

From Curriculum Ideals to Textbook Practice: Learner Autonomy in Indonesia's Government- Issued EFL Textbook

*¹Astri Winandari Berlin, ¹Yanty Wirza

¹Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

Abstract: Promoting learner autonomy has become increasingly important in EFL education, particularly within curriculum reforms that emphasise student-centred learning, flexibility, and lifelong learning. In Indonesia, Kurikulum Merdeka positions students as active and independent learners; however, the extent to which this curricular orientation is reflected in government-issued English textbooks remains underexplored. This study examines how learner autonomy is facilitated in *Work in Progress*, a Grade 10 EFL textbook developed to support the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. Using qualitative textbook evaluation, the study analysed 73 activities from the first three chapters, including the Task, Chapter Review, Reflection, Assessment, and Enrichment sections. Nunan's five-level framework for implementing autonomy (Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, Creation, and Transcendence) served as the analytical lens. The findings indicate that *Work in Progress* supports learner autonomy at four levels: Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, and Transcendence. Nevertheless, the Creation level is absent, suggesting that students are rarely positioned as designers of their own learning goals, tasks, or materials. The analysis further reveals that autonomy support is unevenly embedded across the textbook. While most core task activities emphasise awareness-building and guided learning, higher-level autonomy appears mainly in the Assessment and Enrichment sections. These findings suggest that, although the textbook reflects some principles of learner-centred curriculum reform, its facilitation of learner autonomy remains partial rather than systematic. The study highlights the need for future EFL textbook development to integrate more student-led, choice-based, and self-directed activities into core instructional sections.

Keywords: EFL textbook, government-issued materials, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, learner autonomy, textbook evaluation.

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy has become a central concern in contemporary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education because successful language learning increasingly requires students to take an active role in managing their own learning. In many EFL contexts, however, students are still commonly positioned as recipients of instruction, completing textbook-based tasks, following teacher directions, and reproducing language models. Such practices may support short-term classroom performance, but they do not necessarily prepare students to make decisions, select learning strategies, monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, or extend learning beyond the classroom. This issue is particularly important because language learning is not limited to mastering classroom materials; it also involves developing long-term learning habits and the

*Correspondence: astriwinandari@upi.edu

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capacity to use language independently in diverse contexts. Learner autonomy, therefore, is not merely an additional pedagogical goal but a fundamental condition for helping students become active, reflective, and lifelong language learners (Roki'ah et al., 2023).

The concept of learner autonomy has been widely discussed in language education. Holec (1981) defines learner autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's own learning, while Benson (2011) emphasizes learners' capacity to control different aspects of the learning process. Similarly, Little (2020) and Ruswandi et al. (2024) argue that autonomous learners can reflect on their learning, make informed decisions, and assume greater responsibility for their progress. In EFL learning, autonomy is closely related to students' ability to set goals, manage learning time, choose appropriate strategies, seek learning resources, and evaluate their own performance. Previous studies have shown that learner autonomy contributes to language development, motivation, self-efficacy, critical thinking, and personal growth because it encourages students to participate more actively in the learning process (Arabai, 2021; Avazmatova, 2022; Han, 2021; Little, 2020; Raya et al., 2017; Tuan, 2021). Thus, promoting learner autonomy is essential in EFL education, especially in curricula that emphasize student-centered and lifelong learning.

Although learner autonomy is often associated with individual responsibility, it does not develop automatically. Students need structured opportunities to make choices, reflect on their learning, adapt tasks, evaluate their progress, and apply their knowledge beyond the classroom. In this regard, textbooks play an important role, as they remain among the most widely used instructional resources in EFL classrooms. Textbooks organize learning content, provide task sequences, shape classroom interaction, and influence how curriculum principles are translated into practice. Knight (2015) notes that textbooks provide credible and comprehensible materials that support students' understanding of key concepts. More specifically, Nunan (1997) argues that textbooks can promote learner autonomy by gradually supporting learners' awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence in the learning process. Reinders and Balçikanli (2011) also emphasize that autonomy-oriented textbooks should include learning skills, strategy instruction, reflection, self-assessment, and opportunities for learners to take control of learning. Therefore, evaluating textbooks from the perspective of learner autonomy is necessary to determine whether instructional materials merely transmit content or also support students' development as independent learners.

However, previous research has shown that EFL textbooks do not always comprehensively facilitate learner autonomy. Studies in different international contexts, including Turkey, Algeria, Italy, and Hong Kong, have reported that textbooks often contain some autonomy-supportive elements but provide limited opportunities for learners to exercise meaningful control over their learning (Kissacık, 2016; Kong, 2014; Mezhoud, 2020; Naziha, 2020; Pasqualato, 2020; Reinders & Balçikanli, 2011). Many textbook activities remain focused on comprehension, controlled practice, and reproduction of language models rather than learner choice, task modification, self-directed inquiry, or real-world application. Similar concerns have been reported in Indonesian EFL textbook studies. Khaerudin and Chik (2021), vitta (2021), Mustofa and Wirza (2023), and Berlin et al. (2025) found that Indonesian English textbooks tend to provide partial support for learner autonomy, with greater emphasis on guided learning than on independent decision-making or student-generated learning activities. These findings indicate that textbooks may contain autonomy-related features, but their support is often uneven, limited, or insufficiently integrated across core instructional sections.

The issue of learner autonomy has become more significant in Indonesia following the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. This curriculum emphasizes flexibility, differentiated learning, student-centered instruction, and the development of independent learners. In principle, these orientations align closely with learner autonomy, as students are expected to participate actively, take responsibility for their learning, and engage in meaningful learning experiences. To support curriculum implementation, the Indonesian Ministry of Education provides government-issued textbooks, including Work in Progress, an English textbook for Grade 10 senior high school students. As an official textbook designed for national use, Work in Progress

plays an important role in transforming curriculum ideals into classroom-ready learning activities. Therefore, examining whether this textbook facilitates learner autonomy is crucial for understanding the extent to which the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka are represented in government-designed EFL materials.

Despite the growing body of research on learner autonomy and EFL textbook evaluation, several gaps remain. First, many previous studies have examined learner autonomy in commercial or locally used textbooks, whereas fewer have focused on government-issued textbooks designed to support national curriculum reform. Second, existing Indonesian studies have shown that textbooks provide partial support for learner autonomy. However, little attention has been paid to how autonomy is distributed across textbook sections, such as core tasks, reflection, assessment, and enrichment activities. Third, although *Work in Progress* is a nationally distributed textbook developed under Kurikulum Merdeka, empirical evaluation of its ability to facilitate learner autonomy remains scarce. This gap is important because government-issued textbooks directly influence classroom practices, teacher guidance, and students' learning experiences across diverse Indonesian EFL contexts.

To address these gaps, this study evaluates how learner autonomy is facilitated in *Work in Progress*, the Grade 10 English textbook developed to implement Kurikulum Merdeka. Using [Nunan's \(1997\)](#) five-level framework of autonomy implementation, Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, Creation, and Transcendence, this study analyzes activities in the Task, Chapter Review, Reflection, Assessment, and Enrichment sections of the textbook. The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on a government-issued EFL textbook within Indonesia's current national curriculum reform and in its systematic mapping of learner autonomy across multiple sections of the textbook. By doing so, this study contributes to EFL textbook evaluation research by showing not only whether learner autonomy is present, but also how consistently and at what levels it is embedded in official instructional materials.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative textbook evaluation design to examine how learner autonomy is facilitated in *Work in Progress*, a government-issued English textbook for Grade 10 students under Indonesia's *Kurikulum Merdeka*. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study focused on interpreting textbook activities, task instructions, prompts, and expected learner actions rather than measuring classroom implementation or students' learning outcomes. Qualitative research enables researchers to examine meanings, patterns, and pedagogical representations within educational texts in relation to their instructional contexts ([Creswell & Poth, 2018](#)). In this study, textbook evaluation was used to investigate the extent to which learner autonomy is represented as a pedagogical opportunity embedded in instructional materials. Textbooks are not neutral collections of language exercises; they organize learning content, shape classroom practices, and influence the roles assigned to teachers and students ([Tomlinson in Norton & Buchanan, 2022](#)). Therefore, analyzing textbook activities can reveal how curriculum principles are translated into classroom-ready learning tasks. Since the focus of this study was learner autonomy, the evaluation examined whether the textbook provided opportunities for students to recognize learning goals, make choices, adapt tasks, create learning products, and connect classroom learning with real-life contexts.

2.2 Data Source and Textbook Selection

The primary data source for this study was *Working in Progress*, an English textbook officially issued for Grade 10 (Phase E) senior high school students in Indonesia. The textbook was developed to support the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which emphasizes student-centered learning, flexibility, independence, and meaningful learning experiences. As a government-issued textbook, *Work in Progress* is pedagogically significant because it functions as one of the main instructional resources through which national curriculum principles are operationalized in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Although *Work in Progress* consists of six chapters, this study focused on the first three chapters. These chapters were selected because they represent the textbook's recurring organizational structure and activity patterns. They also cover three common text types in Grade 10 EFL: descriptive, recount, and procedural texts. The analysis included five sections: Task, Chapter Review, Reflection, Assessment, and Enrichment. These sections were selected because they contain the main instructional activities through which students engage with language content, review learning materials, reflect on progress, complete assessment tasks, and extend learning beyond classroom-based instruction. The selection of these chapters and sections was guided by the principle that textbook evaluation should examine not only linguistic content but also the pedagogical functions of activities and tasks (McGrath, 2016). In relation to learner autonomy, this means that textbook activities need to be examined in terms of the extent to which they provide learner control, choice, reflection, task adaptation, and opportunities for self-directed learning.

2.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study was each textbook activity. An activity was defined as a distinct instructional unit that required students to perform a specific learning action, such as answering questions, listening for information, discussing ideas, revising writing, completing a project, reflecting on learning, or applying English in a real-life context. This unit was selected because learner autonomy is most directly represented in the actions that students are asked to perform through textbook instructions. When a single task contained several separate instructions requiring different learner actions, each instruction was treated as an independent activity. This procedure was used to avoid overgeneralizing complex tasks and to ensure that each learner's action was analyzed accurately. Defining the unit of analysis is essential in qualitative content analysis because it determines how textual data are segmented, interpreted, and categorized (Schreier, 2012). Based on this procedure, 73 activities from the first three chapters were identified and analyzed.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by Nunan's (1997) framework for implementing learner autonomy. This framework was selected because it provides a clear and pedagogically relevant basis for evaluating how instructional materials support different levels of learner autonomy. Nunan conceptualizes learner autonomy as a gradual process that can be developed through five levels: Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, Creation, and Transcendence. This framework was appropriate for the present study because it allows textbook activities to be examined not only in terms of whether they support autonomy, but also in terms of the level of autonomy they facilitate.

In this study, the Awareness level refers to activities that help students recognize learning goals, content, strategies, task purposes, or language features. The Involvement level refers to activities that allow students to make limited choices from options provided by the textbook or teacher. The Intervention level refers to activities that enable students to modify, adapt, revise, or improve learning tasks or learning products. The Creation level refers to activities that allow students to design their own learning goals, tasks, materials, procedures, or assessment criteria. The Transcendence level refers to activities that encourage students to connect classroom learning with real-life contexts beyond the textbook or classroom. Nunan's framework was also considered suitable because it views autonomy as a pedagogically supported process rather than as complete learner independence. This view is consistent with the argument that learner autonomy develops through structured opportunities for reflection, decision-making, self-direction, and increasing learner control (Benson, 2011; Little, 2020). The operational definitions used to guide the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Learner Autonomy Levels

Autonomy Level	Operational Definition in This Study	Indicators in Textbook Activities
Awareness	Activities that help students recognize learning goals, content, strategies, task purposes, or language features.	Identifying information, answering comprehension questions, reviewing materials, recognizing text structure, and reflecting on what has been learned.
Involvement	Activities that allow students to make limited choices from options provided by the textbook or teacher.	Choosing a topic, selecting examples, deciding on partners or groups, and choosing responses from available alternatives.
Intervention	Activities that allow students to modify, adapt, revise, or improve learning tasks or learning products.	Revising writing, improving drafts, adapting content, personalizing outputs, and modifying presentation formats.
Creation	Activities that allow students to design their own learning goals, tasks, materials, procedures, or assessment criteria.	Designing independent tasks, creating learning materials, setting personal learning goals, and planning self-directed learning procedures.
Transcendence	Activities that encourage students to connect classroom learning with real-life contexts beyond the textbook or classroom.	Conducting outside research, applying English to real-world situations, keeping journals, planning events, and relating tasks to personal or social contexts.

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure began with a close reading of the first three chapters of *Work in Progress* to identify all learning activities relevant to the analysis of learner autonomy. The activities were selected from five textbook sections: Task, Chapter Review, Reflection, Assessment, and Enrichment. These sections were included because they represent the main spaces in which students are expected to engage with language input, complete learning tasks, reflect on their progress, demonstrate achievement, and extend learning beyond classroom-based activities. After the relevant activities had been identified, each activity was extracted and recorded in a coding table for further analysis.

To ensure that the data were organized systematically, each activity was assigned a code based on its chapter, section, and sequence number. For example, activities from Chapter 1 in the Task section were coded as C1-T1, C1-T2, C1-T3, and so forth. In contrast, activities from other sections were coded using the same principle, such as C1-CR for Chapter Review, C1-RF for Reflection, C1-AS for Assessment, and C1-EN for Enrichment. This coding system was used to create a transparent audit trail and to make the analysis traceable from the findings back to the original textbook activities. In qualitative research, a clear coding system enhances transparency and demonstrates how raw data are transformed into analytical findings (Oliviera, 2023). In this study, the coding table served as an analytical record documenting the relationships among textbook activities, autonomy indicators, and final category assignments.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which is appropriate for systematically interpreting textual data and identifying patterns, categories, and meanings within instructional materials (Schreier, 2012). All identified activities were first organized in a coding table containing the chapter, section, activity code, textbook instruction, expected learner action, autonomy indicator, assigned autonomy level, and analytical note. Each activity instruction was then examined to determine the type of learner action required, particularly whether students were expected to recognize information, make choices, modify tasks, create learning activities, or apply learning beyond the classroom. Based on this interpretation, each activity was categorized according to Nunan's (1997) five levels of learner autonomy implementation.

The classification was based on the dominant learner action required in each activity. For example, activities requiring students to identify factual information, answer comprehension questions, or review learning content were categorized as Awareness. In contrast, activities requiring students to revise or improve a learning product were categorized as Intervention. After the coding process was completed, the distribution of learner autonomy across textbook sections was examined by calculating the frequencies and percentages of activities at each autonomy level. These numerical descriptions were used to support the qualitative interpretation rather than to make statistical generalizations. Finally, representative examples were selected to illustrate how each level of autonomy was facilitated in the textbook and to support the interpretation presented in the findings section.

2.7 Trustworthiness and Researcher Reflexivity

Several procedures were applied to strengthen the trustworthiness and transparency of the analysis. The coding scheme was derived from Nunan's (1997) five-level framework for learner autonomy implementation, and each level was translated into operational indicators prior to coding. This theoretical alignment helped ensure that the categories used in the analysis were directly connected to the research focus. To increase analytical precision, all textbook activities were examined at the activity level rather than at the chapter or section level. When a task contained multiple instructions requiring different learner actions, each instruction was coded separately to avoid overgeneralization. A coding table was used to document the activity code, textbook section, task instruction, expected learner action, autonomy indicator, assigned autonomy level, and analytical note. This documentation served as an audit trail, making the analytical process more transparent and traceable.

Because qualitative textbook evaluation involves interpretive judgment, the researcher's reflexivity was also considered throughout the analysis. The researchers acknowledged that the classification of textbook activities could be influenced by their understanding of learner autonomy and EFL pedagogy. To minimize this bias, the analysis focused on explicit textbook instructions and expected learner actions rather than assumptions about how teachers or students might implement the activities in actual classrooms. When activities contained overlapping autonomy features, a dominant-feature principle was applied, in which each activity was categorized according to the most prominent learner action required by the task. Representative examples from the textbook were then selected to support the interpretation of each autonomy level and to demonstrate the connection between data, coding categories, and findings. These procedures were intended to enhance the credibility, consistency, and transparency of the qualitative analysis (Schreier, 2012).

3. Findings

This section presents the findings of the textbook analysis based on Nunan's (1997) five-level framework of learner autonomy implementation: Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, Creation, and Transcendence. The analysis focused on 73 activities identified in the first three chapters of *Work in Progress*, covering the Task, Chapter Review, Reflection, Assessment, and Enrichment sections. The findings show that the textbook facilitates four levels of learner autonomy: Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, and Transcendence. However, the Creation level was not identified in the analyzed activities. This indicates that learner autonomy is present in the textbook, but its facilitation remains uneven and incomplete.

3.1 Distribution of Learner Autonomy Levels

The Task section formed the largest portion of the analyzed data. Across the first three chapters, 61 task activities were identified: 24 in Chapter 1, 17 in Chapter 2, and 20 in Chapter 3. The analysis shows that the Awareness level dominates learner autonomy in the Task section. Of the 61 task activities, 49 (80%) were categorized as Awareness. Meanwhile, 6 activities (10%) facilitated the Involvement level, and 5 (8%) facilitated the Intervention level. Only 1 activity, or 2%, reached the Transcendence level. No task activity was categorized under the Creation level.

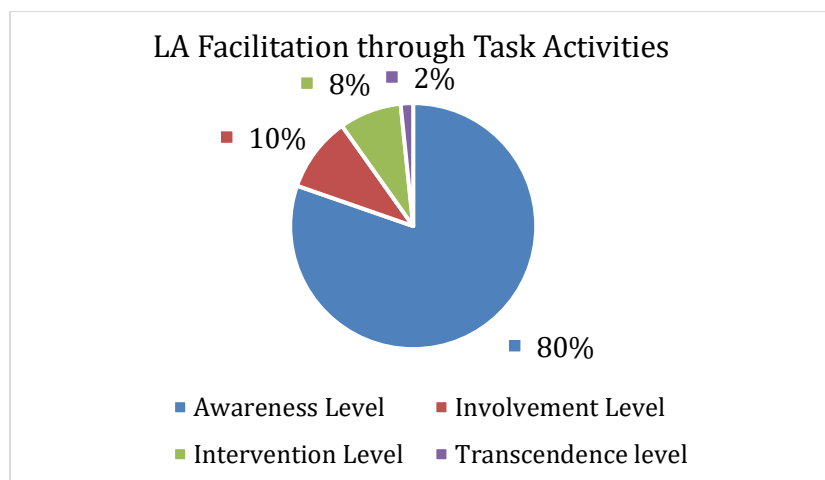


Figure 1. Distribution of Learner Autonomy Levels in Task Activities

Figure 1 shows that the core instructional tasks mainly position students as guided learners. Most activities require students to recognize information, understand language features, answer comprehension questions, follow instructions, or complete structured exercises. These activities are important for building students' awareness of the learning content and the purposes of tasks, but they provide limited opportunities for learner control. The small number of Involvement and Intervention activities suggests that students are occasionally given opportunities to make choices or improve learning products. However, such opportunities are not systematically embedded in the main task sequence. The very limited presence of Transcendence-level activities also indicates that only a few core tasks encourage students to extend classroom learning into real-life or personally meaningful contexts.

3.2 Forms of Learner Autonomy Facilitation across Textbook Sections

The analysis shows that each textbook section facilitates learner autonomy in different ways. In the Task section, Awareness-level activities are the most dominant. For example, the "Listen and Check" activity asks students to listen to an audio recording about a great athlete and decide whether the given statements are true or false. This activity supports learner autonomy at the Awareness level by helping students recognize factual information and understand the listening text. However, the task remains highly guided because the textbook predetermines the listening focus, statements, and expected responses. A similar pattern appears in many Task activities, in which students are primarily required to identify information, answer questions, complete exercises, or recognize text features.

The Chapter Review and Reflection sections also mainly support the Awareness level. Chapter Review activities ask students to recall and consolidate what they have learned in the chapter, such as the characteristics of certain text types or the content of previous tasks. Reflection activities ask students to think about what they have learned, what they want to learn more about, and what questions they still have. Although these activities encourage students to become aware of their learning progress, they remain guided by fixed prompts. Therefore, they do not yet require students to independently formulate learning goals, select learning strategies, or design follow-up learning activities. Involvement-level activities appear when students are given limited opportunities to make choices within a task structure provided by the textbook. One example is the "Let's Play" activity, in which one student thinks of a famous athlete while other group members ask closed-ended questions to guess the athlete's identity. This activity reflects the Involvement level because students are allowed to choose the athlete used in the game and participate actively in the interaction. Nevertheless, the degree of autonomy remains limited because the textbook still controls the procedure, question type, interaction pattern, and task outcome.

Intervention-level activities are found in tasks that require students to modify, revise, improve, or personalize learning products. For example, the “Publish Your Writing” activity asks students to revise their writing based on feedback from classmates and the teacher, make necessary improvements, and publish their work through a medium of their choice. This activity reflects the Intervention level because students are not only completing a writing task but also improving and adapting their work through feedback and revision. Another example appears in the Assessment section through the “Individual Project: What Makes a Great Athlete?” activity. In this task, students brainstorm ideas, create a mind map, design a visual representation, write an essay, and present their work. This activity gives students space to organize ideas, develop content, and personalize their final product, although the textbook still provides the topic and general procedure.

Transcendence-level activities are less frequent, but they represent stronger forms of learner autonomy because they connect classroom learning with real-life or personally meaningful contexts. For example, the “Use Your Words” activity asks students to research their favorite athlete and use the information to complete a descriptive writing task. This activity supports Transcendence by encouraging students to seek information beyond the textbook and to connect the writing task to their own interests. Transcendence-level support is also visible in the Assessment and Enrichment sections. The “Group Project: Organizing a Sports Event” activity requires students to plan a sports event by determining its goals, venue, budget, equipment, schedule, and proposal presentation. Similarly, the “My Daily Journal” activity asks students to keep a daily journal for at least one week and write about their emotions, thoughts, feelings, and daily experiences. These activities extend English use beyond routine classroom exercises and allow students to apply language learning in personal, social, or practical contexts.

Table 2. Representative Examples of Learner Autonomy Facilitation in *Work in Progress*

No.	Activity / Task Example	Textbook Section	Autonomy Level	Learner Autonomy Feature
1	Listen and Check	Task	Awareness	Students identify factual information from a listening text.
2	Let’s Play	Task	Involvement	Students choose a famous athlete and participate in a guessing game.
3	Publish Your Writing	Task	Intervention	Students revise their writing based on feedback and choose a publication medium.
4	Use Your Words	Task	Transcendence	Students research a favorite athlete using information beyond the textbook.
5	Chapter Review Questions	Chapter Review	Awareness	Students review and consolidate what they have learned in the chapter.
6	Reflection	Reflection	Awareness	Students reflect on what they learned and identify questions for further learning.
7	Individual Project: What Makes a Great Athlete?	Assessment	Intervention	Students develop ideas, create a visual representation, write an essay, and present their work.
8	Group Project: Organizing a Sports Event	Assessment	Transcendence	Students apply English to plan and present a real-world event proposal.
9	My Daily Journal	Enrichment	Transcendence	Students use English to write about personal experiences beyond classroom tasks.

3.3 Missing Creation-Level Support

One of the most important findings is the absence of Creation-level activities in the analyzed chapters. In Nunan’s framework, Creation refers to activities that allow students to design their own learning goals, tasks,

materials, procedures, or assessment criteria. The analysis shows that *Work in Progress* does not yet provide this type of autonomy support. Even activities involving projects, revisions, presentations, or real-world applications still provide students with predetermined topics, task procedures, and expected outputs.

This absence suggests that the textbook supports learner autonomy only partially. Students are given opportunities to become aware of learning content, make limited choices, revise learning products, and apply English in meaningful contexts. However, they are not yet positioned as designers of their own learning process. As a result, learner autonomy in the textbook appears as guided participation and task extension rather than as full student-generated learning. Overall, the findings indicate that *Work in Progress* reflects several principles of learner-centered learning. However, its support for learner autonomy remains uneven, with stronger emphasis on awareness-building than on independent learning design.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that *Work in Progress* facilitates learner autonomy, but its support remains partial, uneven, and largely guided. Although the textbook includes activities corresponding to four levels of [Nunan's \(1997\)](#) learner autonomy framework, Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, and Transcendence, the absence of Creation-level activities indicates that students are not yet positioned as active designers of their own learning. This pattern suggests that the textbook reflects some principles of learner-centered education promoted by Kurikulum Merdeka. However, it does not fully translate these principles into systematic autonomy-supportive task design. In other words, the textbook provides opportunities for students to understand, participate in, revise, and extend learning. However, it offers limited space for them to independently formulate learning goals, design learning tasks, or develop self-directed learning procedures.

The dominance of Awareness-level activities indicates that *Work in Progress* mainly supports learner autonomy at an introductory level. Most core task activities require students to identify information, answer comprehension questions, recognize language features, follow instructions, or reflect on what they have learned. These activities are pedagogically useful because awareness is an important foundation for autonomy. Learners need to understand learning goals, task purposes, language features, and their own learning progress before they can make more independent decisions. This finding is consistent with [Nunan's \(1997\)](#) view that autonomy can be developed gradually, beginning with learners' awareness of what they are learning and how they are learning it. However, when Awareness-level activities dominate the main instructional sections, learner autonomy risks being reduced to guided recognition rather than meaningful learner control.

This finding supports [Reinders and Balçikanlı's \(2011\)](#) argument that many EFL textbooks include elements of learner autonomy but still provide limited opportunities for learners to take responsibility for learning decisions. Similar patterns have also been reported in previous textbook evaluation studies in different EFL contexts, where textbooks tend to emphasize comprehension, controlled practice, and structured task completion rather than learner choice, task negotiation, or student-generated learning ([Kissacık, 2016](#); [Kong, 2014](#); [Mezhoud, 2020](#); [Naziha, 2020](#); [Pasqualato, 2020](#)). The present finding also resonates with studies in the Indonesian EFL context. [Khaerudin and Chik \(2021\)](#), [Mustofa and Wirza \(2023\)](#), and [Berlin et al. \(2025\)](#) similarly found that Indonesian English textbooks tend to provide partial support for learner autonomy. The present study extends these findings by showing that the same pattern is also evident in *Work in Progress*, a government-issued textbook developed under Kurikulum Merdeka. This is significant because the textbook is expected to reflect the curriculum's emphasis on student-centered, independent learning.

Another important finding is that higher-level autonomy is not evenly distributed across the textbook. Involvement and Intervention activities appear only in limited numbers, while Transcendence-level activities are more visible in Assessment and Enrichment sections than in the core Task section. This pattern suggests that autonomy-supportive learning is present, but it is often positioned as an extension of learning rather than as an integral feature of everyday instructional tasks. In practical terms, students are more likely

to encounter stronger autonomy-oriented activities at the end of a chapter or in supplementary tasks. At the same time, the main instructional sequence remains largely guided and textbook-controlled.

The limited presence of Involvement-level activities shows that students are occasionally given opportunities to make choices, such as choosing topics, examples, or personal responses. However, these choices are usually made within a structure already determined by the textbook. This reflects a controlled form of learner participation rather than open-ended learner agency. While such choices can increase engagement, they may not be sufficient to foster deeper autonomy unless they are connected to broader opportunities to plan, monitor, evaluate, and redesign learning. This finding supports [Benson's \(2011\)](#) argument that autonomy involves learners' capacity to control different dimensions of learning, including learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content.

Intervention-level activities, such as revising writing based on feedback or improving learning products, offer stronger autonomy support by allowing students to modify their work and take greater responsibility for learning outcomes. These activities are valuable because revision, feedback use, and product improvement encourage students to evaluate their own performance and make decisions about how to improve it. However, the relatively small number of such activities indicates that task adaptation is not yet a consistent feature of the textbook. If learner autonomy is to be developed systematically, opportunities for revision, personalization, peer feedback, self-assessment, and task adaptation need to appear more frequently in the core instructional sections.

The Transcendence-level activities found in the Assessment and Enrichment sections are among the strongest autonomy-supportive features of the textbook. Activities such as researching a favorite athlete, planning a sports event, and keeping a daily journal encourage students to connect English learning with real-life contexts, personal experiences, and practical communication. These activities reflect a broader understanding of language learning as social, contextual, and meaningful. They also align with [Little's \(2020\)](#) view that autonomous learning involves reflection, self-direction, and the ability to use language beyond controlled classroom exercises. Nevertheless, because these activities are concentrated mainly in assessment and enrichment components, their impact may be limited. Autonomy is more likely to become part of students' learning habits when it is embedded throughout the instructional cycle, not only in end-of-chapter projects or supplementary tasks.

The absence of Creation-level activities is the most critical limitation identified in this study. In [Nunan's \(1997\)](#) framework, Creation represents a higher level of learner autonomy because students are expected to design their own learning goals, tasks, materials, procedures, or assessment criteria. The analyzed chapters of Work in Progress do not provide this type of opportunity. Even project-based and real-world-oriented tasks still provide students with the topic, steps, and expected outputs. As a result, students are invited to participate in and extend learning, but not to design the learning process itself.

This absence has important pedagogical implications. Without Creation-level activities, learner autonomy may remain procedural rather than generative. Students may be able to complete tasks, reflect on their learning, revise products, or apply English in certain contexts. However, they are not sufficiently trained to initiate learning, formulate personal goals, design inquiry paths, or create their own learning resources. This limits the development of autonomy as a long-term capacity. From an autonomy perspective, the ability to create learning pathways is crucial because independent learners need to make decisions not only within tasks but also about the direction, process, and evaluation of their learning.

The absence of Creation-level support also reveals a tension between curriculum ideals and textbook practice. Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes independent learning, flexibility, and student-centered pedagogy. However, the textbook's task design still largely follows a structured and guided format. This does not mean that the textbook entirely fails to support learner autonomy. Rather, it suggests that the textbook operationalizes autonomy mainly through guided participation, reflection, revision, and contextual application, while leaving student-generated learning underdeveloped. This finding highlights the

importance of examining not only whether curriculum concepts appear in textbooks, but also how deeply they are embedded in task design.

From a textbook-development perspective, Creation-level autonomy can be supported by tasks that invite students to formulate their own project questions, design learning plans, select resources, create assessment rubrics, develop learning materials, or propose alternative task formats. For example, instead of asking students only to write about a predetermined topic, a textbook could invite them to identify a communication problem in their community, design a short English project to address it, choose appropriate resources, and evaluate the project using criteria they help develop. Such activities would better reflect learner autonomy because they position students as co-designers of learning rather than simply as task completers.

The findings also have important implications for implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesian EFL classrooms. As a curriculum framework, Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes student-centered learning, flexibility, differentiated instruction, and learner independence. These principles are closely aligned with learner autonomy. However, the findings suggest that curriculum reform does not automatically produce autonomy-supportive materials. Textbooks need to be deliberately designed to translate curriculum ideals into concrete learning opportunities that gradually increase learner control (Zulfa et al., 2024). This issue is particularly important for government-issued textbooks because such materials often serve as national models of classroom practice. Teachers may rely on them not only for content coverage but also for pedagogical direction. If textbook activities remain largely guided, teachers may have limited support for implementing more autonomous, student-centered learning, especially in contexts where they depend heavily on textbooks.

The findings suggest several directions for future textbook development. First, learner choice should be embedded more consistently in core tasks, not only in games, projects, or enrichment activities. Students can be given options in topics, texts, strategies, roles, products, or modes of presentation. Second, activities should include more explicit strategy instruction and self-regulation prompts, such as asking students to plan how they will complete a task, monitor their progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies. Third, textbooks should provide more opportunities for task adaptation, peer negotiation, and student-generated criteria. Fourth, Creation-level activities should be integrated gradually, allowing students to learn to design parts of their own learning process with appropriate scaffolding.

These implications are also relevant for teachers. Even when textbooks provide limited Creation-level activities, teachers can adapt textbook tasks to create more autonomy-supportive learning. For example, teachers can ask students to reformulate task goals, select alternative materials, design follow-up questions, create peer-assessment criteria, or propose real-world applications of the lesson. In this sense, the textbook can serve as a starting point, but teacher mediation remains crucial for expanding the potential for autonomy in textbook activities.

This study contributes to learner autonomy and textbook evaluation research by providing empirical evidence on how learner autonomy is facilitated in *Work in Progress*, a government-issued EFL textbook developed under Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka. It also contributes methodologically by mapping learner autonomy across multiple sections of the textbook rather than treating it as a single, undifferentiated text. The study, by examining the Task, Chapter Review, Reflection, Assessment, and Enrichment sections, shows that autonomy support is unevenly distributed across these sections. Pedagogically, the study identifies the absence of Creation-level activities as a key area for improvement. Rather than simply increasing the number of independent tasks, future materials need to provide structured opportunities for students to design learning goals, select resources, create tasks, and evaluate their own learning processes. Thus, *Work in Progress* reflects an important but incomplete movement toward autonomy-supportive EFL learning. It introduces learner autonomy through awareness-building, limited choice, task revision, and real-world extension. However, future textbook development needs to move beyond guided participation and provide more systematic opportunities for student agency, self-direction, and learning design.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which learner autonomy is facilitated in *Work in Progress*, a government-issued Grade 10 EFL textbook developed under Indonesia's *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Drawing on Nunan's (1997) five-level framework of autonomy implementation, the analysis of 73 activities from the Task, Chapter Review, Reflection, Assessment, and Enrichment sections shows that the textbook supports learner autonomy at the levels of Awareness, Involvement, Intervention, and Transcendence, while the Creation level is absent. This finding indicates that the textbook provides students with opportunities to understand learning goals and content, make limited choices, revise learning products, and connect classroom learning with real-life contexts; however, it does not yet sufficiently enable students to design their own learning goals, tasks, materials, procedures, or assessment criteria. The study further reveals that autonomy support is unevenly distributed throughout the textbook, with Awareness-level activities dominating the core instructional tasks and higher-level autonomy appearing primarily in the Assessment and Enrichment sections. These findings suggest that *Work in Progress* reflects the learner-centered orientation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* only partially, as learner autonomy is introduced primarily through guided participation and task extension rather than as systematic learner agency. The study contributes to EFL textbook evaluation by demonstrating how official curriculum materials can be examined not only for content coverage but also for the quality and distribution of autonomy-supportive learning opportunities. Pedagogically, the findings imply that future textbook development should integrate more student-led, choice-based, reflective, self-regulated, and creation-oriented activities across core instructional sections. Teachers may also need to adapt guided textbook tasks by allowing students to formulate learning goals, select resources, negotiate task procedures, and develop criteria for evaluating their own work. Since this study analyzed only the first three chapters of a single Grade 10 textbook, future research should examine the entire textbook, compare textbooks across grade levels, and investigate how teachers and students enact learner autonomy in classroom practice.

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7. Declaration of AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT and Grammarly to support language refinement, academic editing, grammar checking, and structural clarity. These tools were not used to generate research data, conduct independent data analysis, or replace the authors' scholarly judgment. All AI-assisted revisions were reviewed, verified, and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the integrity, accuracy, and final version of the manuscript.

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