehensive approach to writing instruction. Future editions of "Work in Progress" should incorporate a wider range of exercises, including free writing opportunities, to foster creativity, fluency, and a more balanced skillset. Further research should expand this analysis to encompass multiple textbooks and directly assess the impact of diverse writing exercises on student proficiency. Policymakers, too, have a role to play in ensuring that educational materials provide a comprehensive approach to writing instruction, aligning with frameworks like Raimes's to better equip students for effective writing across various contexts.

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