

## A Micro-Evaluation of “Family and Friends” Textbook on Using TBLT vs. TSLT Approach and Teachers’ Comments on Its Efficacy

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### ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the extent to which the "Family and Friends" Young Learners’ textbook series aligns with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) methodologies. Additionally, it examines teachers’ feedback on the textbook’s efficacy. An explanatory mixed-methods design was used and checklists were employed to assess the textbook’s underlying approach. Ten teachers from across the country, each with experience using this textbook, participated in the second phase of the study. They were interviewed about their comments on the efficacy of the textbook. Two checklists were designed: one to identify tasks versus other activities in the textbook, and another to compare the textbook’s design with TBLT and TSLT approaches. The analysis revealed that the textbook predominantly follows a weak version of TSLT. Moreover, only half of the teachers expressed satisfaction with the textbook. The rest provided reasons for their dissatisfaction as well as suggestions on how to improve the textbook. The findings suggest that textbook designers should incorporate those task-based elements that align with TBLT principles to enhance effectiveness and meet contemporary pedagogical standards.

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### Introduction

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been developed as a significant approach in second language acquisition (SLA), and has evolved from communicative language teaching (CLT) to focus on meaningful language use through purposeful tasks (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Ahmadian, 2016). Thus, researching TBLT is deeply rooted in the recognized drawbacks of traditional grammar-based and vocabulary-centered approaches, which often failed to facilitate true language competency. As a substitute, TBLT has treated language as a system of meanings, and has promoted active engagement, motivation, and authentic communication (Chegini, 2023; Shehadeh, 2005; Hui, 2004). This approach plays especially a critical role in contexts such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where opportunities for language use beyond the classroom are scarcely available (Jeon, 2005; Jeon & Hahn, 2006). In Iran, for instance, where TBLT is relatively new (Zare, 2007), promoting real use of the target language inside the classroom remains a missing opportunity (Hadi, 2013; Mokarram, 2023).

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Generally, there are two approaches which integrate tasks into language teaching. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) curriculum revolves around tasks (Ellis, 2003), and tasks are the core of analysis during all stages of designing, implementing, and evaluating (Long, 2015). In contrast, Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) incorporates tasks into traditional syllabi, and is often dominated by the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) method, limiting tasks only to the "production" stage (Ellis, 2003, 2018; Long, 2015).

An important component of EFL classes, with a defining role in applied methodology, is the textbook. As resources for materials, activities, and classroom practices, textbooks should not be blindly relied upon; their claims must be scrutinized to assess validity and appropriateness (Cunningsworth, 1995). This makes textbook evaluation critical in ELT (Shatery, 2012), as many textbooks are outdated, based on older methods, and contain ineffective activities. Many learners are required to buy textbooks in institutions, often using international textbook series based on the PPP method, which has proven to be largely ineffective (Skehan, 1996). Thus, selecting the best materials through textbook evaluation becomes crucial (Rashidi & Bahrami, 2012). Textbook evaluation is, therefore, critical to ensure that educational materials and resources correspond to modern methodologies and effectively support language acquisition (Cunningsworth, 1995; Shatery, 2012).

Thus, this study intends to explore the extent to which Young Learner (YL) textbooks that are widely used in Iranian EFL contexts are consistent with the TBLT framework. Specifically, the "Family and Friends" textbook series which are widespread in Iranian educational settings will be examined. Previous research indicates a lack of comprehensive evaluations of YL textbooks with regard to TBLT integration (Pirzad et al., 2021) that highlights the necessity of this inquiry.

By utilizing a checklist informed by TBLT principles, this study attempts to evaluate the presence of task components in the Family and Friends series. The results will provide empirical evidence on the alignment of textbook series with TBLT and will offer practical guidance for textbook designers to revise and update materials to meet pedagogical standards. Moreover, in contexts like EFL where opportunities for natural language use are limited, speaking tasks are considered essential for learners to practice oral communication. Micro-evaluation helps ensure the speaking tasks in the books are meaningful and engaging for learners and help foster authentic communicative experiences. It will also provide a better understanding of how well speaking tasks support language learning and for guiding the development of effective, communicative-oriented teaching materials and methods. Thus, the study seeks to answer the following question:

- Based on a micro-evaluation of speaking tasks, is "Family and Friends" textbook series following TBLT or TSLT?
- What are teachers' comments on textbook efficacy?

## Literature Review

Evaluating textbooks is of utmost importance in English Language Teaching (ELT) because textbooks are considered as the primary instructional resource that shape language learning experiences in classrooms. Research in this area indicate that many textbooks focus on teaching grammar through a structural syllabus or the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) method. However, this approach has limited evidence-based support and often skips the production phase in classroom practice (Masuhara et al., 2008; Tomlinson, 2018, 2020; Tomlinson et al., 2001; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013, 2018). Based on these findings, it is evident that evaluating and updating textbooks to incorporate more effective, research-based teaching methods is essential for improving language learning outcomes.

There are different textbook evaluation frameworks, each reflecting different theoretical foundation. Checklists are regarded as a practical and focused tool for assessing textbook content and task design (Ashraf & Kazemi, 2017; Haghverdi & Qhasemi, 2013; Hussaini, 2020; Toofal & Nasrollahi, 2018). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as one such framework examines underlying ideological and sociolinguistic constructs found within textbooks (Beiki & Gharaguzlu, 2017; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015). The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework stresses the functional use of language and communicative activities, and is useful in guiding researchers to evaluate how textbooks facilitate and create opportunities for real-life communication skills (Goodarzi et al., 2020; Nejati et al., 2018; Rashidi & Bahrami, 2012; Razmjoo, 2007). Each framework has its unique contribution by illustrating different dimensions of textbook effectiveness and limitations.

From amongst these frameworks, evaluating textbooks through a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) lens has received attention. This approach checks the consistency of textbook content with the tenets of TBLT to identify meaningful, purposeful task completion which promotes authentic language use. Based on this perspective, Pirzad et al. (2021) analyzed textbooks in Iranian bilingual schools through combining content analysis with teacher questionnaires. Their findings indicated that although teachers expressed preference for TBLT principles, the textbooks themselves exhibited limited integration of these components. This indicated that the textbooks were limited in integrating TBLT, despite teachers' preference.

Similarly, Ayu and Indrawati (2019) employed TBLT criteria to evaluate task complexity in an Indonesian high school English textbook. Their study found that the textbook contained attractive tasks that met the intended objectives and there was a balanced task distribution across the book. In contrast, Alemi and Hesami (2014) critically evaluated popular Iranian textbooks using Nunan's (1999) task classification and concluded that the recent publication of these textbooks did not necessarily guarantee their appropriateness. Alemi et al. (2013) extended this research by evaluating task quantity and type in Top Notch and Interchange series, and emphasized the gap between contemporary task-based teaching theory and textbook content.

Overall, these studies strengthen the importance of using TBLT-based textbook evaluation as a means of judging the extent to which textbooks promote communicative competence through genuine task engagement. They also reveal a continuous challenge in filling the gap between theoretical progresses in language pedagogy and textbook design.

Research studies done on the Family and Friends textbook series, which is widely used in Iranian EFL contexts, reveals mixed outcomes. Sahragard and Rahimi (2018) used a checklist adapted from McDonough and Shaw (1993) to evaluate textbooks 5 and 6. They analyzed the data by calculating frequencies and percentages and using the Chi-square test, and found that teachers were generally satisfied with the textbooks and considered them suitable for ELT classes, thus proving these textbooks to be well-designed. Even though these findings are based on sound design, they differed in their evaluation in that they mainly addressed general features such as textbook aims and linguistic content rather than task authenticity or TBLT alignment.

In contrast, Esmaili and Arabmofrad (2015) applied a Critical Discourse Analysis to textbooks 4, 5, and 6, with a focus on gender biases in linguistic representations. They specifically examined the linguistic representation of male and female social positions using van Leeuwen's (1996) representational framework and Halliday as well as Matthiessen's (2004) Transitivity Theory Model. This perspective highlights the importance of evaluating not only language teaching methods but also the social implications of textbook content.

Despite the importance and benefits of task-based approaches in ELT, few studies have focused systematically on evaluating the Family and Friends series based on a TBLT framework. Due to the extensive use of the textbook series in Iran, it is essential to evaluate whether the textbooks have meaningful tasks that reflect current pedagogical standards and truly support language learning through effective authentic communication. This study can be beneficial for textbook designers and teachers by demonstrating the necessity of tasks and assessing whether they are integrated into the textbooks and implemented in the classroom which could ultimately improve instructional effectiveness and learner outcomes.

## **Method**

### **Design**

In this study, an explanatory mixed-methods design was applied to evaluate the Family and Friends textbook series in a comprehensive manner. The research proceeded in two main phases.

First, content analysis was conducted to extract and categorize the tasks included in the textbook. This was done for obtaining a detailed quantitative assessment of the textbook's task types and distribution and served as the data source for evaluating the extent to which the textbook aligned with task-based language teaching (TBLT) and task-supported language teaching (TSLT) approaches. Based on this analysis, a checklist based on TBLT versus TSLT principles was developed as a research instrument to measure the extent and nature of task integration within the textbook (see Appendix C).

Second, to enrich the findings from content analysis with contextual insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected English language teachers experienced in using the Family and Friends series. Ten teachers were interviewed to understand their perspectives and feedback on the use of the book series. The interview protocol was developed based on themes emerging from the content analysis and the checklist criteria. The interviews focused on exploring teachers' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward the textbook's tasks, their practical implementation in classrooms, and any challenges or benefits observed in relation to task-based instruction.

## Participants

The study needed 10 teachers with Family and Friends teaching experience. Various institutes in Mazandaran province, Iran, were requested to participate, in addition to some online institutes. Invitations were also posted in two public Telegram groups for teachers and on several Instagram educational pages managed by private educators. Some teachers shared the request with their colleagues. Initially, 13 teachers agreed to participate, but three withdrew after the study procedures were explained. Ultimately, 10 teachers participated, providing sufficient data for the study. All participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their information. The demographic information is listed in the table below:

**Table 1**

*Teachers' Demographic Information*

| Number | Gender | Degree                        | Age       |
|--------|--------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1      | Male   | Masters, TEFL                 | 26        |
| 2      | Male   | Masters, TEFL                 | 25        |
| 3      | Female | Masters, TEFL                 | 24        |
| 4      | Female | Masters, TEFL                 | 24        |
| 5      | Female | Bachelors, TEFL               | 25        |
| 6      | Female | Bachelors, TEFL               | 24        |
| 7      | Female | Bachelors, TEFL               | 24        |
| 8      | Female | Bachelors, English Literature | 27        |
| 9      | Female | Bachelors, English Literature | 23        |
| 10     | Female | Non-English major             | Around 30 |

## Instruments and Measures

The selected textbook for this study was the American version of Family and Friends textbook series. The instruments applied for this study are listed below:

1. Checklist to Distinguish Tasks from Other Types of Exercises
2. Checklist to Evaluate Textbook Orientation: TBLT vs TBLT

**1. Checklist to Distinguish Tasks from Other Types of Exercises**

This checklist was developed by creating a comprehensive list of features of a "task" in language teaching based on the works of Ellis (2021) and Samuda and Bygates (2008)(see Appendix A). The checklist included criteria such as a clear communicative goal, real-world relevance, learner autonomy, and outcome orientation which are the essential indicators in TBLT theory. To ensure

content validity, two subject-matter experts critically reviewed the instrument, and their feedback was incorporated into the final version.

## 2. Checklist to Evaluate Textbook Orientation: TBLT versus TSLT

Through an extensive literature review, it was evident that no existing checklist focused exclusively on evaluating textbooks' task components to be used to determine whether a textbook follows a TBLT or TSLT approach. Therefore, a checklist was developed based on the distinctive theoretical features of TBLT and TSLT approaches as mentioned by Ellis (2021) and Samuda and Bygates (2008).

The checklist items included indicators such as whether tasks are at the core of the syllabus (TBLT) or are used as a supplementary activity to complement traditional PPP sequences (TSLT). Additionally, they focused on the extent of learner autonomy, and the nature of task complexity and feedback mechanisms (see Appendix B). Two experts specializing in language teaching methodologies were invited to analyze the checklist for content validation. Their recommendations led to several refinements before the final instrument was approved for use.

### Data Collection

This study conducted a micro-evaluation of the Family and Friends textbook series, with a particular focus on the speaking tasks within the series. Speaking was selected as the focus due to its central role in communicative competence development, especially important in EFL contexts where oral communication opportunities are limited.

To evaluate the speaking tasks, a checklist distinguishing features of TBLT and TSLT approaches was created. This checklist was used to identify and categorize all speaking tasks in the Family and Friends series as either task-based (TBLT) or task-supported (TSLT) according to their design characteristics.

Data collection in this phase employed a quantitative content analysis approach. Researchers carefully counted and recorded all speaking tasks throughout the series and then categorized each task based on the checklist criteria. The quantitative data were then analyzed descriptively to determine the frequency and distribution of TBLT versus TSLT speaking tasks in the textbooks.

Following this textbook analysis, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with ten experienced teachers who were using the Family and Friends series. These interviews captured teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness, challenges, and practical implementations of the speaking tasks inside the textbooks. Some teachers were contacted through WhatsApp or Skype video calls since it was more convenient for them to be online, some others were met face-to-face and all sessions were audio-recorded for subsequent thematic analysis. Informed consent of all the participating teachers was obtained.

### Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the content analysis of speaking tasks in the Family and Friends textbook series were analyzed descriptively by indicating the alignment or nonalignment of tasks with the criterion. All identified speaking tasks were first classified according to the developed TBLT vs. TSLT checklist criteria. Frequencies of tasks falling into each category

(TBLT or TSLT) were calculated to determine the distribution and existence of task types throughout the series.

For the qualitative interview data, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify recurring patterns and themes identified in teachers' perspective towards the textbook's speaking tasks and their effectiveness in classroom use. Coding categories were developed both based on the research questions and from the data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of teacher feedback.

Research shows that for a targeted study, saturation typically reaches somewhere between the 6th and 12th interview (Guest et al., 2020). In the present study, interviewing 10 experienced teachers seemed sufficient after finding recurring themes on textbook task use, TSLT alignment, and needs for TBLT integration and no new categories emerged in later interviews. Since all the teachers were familiar with the Family and Friends series in the same educational context, saturation was supported with this sample size (Morse, 1995). Moreover, inter-coder reliability was established through independent coding by three researchers.

## Results

The first research question aimed to determine the extent to which the Family and Friends textbook series aligns with the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) or Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) framework in its approach. To address this, all speaking tasks in each unit in the Family and Friends textbooks were identified with the use of the developed checklist.

A sample speaking activity was selected from the textbook and presented here to show how the comparison with the checklist was developed.

### Figure 1

*Family and Friends 6, unit 1, page 11.*

4 **Speaking** Ask and answer.

It needs to be mentioned that individual units within the textbooks generally did not contain isolated speaking tasks; rather, every third unit contained a project that represented a speaking task. This pattern was consistent across the series and in all of them speaking projects appeared at the end of units 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15.

To do the analysis, frequencies of different task types were calculated to provide an overview of task distribution and to determine whether the speaking tasks were more closely in line with TBLT's emphasis on meaningful, authentic communication or with TSLT's more traditional task use in the production stage. All speaking tasks identified were presented as projects that required students to complete them through successive stages that are features of the task cycle in TBLT theory.

To illustrate how the analysis was done, the sample speaking section from Family and Friends 6 (illustrated above) was examined through the use of the checklist to distinguish between task and non-task activities (See appendix D). This checklist evaluates each activity on the basis of criteria such as meaningfulness, cognitive engagement, presence of a gap, real-world relevance, and communicative outcome.

Based on the checklist, this speaking section was classified as a non-task exercise. It did not follow a task cycle process, as it had a single correct answer that could be easily answered from the recently taught grammar point. There was no focus on meaning and its objective was to practice the grammatical point rather than to convey meaningful content. Thus, it required limited cognitive effort and did not encourage true communicative interaction.

The speaking section lacked real gaps that needed to be filled through interaction. All answers and necessary information were provided, and all students needed was to apply the grammatical structure taught to complete it. Although there was an ask-and-answer component, it was nothing like real-life interactions in which the aim is to fill knowledge gaps. What happened was that the questions were selected by the teacher to practice the new grammar point, and the answers did not really matter anyway. In other words, it had no meaningful outcomes, as it was designed simply for linguistic practice.

Another speaking section from the Family and Friends 6 textbook (unit 4, page 47) was analyzed to illustrate the contrasting nature of tasks and non-tasks (See Figure 2. below). This project which was done in multiple phases, qualifies as a task according to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles.

By comparing the section against the checklist developed for this study (see Appendix D), it was found that this speaking section functioned as a workplan that required careful planning and execution which is typically a feature of a task-in-process. TBLT theory emphasizes that tasks should focus on meaningful communication, involve learner autonomy, require use of linguistic resources flexibly, and include successive phases consistent with a task cycle (pre-task, task phase, post-task).

This speaking project mainly focused on meaning and allowed students to creatively and spontaneously use various linguistic resources such as the vocabulary and grammatical rules that they had learned in previous units, to complete the task. For example, students applied any lexical or grammatical forms they knew to write their weekly diary which shows an instance of authentic language use rather than mere controlled practice.

In contrast to non-task projects designed for practicing specific grammar points with single correct answers, this task required students' genuine engagement and language use that reflected real-world communication and was consistent with the core principles of TBLT.


**Figure 2**

*Family and Friends 6, Unit 4, Page 47.*


**Project**

- 1 Look at the story again. Act.
- 2 Make a diary for your plans this weekend.
 

- 1 Write a day on each side of your paper.
  - 2 Find examples of things you are doing at the weekend. Use the pictures or your own photos. Think about:
    - chores
    - hobbies
    - places to visit




- 3 Stick your pictures in the right place and then write to create your weekend diary.
- 3 **Speaking** Use your diary to make plans. Ask and answer.
 



Are you doing anything special on Saturday?

I'm not sure. My mum wants me to help with the decorating. How about doing something on Sunday morning?



Yes! I'm going bowling in the afternoon. Why don't you come?

Sorry, I can't ...
- 4 **Speaking** Tell the class about your project.
 

What are you doing on Saturday morning?

What are you doing on Sunday?

What's your busiest day?

This is my picture diary for the weekend. On Saturday morning, I'm ...

Students engaged in different cognitive processes during this task which included selecting activities for their diaries, organizing them chronologically, justifying their plans during pair discussions, evaluating their planning, and managing their progress through various phases. They had to share relevant information, hypothesize missing details, negotiate with partners, and report their conclusions to the class.

The task had a clear communicative outcome and asked students to make plans with their friends and share these plans with the class. It was holistic and required students to use phonological, lexical, grammatical, and discursal elements to effectively convey their intended meaning. Each phase of the task was defined with specific objectives and instructions, and the outcome depended on the task's conditions.

Furthermore, this task was versatile in the sense that it could be used in different stages of learning for various pedagogical purposes. For example, it could serve to practice the simple present tense, raise awareness about its usage, practice discourse strategies for suggesting, or develop skills for delivering whole-class presentations.

In summary, as indicated by the checklist, the number of such task types were limited across the textbook series and most of the projects functioned more as a non-task than a task. Tasks played a secondary role and appeared alongside various activity types and were considered as just one component of the syllabus rather than its essential characteristic. Tasks were generally not used for assessment purposes but were included as part of class participation, homework, or classwork marks. The syllabus primarily focused on linguistic features and tasks served mostly as tools for communicative practice.

Across levels, the integration of TBLT elements was limited; however, characteristics that were consistent with the TSLT approach were evident, although weak. The proportion of units that functioned as tasks was relatively low. For example, the starter level includes 9 units, of which only 3 include speaking tasks. Levels 1 to 6 contain 15 units each, with 10 units including tasks and this shows that tasks appeared in approximately two-thirds of the units but were scarce compared to other content.

In short, the Family and Friends textbook series can be described as designed with a Task-Supported Language Teaching approach, but with a limited and infrequent integration of task-based principles. The following table summarizes the results:

**Table 2**

*Checklist Evaluation of Family and Friends Textbook Series Using TBLT vs. TSLT Criteria*

| <b>Criterion Description</b>                                      | <b>Yes<br/>(Frequency)</b> | <b>No<br/>(Frequency)</b> |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Task-Supported Textbook Criteria (Items 1 to 5)                   | 4                          | 1                         |
| Task-Based Textbook Criteria (Items 1 to 13)                      | 0                          | 13                        |
| Units with speaking tasks in the Starter level (3 out of 9 units) | 3                          | 6                         |

| Criterion Description   | Yes<br>(Frequency) | No<br>(Frequency) |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| Units with speaking tasks in levels 1 to 6 (10 out of 15 units per level) | 10                 | 5                 |

*Note.* Items represent the number of checklist criteria met ("Yes") or not met ("No") by the Family and Friends textbook series based on theoretical constructs from Ellis (2021) and Samuda and Bygates (2008) distinguishing TBLT and TSLT approaches.

### Research Question 2: Teacher Perspectives on Task Implementation

Teacher feedback provided rich qualitative data that supported the textbook’s classification as predominantly Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) and at the same time suggested a demand for more Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) elements.

In examining teacher feedback regarding the Family and Friends textbook series, distinct themes emerged that both support the classification of the series as following mainly a Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) approach and emphasize teacher's demand for closer adoption of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles.

#### Support for Task-Supported Language Teaching Classification

Several teacher comments reinforced the classification of the Family and Friends textbook series as following a Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) approach by highlighting features related to this method. Teachers mentioned the limited number and scattered distribution of speaking tasks and confirmed that tasks function mostly as supplementary components rather than central elements of the curriculum. This observation aligns with checklist results which indicates that speaking tasks are generally presented alongside other learning activities rather than serving as the primary focus.

Moreover, teachers, too, distinguished the speaking activities to be predominantly linguistic practice exercises which intended to reinforce grammar or vocabulary points rather than to promote meaningful, authentic communication. This emphasis on form and linguistic features is closely in line with TSLT’s focus on structured language practice.

Assessment practices reflected the TSLT orientation as well. The tasks were not formally assessed; instead, their impact on grades was incidental, and manifested indirectly through components like homework completion or participation scores. This matches TSLT’s tendency to avoid using task performance as a major basis for assessment.

For example, Teacher 1 (T1) expressed dissatisfaction with the textbook’s engagement and suitability for his mixed-age classroom: *"The tasks are boring and not related to my students’ interests; many of them liked to skip these*

*sections. It seemed like the textbook was designed for a very particular age group and didn't work well for my mixed-age class."*

This emphasizes the perception that tasks are peripheral and are not meant for creating a genuine communicative learning which is consistent with TSLT features.

Similarly, Teacher 2 (T2) noted the absence of a key TBLT element, the production phase, stating: *"The textbook follows the PPP approach and completely skips the production phase, which makes it very hard and very unlikely to develop learners' speaking skills."* This highlights the textbook's tendency to move towards TSLT, with no full task cycles that encourage meaningful language use.

Teacher 9 (T9) highlighted the outdated nature of the textbook and the superficial speaking activities:

*"The speaking activities are very brief and artificial and need supplementation. The book is outdated, and it follows PPP method without production tasks."*

Together, these comments illustrate the fact that the textbook's current design is strongly consistent with the TSLT approach which emphasizes form-focused, supplementary tasks in a mainly linguistic syllabus with limited communicative practice.

### **Demand for Task-Based Language Teaching Integration**

In contrast to the support for Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) features, teachers consistently called for incorporating Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles into the Family and Friends textbook series. An important theme in their feedback was the need for more meaningful, real-world speaking tasks that aims to enhance both student motivation and communicative competence beyond repetitive or mechanical practice.

Teachers emphasized that effective tasks should involve a complete task cycle with appropriate preparation, execution, and reflection phases to more precisely model authentic language use. This element of cyclical, contextualized engagement is the main feature of TBLT theory which was noticeably lacking in the current textbook design.

Additionally, there was a strong demand for greater learner autonomy and cognitive engagement through tasks that encourage spontaneous language use, negotiation of meaning, and problem-solving. Teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the prevalent inflexible, teacher-directed formats and advocated for more flexible, learner-centered task designs that are consistent with TBLT methodology.

For example, Teacher 1 (T1) highlighted this need for increased engagement and interactivity:

*"The textbook lacks engaging tasks that students need to be able to interact and be creative, not just complete drills that feel boring and irrelevant."*

Teacher 3 (T3) stressed the importance of dynamic and interactive classroom activities: *"If this textbook is supposed to show an effective syllabus, it should contain real interaction, not*

*just grammar and vocabulary drills. Teachers shouldn't be made to create everything that is missing themselves. It's too time-consuming and hard, too."*

Teachers 7 (T7) and 8 (T8), despite overall satisfaction with the textbook, acknowledged the necessity of supplementing or modifying speaking tasks to achieve greater communicative effectiveness:

*"I often add more real and challenging speaking activities to challenge my students more" (T7), and*

*"I modify the tasks so they can become more meaningful and encourage real communication," (T8).*

The following table categorizes teachers based on their feedback:

**Table 3**

*Teachers' feedback on their level of satisfaction and comments about the Family and Friends textbook.*

| <b>Category</b>  | <b>Teachers</b> | <b>Key Points</b>  |
|--|-----------------|--|
| <b>Satisfied with the Textbook Despite Limitations</b>                       | T5, T6          | Found the textbook generally satisfactory. Described it as "good for teaching children." Noted its focus on grammar and vocabulary over speaking tasks.  |
| <b>Highly Satisfied with the Textbook, but Noticed Areas for Improvement</b> | T7, T8          | Noted the need for additional or more complex speaking activities. Generally, very satisfied with the textbook's overall features, such as its cycle and engaging topics.                                  |
| <b>Dissatisfied with the Textbook for Speaking Tasks and Content</b>         | T1, T2, T9      | Criticized the textbook for lack of engaging speaking tasks. Noted the textbook's outdated content and lack of a production phase. Felt it was inadequate without supplementation.                         |
| <b>Neutral or Indifferent Toward the Textbook</b>                            | T3, T10         | Suggested improvements (e.g., more interactive activities) but did not express strong satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Maintained a neutral stance due to lack of familiarity with specific methodologies. |

In conclusion, a summary of teachers' suggested modifications for Family and Friends textbook series related to speaking practice are presented below:

**Table 4**

*Summary of Modification Suggestions for Speaking Tasks in the Family and Friends Textbook Series*

| <b>Modification Suggestion</b>                              | <b>Description</b>   |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Boring Presentation and Activities</b>                | Materials and activities are considered to be unengaging for students.   |
| <b>2. Few True Speaking Tasks</b>                           | The textbook includes a very limited number of true speaking tasks.  |
| <b>3. Weak and Simple Speaking Activities</b>               | Existing speaking activities are considered too basic and insufficiently challenging.                                    |
| <b>4. Need for Useful Vocabulary and Engaging Tasks</b>     | The textbook should include useful vocabulary and design tasks that effectively incorporate this vocabulary.             |
| <b>5. Absence of Production Phase in PPP Approach</b>       | The textbook follows a PPP approach but omits the production phase.  |
| <b>6. More Real-World Activities</b>                        | Incorporate real-world activities to increase student motivation and engagement.   |
| <b>7. Outdated Edition and Lack of Modern Methodologies</b> | The new edition of the textbook does not reflect modern methodologies or significant updates, maintaining an old format. |

This list highlights key areas where teachers feel the textbook could be improved to better support speaking practice and to improve overall student engagement. These textbook series were designed many years ago according to the methodologies common at that period, and they have not been updated and modified to integrate more modern teaching methodologies.

### **Discussion**

This study found that the underlying methodology of the Family and Friends textbook series reflects a weak implementation of the Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) approach. The limited number of speaking tasks was identified through the application of checklists based on TBLT and TSLT frameworks, and half of the participating teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the textbook's outdated methodology.

Current language teaching professionals generally prefer textbooks that reflect modern, communicative teaching methodologies such as TBLT. However, the Family and Friends series proves inadequate in this regard, offering little alignment with task-based principles. Although the revisions reflect recent SLA research and contemporary pedagogical approaches, they fail to bring the series in line with current trends. This disconnect between textbook updates and current pedagogical thinking is consistent with findings reported by Pirzad et al. (2021) and Alemi and Hesami (2014), who observe that while TBLT has become a preferred approach among teachers, textbooks have yet to integrate it meaningfully. Similarly, Alemi et.al., (2013) pinpoint the same mismatch between TBLT principles and the so-called tasks in the Top Notch and Interchange series. Hadi (2013) and Mokarram (2023) have also concluded that promoting real use of the target language inside the classroom in Iranian context remains a missing opportunity.

The present study's findings contrast those of Ayu and Indrawati (2019), who employed TBLT criteria to evaluate task complexity in an Indonesian high school English textbook. Their analysis revealed that the textbook contained attractive tasks which were aligned with intended objectives and demonstrated a balanced task distribution throughout. But the analysis of the textbook series under investigation in this study presents a different picture. The current analysis indicates that communicative tasks are weakly represented and are insufficient to consider the series consistent with task-based language teaching. This should be noted that the discrepancy may be attributed to differences in educational contexts, publication timelines, or the criteria used to define and identify task complexity. These results reveal important variation in how TBLT principles translate into practice in different textbooks which could raise important questions about the reliability of task-based design in commercial materials.

As can be seen from the qualitative analysis of the data, teacher 1 corroborated this concern and noted, "The tasks often felt boring and not related to my students' interests; many of them liked to skip these sections. It felt like the textbook was designed for a very particular age group and didn't work well for my mixed-age class." This highlights the perception that tasks do not serve the function for which they should be designed (which is to foster meaningful communicative learning), and are not fully consistent with TBLT features. In a similar vein, the textbook's TSLT orientation emerges in Teacher 2's observation, "The textbook uses the PPP approach but completely skips the production phase, which makes it very hard to develop speaking skills properly," which emphasizes the absence of a production phase as a core component of TSLT approach.

Teacher 9 critiqued the speaking activities as both too brief and outdated: "The speaking activities are very brief and need supplementation. The book hasn't been updated in years, and it relies on PPP method without production tasks." This criticism reinforces the urgency for modernization and incorporation of authentic communicative tasks.

In contrast to earlier positive evaluations by Sahragard and Rahimi (2018), the present study showed that dissatisfaction among teachers stems mainly from the insufficient number and quality of tasks, which clearly indicate misalignment with contemporary pedagogical standards. Teachers repeatedly expressed the need for more real-world, motivating activities to engage students meaningfully.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the Family and Friends series would benefit significantly from comprehensive revision to more closely integrate TBLT principles and recent SLA insights. The revision would definitely better address teachers' expectations and improve overall effectiveness in speaking skill development.

### Conclusion

This study attempted to evaluate the Family and Friends textbook series for young learners by examining its task content and alignment with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) methodologies. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the investigation combined quantitative checklist analyses with qualitative feedback from teachers experienced in using the series to assess its instructional efficacy.

The findings indicate that the Family and Friends series reflects a weak implementation of the TSLT approach. Specifically, speaking tasks are limited and unevenly distributed; for example, in the starter level, only 3 of 9 units include speaking tasks which reveal how infrequently communicative tasks appear relative to the overall volume of content. Teacher feedback further emphasized this shortcoming and half of the teachers expressed dissatisfaction and criticized the textbook's reliance on outdated methodologies and lack of engaging, communicative speaking activities.

To address these issues and enhance pedagogical effectiveness, it is recommended that the Family and Friends series undergo substantial revision to better integrate TBLT principles. Incorporating more frequent and authentic speaking tasks, including full task cycles that promote learner autonomy, meaningful interaction, and task-based assessment, would align the series more closely with contemporary language teaching theory and practice.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on textbook evaluation by highlighting the critical gap between current textbook offerings and evolving teaching methodologies. The insights emphasize the need for materials developers and educators to collaboratively promote task-based, learner-centered approaches to meet the dynamic needs of young language learners effectively.

### Implications

Writers and designers of Family and Friends textbook series, as well as textbooks developers with CLT and TBLT methodologies, should consider the findings of this study. The research indicates that these textbooks often implement only a weak version of TSLT, or lacking tasks. To enhance teaching effectiveness and ensure a more engaging learning experience, textbook revisions are crucial to better incorporate TBLT methodologies. This would address the current gaps and align the textbooks more closely with modern pedagogical approaches, ultimately supporting more effective language instruction.

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**Appendix A. Checklist of Distinguishing a Task from Other Kinds of Activities**

| Task features (Ellis, 2021; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). |  | Yes | No |
|---|--|-----|----|
| 1   | A work plan.   |     |    |
| 2   | Focused on meaning.  |     |    |
| 3   | Incorporating some kind of gap.  |     |    |
| 4   | Using real-world processes of language use.  |     |    |
| 5   | Containing any of the four language skills.  |     |    |
| 6   | Engaging cognitive processes.  |     |    |
| 7   | Containing definite communicative outcome.   |     |    |
| 8   | Being holistic.  |     |    |
| 9   | Containing input material (objects and instructions).  |     |    |
| 10  | Different phases.  |     |    |
| 11  | The conditions under which it is implemented impact on process and outcome and can be manipulated and variously exploited. |     |    |
| 12  | Used for different pedagogic purposes at different stages of learning.   |     |    |

**Appendix B. Checklist of Determining Task-Based Vs Task-Supported Textbooks**

| <b>Task-supported textbook (Ellis, 2021; Samuda &amp; Bygate, 2008).</b> |   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|--|---|------------|-----------|
| <b>1</b>   | Tasks are an important, but central in pedagogic cycle.   | ✓          |           |
| <b>2</b>   | Tasks accompany activity.   | ✓          |           |
| <b>3</b>   | Tasks are among other elements in the syllabus.   | ✓          |           |
| <b>4</b>   | Tasks are among other elements of assessment.   |            | ✓         |
| <b>5</b>   | The curriculum focuses on linguistic features; tasks are for practicing these features communicatively. | ✓          |           |

| <b>Task-based textbook (Ellis, 2021; Samuda &amp; Bygate, 2008).</b> |   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|--|---|------------|-----------|
| <b>1</b>   | Tasks are the basis of the curriculum.  |            | ✓         |
| <b>2</b>   | Tasks define the syllabus, and language is taught according to the task requirements. |            | ✓         |
| <b>3</b>   | Tasks engage key processes of language acquisition.                                   |            | ✓         |
| <b>4</b>   | Tasks should replicate or simulate real-world activities.                             |            | ✓         |
| <b>5</b>   | Assessment is based on task performance.  |            | ✓         |
| <b>6</b>   | Tasks define the syllabus.  |            | ✓         |
| <b>7</b>   | Task performance is followed with a focus on form.                                    |            | ✓         |
| <b>8</b>   | Task selection is shaped according to real-world activities and learners' needs.      |            | ✓         |
| <b>9</b>   | Tasks define the curriculum.  |            | ✓         |
| <b>10</b>  | Tasks are not pre-selected on the basis of form                                       |            | ✓         |
| <b>11</b>  | The demands of a task determine the pedagogical focus.                                |            | ✓         |
| <b>12</b>  | Engagement with meaning precedes engagement with form                                 |            | ✓         |
| <b>13</b>  | Teacher introduces forms that the learners need for the task.                         |            | ✓         |

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