

Collaboration Skills in Seventh Grade English Textbooks: An Analysis Using the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the integration of collaboration skills in the seventh grade English textbook "English for Nusantara," published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, using the Cambridge Life Competency Framework. Through qualitative content analysis, the research assesses the textbook's integration of skills such as active contribution, role-taking, respectful listening, mutual support, and organizational abilities. Each lesson unit was meticulously examined and coded according to the Cambridge Framework. Findings reveal a varied distribution of collaboration skills across chapters, reflecting alignment with the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. The study concludes that the textbook effectively embeds these collaboration skills, preparing students for teamwork, task management, and collective problem-solving, thus promoting essential 21st-century competencies. These skills are crucial for students' future academic and professional success. The research highlights the importance of well-structured educational materials in developing collaborative abilities. This strategic approach ensures students are equipped with the necessary tools to thrive in a collaborative environment.

Keywords: Collaboration skills; Cambridge Life Competencies Framework; Seventh-grade English textbook; 21st-century skills.

INTRODUCTION

In 21st-century learning, there has been an emphasis on a broad set of skills and competencies that are critical for students to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. These competencies, often referred to as 21st-century skills, include critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, effective communication and adaptability (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). The need for these skills is driven by the changing demands of the modern workforce and society, which require individuals to possess a diverse set of abilities to navigate complex challenges and contribute effectively (Pallegrino &

Hilton, 2012). In the 21st-century educational landscape, the traditional focus on memorizing facts and figures is no longer sufficient. Instead, the emphasis has shifted towards developing a more dynamic set of skills that prepare students for the complexities of modern life. (Llego, 2024). To support this, one crucial aspect is the development of collaborative skills, which are key to working effectively within teams and collectively solving complex challenges.

Collaboration skills are the abilities required to work effectively with others to achieve common goals. These skills are essential for successful

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teamwork and include various competencies such as communication, conflict resolution, open-mindedness, and organizational skills (Suter, 2009). Collaboration skills are foundational to effective teamwork, involving not just working alongside others, but also engaging in meaningful interaction and shared decision-making (Green & Johnson, 2015). In the context of education, collaboration is a critical component of 21st-century learning, as it enables students to develop crucial competencies for thriving in an increasingly interconnected and complex world. According to Cambridge University Press (2020), students can work well together in groups by actively taking part in group activities, listening to others, sharing tasks and finding solutions to problems. To facilitate the development of collaboration skills, curricula and textbooks need to be adapted to include various activities that promote cooperation and interaction among students. Recognizing the significance of collaboration skills, it is crucial to explore how these competencies can be effectively embedded within the curriculum to enhance student learning and development.

A curriculum is a structured framework that outlines the educational content and learning experiences provided in a course, program, or educational institution (Grossman & Thompson, 2008). To respond to the educational challenges of the 21st century, *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum is being implemented in Indonesia (Ferdaus & Novita, 2023). *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a curriculum that focuses on the essential material and the development of the character and

competence of the student. Its primary purpose is to improve the quality of education and meet the needs of students and the conditions of the educational unit (Sitoningrum, 2023). Collaboration skills play a significant role in *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum which is a new approach to education in Indonesia. *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum aims to develop students who can collaborate and work together effectively, which is essential for success in the digital era. In alignment with these educational advancements, English textbooks play a crucial role in supporting the goals of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum by providing students with resources to enhance their language proficiency and collaboration skills.

Textbook plays a crucial role in English language learning, serving as a comprehensive learning resource that provides knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, activities, and motivation to achieve educational capabilities (Akhmad et al., 2022). It provides real language input, acts as a reference tool, and encourages teaching consistency. Additionally, textbooks provide a dependable framework that leads educators and learners through the process of learning, guaranteeing that important language concepts and abilities are methodically covered. In particular, the implementation of collaborative learning practices in the context of English language textbooks can have a profound impact on students' development of essential competencies (Naji Ahmed, 2018). To further explore the role of collaboration in language learning, the Cambridge Framework Collaboration Skills provides a detailed approach to

enhancing students' abilities to work together effectively in the classroom.

The Cambridge Framework for Life Competencies is a comprehensive framework designed to help educators integrate essential life skills into their teaching practices. It focuses on developing a broad range of competencies that are crucial for success in the 21st century. The framework covers six core areas: critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn, communication, collaboration, and social responsibilities. The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework includes a detailed approach to developing collaboration skills, essential for effective teamwork and group activities. This framework, developed by Cambridge University Press in collaboration with Cambridge Assessment, aims to integrate life skills into educational programs, particularly within the context of English language learning (Cambridge University Press, 2020). The collaboration competence outlined in the framework emphasizes the importance of working cooperatively with others, engaging in thoughtful discussions, and collectively working towards shared objectives (Naji Ahmed, 2018)

Previous studies have examined variables pertinent to this research, focusing on the analysis of English textbooks that serve diverse purposes. For instance, one study analyzes the vocabulary contained in English textbooks for first grade high school based on Tomlinson's theory. This research was conducted to address the importance of vocabulary as part of learning content (Narhan, 2021). Additionally, research has been conducted on analyzing the

representation of cultural content in English textbook (Riadini & Cahyono, 2021). Moreover, there is research that aims to examine gender bias in language in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, with findings followed by analysis and interpretation that pay special attention to the relationship between language sexism and ideology (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012). Furthermore, another study analyzes reading comprehension questions using Bloom's Taxonomy as indicators to form knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creation. This aims to consider the role of high-level and low-level thinking skills in reading comprehension questions in English textbooks (Stevani & Tarigan, 2022). Meanwhile, English textbooks for high schools in Japan and Korea were analyzed from the viewpoint of intercultural understanding and communicative activities. This research describes the types of articles, the countries covered in the materials, the purpose of the materials, and the number of four communicative activities, and then discusses the characteristics of these issues (Ookawa, 2017).

Other previous studies have examined collaborative skills, specifically the improvement of collaborative skills of elementary school students through science project learning based on the entrepreneurship model. According to the study's findings, that science project learning based on entrepreneurship model is effective in improving collaborative skills in 5th grade students (Naila, 2020). In more detail, previous research has examined using the Cambridge Life Competence Framework. However, the

study only analyzed English reading materials for seventh grade students in terms of critical thinking skills (Mardiyatuzakiyah, 2023). Consequently, there has been no specific research addressing other aspects of the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework, particularly collaborative skills, in textbooks provided by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture for seventh-grade junior high school students. Therefore, additional studies analyzing collaborative skills in English textbooks are highly necessary. This recent research seeks to answer one research question, how do seventh grade english textbooks material incorporate collaboration skills according to the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework.

METHOD

This study employs content analysis to evaluate how seventh-grade English textbooks incorporate collaboration skills according to the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework. This is a descriptive qualitative study using content analysis techniques to identify and analyze collaborative elements within the textbook. (Schreire, 2012) stated that one of the many

qualitative techniques now accessible for assessing data and interpreting its significance is qualitative content analysis (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). The textbook analyzed is the seventh-grade English textbook titled " English for Nusantara " published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. This book was selected because it is the standard teaching material used throughout Indonesia. The research instrument is a content analysis guide developed based on collaborative descriptors from the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework. Data were collected by examining each lesson unit in the textbook to identify English materials that reflect collaborative skills. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, where each identified element was coded and categorized based on the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework indicators. The frequency and manner of representing collaborative skills were analyzed to determine the extent to which this aspect is covered in the textbook. Each descriptors of colaborative skills are coded with CS which means Collaboration Skills in each component to make easier in investigating. They are illustrated in these table below.

Table 1 Core Areas and Components of Collaboration Skills

Core Areas	Components	Code
Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing task	CS 1
	Taking on different roles	CS 2
Encouraging effective group interaction	Listening and responding respectfully	CS 3
	Establishing ways of working together	CS 4
	Engaging and supporting others	CS 5
	Agreeing what needs to be done	CS 6

Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity	Managing the distribution of tasks	CS 7
	Ensuring progress towards a goal	CS 8
Working towards task completion	Identifying issues and challenges	CS 9
	Resolving issues	CS 10

The table illustrates the core areas and components of collaboration skills as identified by Cambridge (2020). The first core area, "Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task," involves two components: actively contributing to the task (CS 1) and taking on different roles (CS 2). This core area highlights the importance of individual accountability and adaptability within a group setting, emphasizing that each member should not only participate actively but also be flexible in assuming various roles as needed. The second core area, "Encouraging effective group interaction," includes listening and responding respectfully (CS 3), establishing ways of working together (CS 4), and engaging and supporting others (CS 5). These components underscore the significance of respectful communication, collaborative planning, and mutual support in fostering a productive group dynamic. The third core

area, "Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity," comprises agreeing on what needs to be done (CS 6) and managing the distribution of tasks (CS 7). This area focuses on the organizational aspect of collaboration, ensuring that tasks are clearly defined and fairly allocated among group members to optimize efficiency and effectiveness. The fourth core area, "Working towards task completion," involves ensuring progress towards a goal (CS 8), identifying issues and challenges (CS 9), and resolving issues (CS 10). This area highlights the importance of goal orientation, problem identification, and conflict resolution in achieving successful group outcomes. Each component within these core areas contributes to developing comprehensive collaborative skills, essential for effective teamwork and collective problem-solving (Cambridge Life Competencies, 2020).

FINDINGS

One textbook was selected by the researcher as the source of information. The book, titled "English for Nusantara," was published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022 for seventh-grade junior high school students. The preface on the first page of the book states that the 15 book is based on the

latest curriculum, the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. The researcher used descriptors from the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework, specifically focusing on collaboration skills, to analyze the material in the book. For each descriptor across the fifteen units of the book, the researchers assigned codes CS 1 - CS 10

Table 2 Collaboration Skills in English For Nusantara Textbooks

No.	Chapter	CS 1	CS 2	CS 3	CS 4	CS 5	CS 6	CS 7	CS 8	CS 9	CS 10
1	1: About Me	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	1	0	1
2	2: Culinary and Me	1	0	3	2	2	2	2	3	0	0
3	3: Home Sweet Home	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	1	0	0
4	4: My School Activities	3	3	2	3	3	3	1	1	0	0
5	5: This is My School	3	1	0	1	5	3	2	2	1	0
	Total	12	8	10	10	15	10	8	8	1	1

The results show a varied distribution of collaboration skills across the chapters, demonstrating different emphases in each part of the textbook. In Chapter 1, "About Me," the emphasis on collaboration skills is well distributed, with CS 1, CS 2, CS 3, CS 4 and CS 5 appearing three times each, while CS 6, CS 7, CS 8, CS 9, CS 10 are less emphasized. Meanwhile, chapter 2, "Culinary and Me," emphasizes CS 4, CS 5, CS 6, CS 7 each appearing twice. CS 1 and CS 5 appeared once each, while other skills such as CS 2, CS 3, CS 7, CS 8, CS 9, and CS 10 made little or no appearance, indicating a narrower focus in this

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study indicate a varied distribution of collaboration skills across chapters in the seventh grade English textbook, "English for Nusantara". Each chapter emphasizes different collaboration

chapter. Additionally, in chapter 3, "Home Sweet Home," CS 1, CS 3, and CS 5 reappear twice, indicating their importance. CS 2, CS 4, CS 8 appear once each, but CS 7, CS 9, and CS 10 do not appear. Furthermore, chapter 4, "My School Activities," shows a broad emphasis on collaboration skills, with CS 1, CS 2, CS 4, CS 5 and CS 6 appearing three times each. CS 9, and CS 10 are not included. Finally, chapter 5, "This is My School," places significant emphasis on CS 5, with five appearances, and also highlights CS 1 and CS 6, which appear three times each. This chapter does not discuss CS 3 and CS 10.

skills, reflecting a strategic approach to align with *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, which aims to develop students competencies in cooperation and active participation.

Chapter 1: About Me

In Chapter 1, the textbook places a balanced emphasis on various collaboration skills, reflecting findings from previous research on the importance of developing a range of collaborative abilities in students. Research has shown that balanced exposure to various components of collaboration, such as active contribution, role-taking, respectful listening, and mutual support, is critical to fostering a comprehensive set

of teamwork skills (Green & Jhonson, 2015). By engaging in activities that require them to actively contribute, take on different roles, and support their peers, students learn the importance of personal responsibility and effective group interaction. This approach is in line with (Ahmed Naji, 2018) emphasis on the need for diverse collaboration skills to enhance students' ability to effectively navigate various collaborative scenarios

Chapter 2: Culinary and Me

Chapter 2, narrows its focus to specific components of collaboration, reflecting previous research that highlights the effectiveness of targeted collaboration skill development in specific contexts. Research by Naila (2020) suggests that project-based learning, which often involves practical activities such as those in culinary education, benefits from a focus on organizational skills and mutual support skills. By concentrating on

ways of working together, involving and supporting others, agreeing on tasks and managing task sharing, the chapter helps students understand the importance of planning and coordination in collaborative projects. This targeted approach not only enhances their ability to work effectively in group settings, but also teaches them to appreciate the roles and contributions of their peers in achieving a common goal

Chapter 3: Home Sweet Home

In Chapter 3, emphasis on active contribution, respectful listening, and mutual support reflects findings from various studies on the importance of communication and interpersonal skills in collaboration. (Green & Jhonson, 2015) highlight that respectful communication and active engagement are key to effective teamwork. By focusing on these skills, this chapter

encourages students to take an active role in their group tasks and value input from others. This approach fosters a collaborative classroom environment where students feel more engaged and supported, ultimately enhancing their ability to work cohesively in a team setting and improving their interpersonal skills.

Chapter 4: My School Activities

Chapter 4, "My School Activities," takes a broad approach to

collaboration, aligning with previous research that emphasizes the need for

students to develop a range of collaborative skills for diverse activities. The broad emphasis on active contribution, taking on roles, building ways of working together, involving and supporting others, and agreeing on tasks reflects findings from research such as that by (Reimers, 2020), which advocates for comprehensive skill development to prepare students for real-world scenarios. By exposing

students to various aspects of teamwork, this chapter helps them develop a comprehensive understanding of effective group interactions, task management and support mechanisms. Such an approach is crucial in preparing students to face real-world scenarios where they have to work collaboratively with diverse teams and manage multiple tasks efficiently

Chapter 5: This is My School

In Chapter 5, “This is My School”, the strong emphasis on mutual support and active participation is supported by previous research on the importance of creating a supportive learning environment. Research has shown that an environment that fosters mutual support and active participation can improve students' social and emotional skills, which are critical to their overall development (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). By prioritizing these skills, this chapter aims to foster a sense of community and cooperation among students, helping them build strong interpersonal relationships and work effectively as part of a team. This focus is crucial to developing students' social and emotional skills, which are crucial to their success both inside and outside the classroom.

The varied emphasis on collaboration skills across the different chapters in this textbook reflects findings from previous research that underscore the need for diverse and comprehensive skills development in education. A balanced approach, as

seen in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, ensures that students develop a well-rounded set of abilities required for effective teamwork, which is supported by Green and Jhonson (2015). The specific focus in Chapters 2 and 3 helps students understand and master certain aspects of collaboration, such as organization and respectful communication, which are critical for certain tasks, which is in line with Naila (2020) findings on project-based learning. Chapter 5 strong emphasis on mutual support and active participation reinforces the importance of creating a positive and inclusive classroom environment, aligning with (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012) research on supportive learning environments. Overall, this strategic distribution of collaboration skills helps students develop critical competencies essential for their future academic success and professional endeavors, aligning with the goals of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum and the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework (Cambridge University Press, 2020)

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The seventh-grade English textbook "English for Nusantara" integrates collaboration skills in alignment with the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework by distributing various collaboration components across its chapters. These include active contribution, role-taking, respectful listening, mutual support, and organizational skills. Each chapter emphasizes different aspects, ensuring a comprehensive development of collaboration abilities. This strategic inclusion ensures that students are well-prepared to work effectively in teams, manage tasks, and solve

problems collectively, thereby supporting the goals of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and fostering essential 21st-century skills. To further enhance the understanding and application of collaboration skills in educational settings, future research should explore the long-term impacts of these skills on students' academic and professional success. Additionally, examining the effectiveness of different teaching methodologies in fostering collaboration skills across diverse cultural and educational contexts would provide valuable insights for curriculum development.

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