

## WRITING LESSONS IN GRADE 1 INDONESIAN THEMATIC TEXTBOOKS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

The Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia has launched a new curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum. It promotes a transition from a traditional learning approach to a more progressive one that appears to reflect a constructivist approach. To ensure the successful implementation of the new curriculum, the Ministry produced compulsory textbooks for teachers and students. This study is aimed at revealing the presentation of writing lessons in the compulsory textbooks for Grade 1 that reflects the underlying theory of the 2013 Curriculum. The study analysed the frequency of writing lessons in the textbooks. It also analysed the types and the focus of writing activities in the lessons by using a content analysis. The sample consisted of eight textbooks of Grade 1. Each book consists of 24 lessons. Therefore, 192 lessons were analysed in this study. The results of the content analysis show that writing lessons in the textbooks, to a great degree, are still influenced by a traditional view of learning, especially those in the first two books used in Semester 1. In fact, the new curriculum appears to promote a constructivist approach. The findings suggest that there was inconsistency between the theory underpinning the writing lessons in the textbooks and the theory required by the 2013 Curriculum. In light of these findings, the study considers practical implications to increase the teaching of writing in Grade 1 based on the 2013 Curriculum Framework.

**Keywords:** Indonesian 2013 Curriculum; writing in grade 1; writing lesson; thematic textbooks

Textbooks have been widely acknowledged to play a significant role in the implementation of a new curriculum and are believed to facilitate change or provide guidance for change (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Remillard, 2005). Several studies from various contexts show that textbooks have become agents of change and serve as important learning tools in education since they tend to reflect current pedagogical thinking and the objectives set in the national core curriculum (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Kosonen & Hokkanen, 2013). In the Indonesian context, this is no different, particularly within the last three years since the introduction of the latest 2013 Curriculum. Under this curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia has arranged and distributed obligatory teachers' resource books and students' workbooks for Grades 1–12. The teachers' resource books are known as the teacher's book; and the students' workbooks are called the student's book. For the purposes of this study, the teacher's book in this paper is referred to as the 'textbook'. The provision of the textbooks is one of the government's attempts to ensure that the 2013 Curriculum is implemented successfully (Ministry of Education and Culture [Kemendikbud], 2013).

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textbooks for Grade 1 that reflects the underlying theory of the 2013 Curriculum. The study analysed the frequency of writing lessons in the textbooks. It also analysed the types and the focus of writing activities in the lessons by using a content analysis. The results are expected to add information for the government regarding implementation change and to improve the development of writing in Indonesian primary school and other contexts.

The 2013 Curriculum requires teachers to use the textbooks as the main resource in their classes. For Grades 1–6, the textbooks are organised according to thematic learning that integrate the subject areas at the primary school level since the learning process for Grades 1–6 should be delivered by a thematic and integrative approach. In the Indonesian context, thematic-integrative learning is an approach that integrates various competencies from several subjects under a general theme (Kemendikbud, 2013).

Eight pairs of textbooks are made available for Grade 1. Each pair consists of a teacher's resource book and a student's workbook. Each pair of books consists of some main themes and each of these main themes consists of four sub-themes. Every sub-theme consists of six lessons, each of which contains several subject areas delivered in a day. Conceptually, a sub-theme is delivered in six school

days and a theme lasts for about a month. The teacher's textbooks consist of the detailed information about core and basic competencies for each subject area; the mapping of basic competencies for each subject to be integrated through the theme; the mapping of indicators to meet for each subject; the scope and skills to be developed in each sub-theme; the educational objectives of each lesson; information about media and learning aids needed for each lesson; steps in delivering each lesson (describing what teachers and students do and the teaching methods to be used, and assessment techniques and forms to assess the lessons). The student workbooks correspond with the textbooks and consist of activities for students based on the themes and sub-themes. Both teachers' and students' books are designed to meet the minimal standards. However, teachers can add educational objectives and indicators when appropriate, and use supplementary materials.

In general, the learning should be delivered by an integrative approach in a theme. In practice, each subject in the textbooks has its own basic competencies to be achieved. Indonesian language is a subject that puts writing as a skill to be taught. In the cognitive domain, the basic competencies of Grade 1 require students to acquire a range of knowledge. The knowledge is covered in the descriptive texts regarding parts of the body and the senses, the forms and characteristics of objects as well as the events of day and night, instruction related to looking after oneself, thanking text, personal recounts, and a diagram about family members both in spoken and written language. In the psychomotor domain, students are expected to be able to deliver or construct skills related to the competencies stated in the cognitive domain in both spoken and written Indonesian language. In general, the affective domain relates to the state of appreciating and accepting the existence of various languages, including the Indonesian language. It also asks students to acknowledge various creatures as gifts from God, showing awareness and inquisitiveness about objects using the Indonesian language and developing self-confidence in using the language related to the given theme.

Under the 2013 Curriculum, progressive learning approaches are promoted to meet the expected basic competencies (Kemendikbud, 2013). Teachers are encouraged to shift from traditional approach to a more progressive one using various models of teaching that promotes active learning. On the subject of Writing, various approaches to teaching writing have been developed and implemented in schools. The approaches can be placed on a continuum, ranging from traditional to progressive approaches, influenced by a cognitive view of learning (Boscolo, 2008; Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons, & Turbil; 2003). The traditional approach, characterised as skill-based, views writing

as production; and great emphasis is placed on handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and grammar in isolation (Browne, 1993; Cox, 2005; Harris et al., 2003). Traditional writing activities mostly involve tracing and copying, with a particular focus on neat writing and correct spelling. Although students have opportunities to compose stories, the emphasis is on practising specific skills and presentation (Browne, 1993). These practices were greatly implemented in lower primary schools in Indonesia prior to the Implementation of 2013 Curriculum. Sulfasyah, Haig, and Barratt-Pugh's (2015) study into how teachers implemented the writing component of a curriculum prior to the 2013 Curriculum provides evidence for this. Their study indicates that the teachers retained their traditional approach of teaching writing despite the intent of the curriculum to embrace a more progressive approach.

The teaching of writing using a traditional approach has strengths and weaknesses. Dunsmuir and Blatchford (2004) suggests that a basic level of handwriting competence helps children to write something, which they can re-read and be accessed by a wider audience. The tracing-and-copying activities commonly found in this approach help children to form their first few letters or words and to cope with the mechanical aspects of writing (Browne, 1993). However, these types of activity do not encourage children's composition development (Browne, 2009). Further, copying does not take account of children's existing knowledge (Clay, 1975). Browne (1993) maintains that

by placing the emphasis on copying, the adult is denying the child the opportunity to demonstrate what the child already knows about writing and losing the opportunity to assess what a child can do and what needs to be taught. (p. 12)

New approaches to the teaching and learning of early literacy started to emerge at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. These approaches were influenced by a movement from a traditional behaviourist to a more progressive view of learning: the constructivist approach (Boscolo, 2008; Harris et al., 2003). A number of early literacy studies influenced by a progressive view focused on how young children learn to write (Clay, 1975; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Teale & Sulzby, 1989). These studies reveal that children already have some understanding of the uses and forms of writing in their early school years. Therefore, children's prior knowledge should be the starting point in the teaching of writing (Browne, 2009; Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Further, these approaches also suggest that children's literacy will occur through active and meaningful engagement with the written language and writing activities, which have a purpose and real audiences (Barratt-Pugh, 2002; Browne, 2009; Crawford, 1995; Schluze, 2006; Teale & Sulzby, 1989; Tompkins,

2008; Vukelich & Christie, 2009). These approaches also influence the role taken by teachers in teaching of writing. Teachers are viewed as facilitators of learning rather than as providers of knowledge and information (Cox, 2005; Soderman, Gregory & McCarty, 2005). Building on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development, teachers provide the scaffold for students' writing development, eventually leading students to take full control of their writing (Cox, 2005; Soderman et al., 2005).

Such new approaches to the teaching and learning of writing also give implications for both students' self-assessment and for teacher's assessment. Since these approaches promote the importance of the process of learning, the assessment of students' writing focuses on students' development as writers, rather than solely on the product of their writing (Browne, 2009; Schluz, 2006; Tompkins, 2008). In this case, the assessment is integrated into classroom instruction and involves evaluation guidelines that enable teachers both to know what the students as writers know and can do, and to give feedback as a means of informing ongoing writing and monitoring the progress of their students (Browne, 2009; Cox, 2005; Schluz, 2006; Tompkins, 2008).

Further, these new approaches highlight the importance of curriculum integration (Roberts & Kellough, 2008). For example, writing subject is integrated into other content areas such as social studies and science. The reason is that the content areas provide a place for language use through authentic experiences within a topic or theme (Cox, 2005; Fox & Allen, 1983; Tompkins, Campbell & Green, 2012). Fox and Allen (1983) states that when children write for a real purpose, artificial exercises to practise language become unnecessary. Another reason for integrating writing is that it can be used as a tool for learning (Cox, 2005; Fox & Allen, 1983; Tompkins et al., 2012). Myers (1984) suggests that when writing is integrated into other content areas, the approach should not focus on the surface features of writing, which should be ignored unless they interfere with clarity of meaning. Myers argues that the purpose of an integrated curriculum is to promote students' learning in a meaningful way rather than to focus on surface error correction.

It is clear that a constructivist-based approach to learning proposes the importance of implicit teaching in which the teacher is a facilitator of learning. There is a concern that, without some explicit teaching, the learner may not have enough information or understanding to begin constructing their own knowledge (Tompkins, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2012; Vukelich & Christie, 2009). Therefore, current research suggests that balancing implicit and explicit instruction provides children with effective early literacy instruction (Louden et al., 2005; Tompkins, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2012; Vukelich &

Christie, 2009). While children need meaningful social engagement with books, access to various forms of print and opportunities to write, most also need to be exposed to some explicit developmentally appropriate instruction on vocabulary, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and print awareness (Vukelich & Christie, 2009). A great deal of literature has documented research-based practices and assessments to learning literacy in the early years that incorporate various views of learning, such as building writing into the daily schedule, explicitly modelling writing, scaffolding children's writing, encouraging invented spelling, and making writing opportunities meaningful (Gerde, Bingham, & Wasik, 2012; Tompkins, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2012; Vukelich & Christie, 2009).

## **METHOD**

This study, part of a larger study, was designed to reveal (1) the frequency of occurrence of the writing lessons in the teacher's textbooks used in Grade 1 under the Indonesian 2013 Curriculum; and (2) types and focuses of writing activities in the teachers' textbooks. The sample of the study consisted of eight compulsory textbooks, which were analysed using a content analysis. These eight textbooks are used in one academic year in Grade 1: four are designed for Semester 1; and four for Semester 2. Each textbook, named after different themes, consists of four sub-themes, each of which has six thematic lessons that integrate subject areas taught in Grade 1. Overall, the eight books have 192 lessons, 96 delivered in Semester 1 and 96 in Semester 2.

The coding scheme (Table 1) employed for the content analysis was based on the range of writing activities found in a study about writing in lower primary school in Indonesia conducted by Sulfasyah et al. (2015). Additional categories were added based on the results of an initial survey given to 30 teachers of Grade 1 about the writing activities they conducted in their classrooms. The procedures taken in this study were adopted from a content analysis study by Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao (2012). Prior to the study, two senior lecturers and researchers, who were also training instructors of the 2013 Curriculum for primary school teachers and who were familiar with the textbooks and the content analysis method, assessed the sufficiency of the coding scheme and the clearness of operational definitions for each category by answering a Likert scale-based questionnaire. The scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Each gave a 4–5 score for all items. Reliability in this study was examined by determining the inter-rater agreement between the judgments of an independent rater and that of the researcher to find the consistency of the two raters. The independent rater,

who was a primary teacher educator and was familiar with the textbooks, was first trained to understand all the categories used. Next, 12.5% of the total lessons from eight textbooks were randomly selected and analysed independently by

both raters. Using Kappa analysis, it was found that the reliability between the two raters was 0.81 for the first main category, 0.91 for the second and 0.83 for the third, which indicate a high degree of agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Table 1. Coding scheme

Categories/Indicators	Operational Definitions
<b>1. Writing lessons</b>	
1.1 Writing lessons	Lessons that contain writing-related activities such as tracing, copying and composition to meet the Basic Competencies for Indonesian Language for Grade 1 and/or to help other subjects meet their basic competencies through the integration of subject areas.
1.2 Types of writing activities	Writing activities found in the writing lesson, which range from practising skill-based aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation and handwriting, to writing for communicating or composing in order to meet Grade 1 the Basic Competencies for Indonesian Language and/or to help meet the Basic Competencies for other subjects.
<b>2. Types of writing activities</b>	
2.1 Pre-writing activities	Writing exercises using fingers to practise fine motor skills, such as writing in the air, on the back and in the sand, and exercises to practise holding a pen.
2.2 Tracing	Activities in which children copy by marking lines, letters and/or words placed beneath the tracing paper.
2.3 Copying	Activities in which children imitate or follow letters, words, sentences, handwriting, and/or stories modelled or provided by teachers or textbooks.
2.4 Dictation	Activities where teachers orally read or say words, sentences or stories, and students write what the teacher dictates.
2.5 Completing sentences	A range of activities that require students to fill in missing letters in words or missing words in sentences.
2.6 Writing answers of questions	Activities that require students to answer comprehension questions based on given texts or pictures.
2.7 Making and writing cards	Activities where students make greeting cards and write notes on them.
2.8 Completing tables/diagrams	Activities in which students complete tables or diagrams with information based on the instructions given.
2.9 Writing words/sentences	Activities where students are involved in a range of writing activities where they independently write words under given pictures or make sentences based on the given themes or pictures using new words.
2.10 Composition	Writing activities that require students to write stories, poems, dialogues or personal recounts.
2.11 Others	Writing activities that are not mentioned in the previous sub-categories.
<b>3. Focus of the writing</b>	
3.1 Rubric-related aspects	The focus of the students' writing is based on the rubric given in the textbooks, which includes aspects such as the relevance between the theme and the content of students' writing, correct spelling, tidiness of the handwriting, correct form of the letters, inclusion of subject, predicate, and objects in the sentence, the number of words written and the number of lines.
3.2 Others	Other focuses of the writing that are not included in the rubric given.

## RESULTS

### Frequency of writing lessons in the Grade 1 textbooks

This study reveals that writing lessons are not given on a daily basis in Grade 1. The results, in Table 2, show that of 96 thematic lessons given in the first

semester, only 56 (58%) contain writing lessons. They are given to meet the Grade 1 Basic Competencies of Indonesian Language, as well as the basic competencies for other integrated subjects in Grade 1. For instance, in the first lesson of Sub-theme 1 of Book 1, writing activities require

students to write their names on a blank name card by copying a model given by the teacher. Next, the students are asked to colour and decorate their cards. In this lesson, the focus is on the artistic aspects of the card to meet basic competencies for art. In another lesson, from Book 3, students are asked to draw a picture and then write their story beneath their drawings. This is to meet the Basic Competencies for the Indonesian Language subject.

The data in Table 2 also indicate that writing activities are particularly rare in the first few weeks of Semester 1. The example can be found in the first book, the *Theme 1: Myself*. It is the first book to be used; and of six lessons in each sub-theme of the book, writing activities occur between two to four times. Since one sub-theme is delivered over six days, and one book lasts for about a month, in the first month of Grade 1, students only receive minimum exposure to writing activities.

Table 2. Frequency of writing lessons found in the textbooks for Grade 1, Semester 1

Book/Theme	Sub-theme (ST)	No. of Lessons in the Book	Frequency of Writing Lessons Occurring in Each ST
1: Myself	ST 1: My new friends and I	6	3
	ST 2: My body	6	2
	ST 3: Taking care of my body	6	4
2: My Hobbies	ST 4: I am special	6	4
	ST 1: Exercising	6	2
	ST 2: Singing and dancing	6	5
	ST 3: Drawing	6	3
3: My Activities	ST 4: Reading	6	5
	ST 1: Morning activities	6	2
	ST 2: Noon activities	6	4
	ST 3: Afternoon activities	6	4
4: My Family	ST 4: Evening activities	6	4
	ST 1: My family members	6	2
	ST 2: My family activities	6	4
	ST 3: My big family	6	4
	ST 4: Family togetherness	6	4
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>56</b>

In the second semester, the books also contain 96 lessons. The lessons are distributed equally in four books. The results show that writing activities increase in Semester 2. Writing lessons comprise 72 (75%) of 96 lessons (see Table 3). In contrast to the first semester, most of the writing lessons in

Semester 2—51(71%)—are designed to meet the Grade 1 Basic Competencies of Indonesian Language. Only 10 (14%) of 72 writing lessons are given to meet basic competencies of other subjects. The remaining 11 (15%) contain writing activities in both categories.

Table 3. Frequency of writing lessons found in the textbooks for Grade 1, Semester 2

Book/Theme	Sub-theme (ST)	No. of Lessons in the Book	Frequency of Writing Lessons Occurring in Each ST
5: My Experience	ST 1: My childhood experience	6	3
	ST 2: My experience with my friends	6	4
	ST 3: My experience at school	6	5
	ST 4: My impressive experience	6	5
6: Clean, Healthy and Beautiful Environment	ST 1: My house environment	6	5
	ST 2: The environment around my house	6	3
	ST 3: My school environment	6	5
	ST 4: Working together to keep the environment clean and healthy	6	5
7: Objects, Animals and Plants Around Me	1: Objects around me	6	5
	2: Animals around me	6	3
	3: Plants around me	6	6
	4: Form, colour, size and surface of objects	6	6
8: Nature	1: Weather	6	5
	2: Dry season	6	5
	3: Rainy season	6	5
	4: Natural disaster	6	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>72</b>

### Types of writing activities in the lessons given

Writing activities found in the 128 writing lessons (56 for Semester 1 and 72 for Semester 2) are grouped into 10 categories based on the levels of the cognitive demand required. These categories range from pre-writing activities to practise fine motor skills to the composition of stories (see Figure 1)

The first three categories, which seem to have

the lowest level of cognitive demand of all the writing activities found in the textbooks, involve a range of activities to practise fine motor skills, letter formation and handwriting. In pre-writing activities, students are asked to practice holding a pencil, writing in the air, in the sand, or at the back of their peer. Pre-writing activities appear eight times mainly in Book 1.

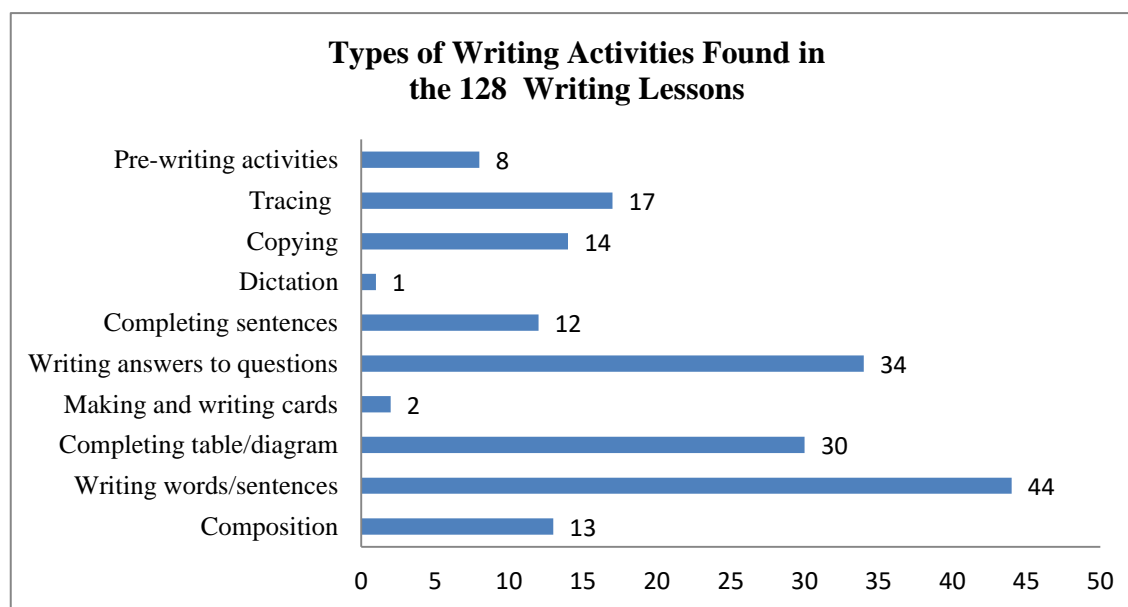


Figure 1. Types of Grade 1 writing activities based on categories.

In tracing category ( $n = 17$ ), students initially trace lines, numbers, letters, words and then simple sentences. In these activities, students also trace print and cursive writing. In copying category ( $n = 14$ ), students involve in copying letters, names, words, sentences, or short paragraph. Although the letters, words or sentences traced or copied are related to the given theme and basic competencies, the purpose is to practise handwriting skills. This is exemplified in Book 1, Sub-theme 2, which focuses on parts of the body. Students are required to trace a range of words such as ‘eyes’ and ‘forehead’. Overall, tracing and copying activities appear 31 times during the whole semester, mostly in the first four books used in Semester 1. Although they also appear less frequently in the books used in Semester 2.

The fourth category, dictation, occurs once, in Book 5. In this activity, students write several sentences dictated by the teacher. The words of the dictated sentences are familiar to the students since they have already practised them through reading and speaking activities. This activity aims to check students’ spelling and sentence structure.

Category 5, completing sentences, covers activities that require students to fill in missing letters in words, or missing words in sentences or stories, by using words provided or found in the given texts. These activities occur 12 times and are spread almost equally within all the books, with the

most demanding tasks in this category, such as filling in missing words in a story, appearing in the later books. The purpose of these activities is mainly to practise words related to the given theme. The last five categories require students to undertake writing activities with greater cognitive demand and are mostly found in the last four books used in Semester 2.

In Category 6, writing answers to questions ( $n = 34$ ), the second highest frequency of occurrence, requires students to answer various questions related to a short text from a textbook. These activities are designed to test the students’ comprehension. Meanwhile, Category 7 ( $n = 2$ ), making and writing cards, requires students to write thank you notes and religious celebration notes on cards. This category occurs in books 4 and 6. In Category 8 ( $n = 30$ ), completing tables and/or diagrams, students are required to complete a simple table or diagram following various activities, such as observation, interviewing or experimenting based on the results of their activities. For example, in the least demanding task, students are asked to measure their friends’ height and write down their names in order based on their heights. In other activities, students are required to write down information in the table about the results of interviewing their friends and then draw a conclusion. For instance, a student will interview other students about their favourite fruits or colour and put the results on the table.

Subsequently, they draw a conclusion about the most favourite foods or colour. These activities seem to meet basic competencies for other subjects such as mathematics.

In Category 9 ( $n = 44$ ), writing words/sentences, students are involved in a range of writing activities where they independently write words under given pictures or make sentences based on the given themes or pictures using new words. This category has the highest occurrence frequency, 44 times, in Book 2 to Book 8. The most occurrences are found in the last three books for Semester 2. The last category, composition, ( $n = 13$ ), requires students to compose based on the given themes, ranging from writing their daily activities to composing a dialogue, making a poem or writing stories, both individually or in group. For example, they are asked to write stories based on a given series of pictures or draw a picture and then write a story about their picture underneath or write a story based on a given theme without any picture. These activities particularly occur in the books used for Semester 2.

The activities found in the last five categories above that require students to make their own sentences or compose poems or stories are mostly assessed on the range of aspects stated in the writing rubrics provided in the textbooks. Depending on the level of difficulty of the tasks, these aspects may include the relevance among the content of the written sentences and the given theme, the correct spelling of the words, the letter formations, the inclusion of subject, verb and object in sentences, the number of words written, the number of lines and the tidiness and cleanliness of the writing. In addition, students' self-assessments are provided at the end of each sub-theme to enable them to judge their own work and their achievement. One option in the self-assessment sheet, for example, says, 'I can form a letter now'.

## **DISCUSSION**

Results from the content analysis suggest that, under the 2013 Curriculum, the Grade 1 textbooks incorporate both a traditional and a more progressive cognitive-based view of learning. The influence of a more traditional view is evident in the frequency of writing lessons in the textbooks, some types of writing lessons, and the focus of the writing lessons. Although a great deal of literature has indicated the importance of including writing in the daily teaching schedule, particularly in the lower schools (Fellowes, Barratt-Pugh, & Ruscoe, 2013; Gerde et al., 2012; Soderman et al., 2005), this does not seem to be the case in the textbooks of Indonesian Language for Grade 1. The analysis of the textbooks shows that of 96 thematic lessons divided between the first and second semester, only 56 (58%) contain writing lessons in Semester 1 and

72 (75%) in Semester 2. Further analysis shows that writing lessons are rare in the first few weeks of Semester 1. The lack of writing lessons in Grade 1, particularly in the first few weeks in the first grade, may suggest that writing is not a priority skill to develop in the early weeks of first grade in Indonesia. One possible explanation for this is that first graders in the Indonesian context are traditionally viewed as being able to learn to write once they have mastered basic spelling and handwriting. That is why students are involved in writing activities after they have known the alphabet. This is commonly found in classes that practise the traditional approach to learning (Browne, 1993; Cox, 2005).

The influence of the traditional approach is also evident in the types of writing activities found in the books, particularly earlier on, where the activities mostly focus on practising fine motor skills, tracing, and copying. For example, in the first few instances of writing in the books used for Semester 1, the dominant writing modes are tracing and copying, while generating ideas are given either later in Semester 1 or in Semester 2. This finding corresponds with other research in the Indonesian context, indicating that low-level writing skills, such as copying, are the dominant activities in writing lessons (Sulfasyah et al., 2015). In addition, the influence of the traditional approach is evident in the emphasis given to the writing product found in the textbooks. The emphasis seems significantly placed on aspects related to the transcription elements of the writing system, such as letter formation, neatness, spelling, punctuation, and presentation (Browne, 2009). For example, the rubrics given in the textbooks that are used to assess the sentences, dialogues, poems, and stories that the students produce include the aspects mentioned earlier along with the relevancy between the content of the students' compositions to the given theme or topic. These findings, however, are not surprising since the traditional approach has been the dominant mode of teaching in Indonesia for many years, including in the teaching of early writing in lower primary schools (Sari, 2012; Sulfasyah et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, there is evidence in this study that shows the textbooks have embraced, to some degree, a more recent and progressive approach to learning to write in Grade 1. Through the integration of subject areas, it is apparent that the textbooks have included various writing modes where students write meaningfully for a variety of purposes and occasionally involve audiences other than the teachers and students. These are particularly found in the last five categories. For example, students write various stories, prepare observation results in a chart or table, write a conclusion of observation results, or write thank you notes for the school cleaners. This suggests that the textbooks, to some extent, have accommodated various research-based

evidence that stresses the importance of involving students in authentic engagement in meaningful activities where they write for different purposes and for varied and real audiences to further their writing development (Browne, 2009; Schluze, 2006; Teale & Sulzby, 1989; Tompkins, 2008; Vukelich & Christie, 2009). Moreover, students' self-assessment at the end of each sub-theme also shows an influence of a more progressive approach to learning (Soderman, et al., 2005).

The findings from this study have implications for the teaching of early writing in Grade 1 in Indonesia and other similar contexts. First, there is a need to balance approaches found in the textbooks. The traditional approach, which is particularly dominant in books 1 and 2, used in the first few months of Semester 1, should be reduced. Students should be encouraged to explore writing as early as possible without worrying too much about the mechanical aspects of the writing (Tompkins, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2012; Vukelich & Christie, 2009). Although studies have shown that having a basic level of handwriting competence allows students to compose something that they can read back (Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2004), too much emphasis on the skill-based aspects of writing will slow children's writing development (Browne, 1993; Cox, 2005; Graves, 1983; Tompkins, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2012; Vukelich & Christie, 2009). Current research suggests that balancing implicit and explicit instructions provides children with effective early literacy education (Tompkins, 2008; Tompkins et al., 2012; Vukelich & Christie, 2009). Children need meaningful, social engagement with books, access to various forms of print, and opportunities to write. In addition, as Vukelich and Christie (2009) stated, 'most children also need some explicit developmentally appropriate instruction on vocabulary, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and print awareness' (p. 12).

Second, although students' self-assessments are included in the textbooks, the assessment types provided in the textbooks seem mostly to focus on the product and transcription elements. Therefore, there is a need to include various assessments that enable teachers to know what the students as writers know and can do, as well as a need to enable teachers to give feedback as a means of informing ongoing writing and to monitor the progress of their students (Browne, 2009; Cox, 2005; Schluze, 2006; Tompkins, 2008).

The discussion above suggests that approaches to writing lessons should not focus on which type of instruction promotes better learning, but rather on when to use each instructional method. Instruction should meet the students' needs and acknowledge individual differences in the classroom (Louden et al., 2005), and it may involve balancing implicit and explicit instruction as a means of improving

outcomes (Louden et al., 2005; Schluze, 2006; Tompkins, 2008; Vukelich & Christie, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

The writing lessons found in the Grade 1 textbooks to some degree appear to accommodate research-based practices influenced by a progressive view of learning. However, this study reveals that a traditional approach to learning is still dominant. It is apparent in the frequency of the writing lessons, and in the types and focus of the writing activities given in the some textbooks for Semester 1. Since research shows that both views have strengths that contribute to the development of students' writing competence, there is a need to balance the approaches in the textbooks. Further research is needed to investigate teachers' implementation of the textbooks in the classroom and the effects of their implementation on students' writing development.

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