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### **DIVING INTO DIVERSITY: TYPES OF WRITTEN TASKS IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS IN SEMEY SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**Annotation.** This study delves into the spectrum of written task types found in English textbooks used by 7th-grade students in Semey secondary schools. It specifically examines two textbooks to evaluate how the included writing exercises impact students' writing skills and language proficiency. Through a comparative analysis, the research identifies prevalent task patterns, assesses strengths, and highlights weaknesses in these exercises, offering valuable insights into pedagogical strategies within Semey's English education context. The findings serve as a resource for educators and curriculum developers seeking to enhance English language instruction, with the overarching objective of optimizing students' language learning outcomes through targeted improvements in instructional design and content selection. This study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on effective language teaching methodologies tailored to the needs of students in Semey's educational landscape.

**Key words:** TEFL, English textbooks, written tasks, types of written tasks, efficacy of written tasks, writing skill, secondary schools.

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### **Погружение в разнообразие: типы письменных заданий в учебниках английского языка для учащихся 7-х классов общеобразовательных школ г. Семей**

**Аннотация.** В данном исследовании рассматривается спектр типов письменных заданий, встречающихся в учебниках английского языка, используемых учащимися 7-х классов средних школ города Семей. В нем специально рассматриваются два учебника, чтобы оценить, как включенные в него письменные упражнения влияют на навыки письма и знание языка учащихся. Посредством сравнительного анализа исследование выявляет распространенные модели задач, оценивает сильные и слабые стороны этих упражнений, предлагая ценную информацию о педагогических стратегиях в контексте английского образования в Семее. Полученные результаты служат ресурсом для преподавателей и разработчиков учебных программ, стремящихся улучшить преподавание английского языка с главной целью оптимизации результатов изучения языка учащимися посредством целенаправленных улучшений в дизайне обучения и выборе контента. Данное исследование способствует продолжающемуся диалогу об эффективных методологиях преподавания языка, адаптированных к потребностям студентов в образовательной среде Семей.

**Ключевые слова:** TEFL, учебники английского языка, письменные задания, типы письменных заданий, эффективность письменных заданий, навык письма, средние школы.

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### **Әртүрлілікке бойлау: Семей қаласының жалпы білім беретін мектептерінің 7-сынып оқушыларына арналған ағылшын тілі оқулықтарындағы жазбаша тапсырмалардың түрлері**

**Андатпа.** Бұл зерттеуде Семей қаласындағы жалпы білім беретін мектептердің 7-сынып оқушыларына арналған ағылшын тілі оқулықтарында кездесетін жазбаша тапсырмалар түрлерінің ауқымы қарастырылған. Зерттеу жазбаша жаттығулар оқушылардың жазу дағдысы мен тілді меңгеруіне қалай әсер еткенін бағалау үшін екі оқулықты арнайы қарастырады. Салыстырмалы талдау арқылы зерттеу жалпы тапсырма үлгілерін анықтайды және осы жаттығулардың күшті және әлсіз жақтарын бағалайды және Семейдегі ағылшын тілінде білім беру контекстінде оқыту стратегиялары туралы құнды түсініктерді ұсынады. Қорытындылар ағылшын тілін оқытуды жақсартуға ұмтылатын

мұғалімдер мен оқу жоспарын әзірлеушілер үшін негізгі мақсат – оқу дизайны мен мазмұнын таңдаудағы мақсатты жақсартулар арқылы студенттердің тілді меңгеру нәтижелерін оңтайландыру үшін ресурс болып табылады. Бұл зерттеу Семей қаласының білім беру ортасындағы студенттердің қажеттіліктеріне бейімделген тілді оқытудың тиімді әдістемелері туралы үздіксіз диалогқа ықпал етеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** TEFL, ағылшын тілі оқулықтары, жазбаша тапсырмалар, жазбаша тапсырмалар түрлері, жазбаша тапсырмалардың тиімділігі, жазу дағдысы, орта мектептер.

## **Introduction**

In language education, the design of written tasks in textbooks is pivotal for developing students' writing skills and language proficiency. This article explores the diversity of written task types in English textbooks for 7th-grade students in Semey secondary schools, Kazakhstan. The study analyzes writing exercises across three specific textbooks to gain insights into pedagogical practices within Semey's English education context.

Well-crafted written tasks are instrumental in fostering language competencies such as vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and discourse organization. Understanding the nature and scope of these tasks is essential for educators and curriculum developers aiming to enhance language learning experiences for 7th-grade students in Semey.

Key research questions include:

1. What types of written tasks are included in English textbooks for 7th-grade students in Semey secondary schools?
2. How do these tasks contribute to students' writing skills and language proficiency?
3. What patterns, strengths, and weaknesses are evident in the design and implementation of these tasks across different textbooks?

Through comparative analysis, this study aims to reveal effective pedagogical strategies and inform curriculum development initiatives for improving English language instruction in Semey's secondary schools.

## **Literature review**

Attempts to compile an analysis of writing tasks in schools' English text-books in recent decade were carried out by Allison Lamonna Escher (2015), Eon-sung Na & Hye-won Lee (2019), Anysa Maisara Tiarasita (2021) and Suhada Arie Kustian (2021). Short review of their studies as follows:

Escher (2015) analyzed eleventh-grade ELA textbooks to explore how writing tasks contribute to students' knowledge construction. The

study focused on 158 tasks, examining cognitive demand, textual depth, and communication opportunities. Escher found that text-based tasks demonstrated higher cognitive demand and rigor, emphasizing the importance of authentic and authoritative task design to improve educational value.

Na & Lee (2019) investigated high school English textbooks using a process-genre based approach. They analyzed 335 tasks across ten textbooks, noting a strong integration of this approach. However, pre-writing activities often emphasized organizing ideas over generating them, and post-writing phases lacked editing and genre awareness activities, suggesting areas for curriculum improvement.

Tiarasita (2021) assessed the relevance of writing tasks in a tenth-grade English textbook to the 2013 curriculum. Analyzing 27 tasks, the study found moderate alignment (80%) with curriculum objectives, highlighting a need to diversify task types for better support of student writing development.

Kustian (2021) studied writing tasks in a ninth-grade English textbook based on Paul Nation's theory. Analyzing 23 tasks, approximately 41.6% met Nation's criteria, emphasizing the need for diverse task types to enhance students' writing proficiency according to theoretical frameworks.

These studies contribute valuable insights into writing task design and implementation, emphasizing the importance of aligning tasks with curriculum objectives and incorporating diverse task types to support students' writing development in English language education contexts.

## **Methodology**

### **1. Textbook selection:**

This study employs a comparative content analysis approach to investigate the diversity of written task types in two specific English textbooks used for 7th-grade students in Semey secondary schools. The selected textbooks are:

- 1) "English Plus Grade 7 Student's book"

by Wetz Ben, Sturing James, and Nicolas Tims (Oxford University Press, 2017), used at Semey Lyceum of Education and Innovation,

2) "Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student's book" by Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, and Bob Obee (Express Publishing, 2017), used at Secondary School No. 26.

These textbooks were chosen to capture different pedagogical approaches, instructional practices within Semey's English education context, and the second reason is that they are the most spread and used English textbooks not only in Semey, but in Kazakhstan as well. Note: There may occur several exceptions depending on the types of secondary schools such as lyceums, gymnasiums and Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. However, the most used types of the textbooks are the ones mentioned above.

#### 2. School Selection:

Two secondary schools in Semey city were selected as the research sites for this study:

1) Semey Lyceum of Education and Innovation: This school uses the "English Plus Grade 7 Student's book" textbook by Oxford University Press.

2) Secondary School No. 26: This school uses the "Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student's book" textbook by Express Publishing.

#### 3. Data Collection:

The data collection process involved accessing and examining the written tasks included in the selected textbooks used in the 7th-grade classrooms of Semey Lyceum of Education and Innovation and Secondary School No. 26. Written tasks were systematically identified and categorized based on their descriptions. For this study, exercises and written tasks in two Grade 7 English textbooks were examined and categorized based on numbering (e.g., Exercise 1, Task 1). The aim was to identify and categorize written tasks into specific types for analysis.

#### 4. Data Analysis:

A mixed-methods approach was utilized for data analysis. Qualitative methods, including thematic coding and content analysis, were employed to identify common patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in task design and implementation across the selected textbooks. Quantitative measures, such as task frequency and distribution, were used to provide statistical insights into

the prevalence and variation of task types.

### **Results & Discussion**

After the examination of the textbooks for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students following results were observed:

#### **1. Quantitative analysis**

**Textbook 1:** English Plus Grade 7 Student's Book

Total Exercises: 627

Total Written Tasks: 181

Complete Sentences: 110

Write / Rewrite Sentences: 52

Write a Text: 17

Describe a Picture: 2

**Textbook 2:** Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student's Book

Total Exercises: 631

Total Written Tasks: 137

Complete the sentences: 60

Write / Rewrite sentences: 30

Write a text: 45

Describe a picture: 2

All written tasks were divided into 4 categories as (1) "Complete the sentences", (2) "Write / Rewrite sentences", (3) "Write a text", (4) "Describe a picture". The analysis revealed notable differences in the distribution of written task types between the two textbooks. Textbook 1 exhibited a higher proportion of complete sentence tasks compared to Textbook 2, whereas Textbook 2 had a greater emphasis on writing text tasks. These findings suggest variations in pedagogical approaches and may have implications for curriculum design and language instruction strategies.

#### **2. Qualitative and content analysis**

**Category 1:** "Complete the sentences"

##### **Common Patterns:**

- Utilization of phrases, adjectives, and other vocabulary from the text or above the tasks, or from the students' memories,
- Practice with different tenses and grammatical constructions.

##### **Strengths:**

- Encourages vocabulary retention and application,
- Reinforces understanding of grammar rules and

sentence structure.

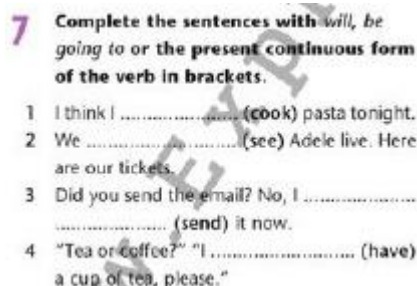
**Weaknesses:**

- May lack creativity or personal expression in

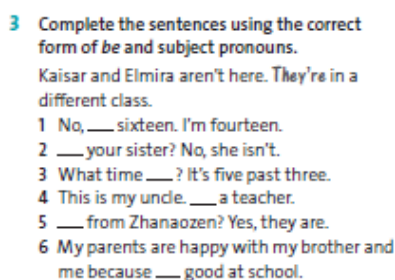
sentence construction,

- Limited scope in sentence variety and complexity.

**Picture 1. An example of ‘Complete sentences’ exercise from Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student’s book.**



**Picture 2. An example of ‘Complete the sentences’ exercise from English Plus Grade 7 Student’s book.**



**Category 2: “Write / Rewrite sentences”**

**Common Patterns:**

- Incorporation of specific phrases, adjectives, or, if simply put, words, into sentence creation,  
- Focus on using correct grammar, sentence structure and tenses,  
- Practice in converting sentences (active/passive voice, different tenses or any other grammatical constructions).

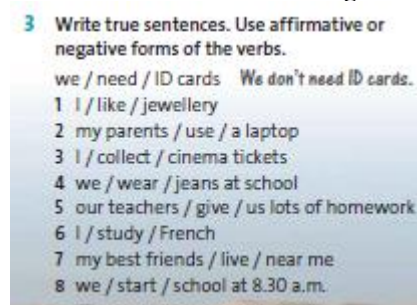
**Strengths:**

- Provides targeted grammar practice and application,  
- Improves sentence fluency and accuracy.

**Weaknesses:**

- Potential for repetitive exercises or formulaic responses,  
- May not foster independent creativity in sentence writing,  
- Limited focus on nuanced writing techniques or stylistic elements.

**Picture 3. A ‘Write / Rewrite sentences’ exercise from English Plus Grade 7 Student’s book.**



**Picture 4. A ‘Write / Rewrite sentences’ exercise from Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student’s book.**



**Category 3: “Write a text”**

**Common patterns:**

- Tasks may include essays, reports, stories, or any other forms of written expression,
- Prompts may require use of specific vocabulary or phrases from the text or above the exercise.

**Strengths:**

- Develops writing skills across different genres and formats,

- Encourages critical thinking and organization of ideas.

**Weaknesses:**

- Tasks may be overly prescriptive, limiting student creativity,
- Lack of emphasis on individual voice or originality in writing,
- Limited opportunities for exploring diverse writing styles or techniques,
- Time consuming.

Picture 5. A ‘Write a text’ exercise from Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student’s book.



Picture 6. A ‘Write a text’ exercise from English Plus Grade 7 Student’s book.

**4 ACTIVATE** Look at the photo of the helicopter rescue and follow the steps in the writing guide.

**WRITING GUIDE**

**A TASK**

Imagine that you took the photo of the helicopter rescue. Write a story with the title *A Brave Rescue*.

**Category 4: “Describe a picture”**

**Common patterns:**

- Describing actions, scenes, or objects depicted in the image,
- Practice in using descriptive language and

adjectives or any other vocabulary.

**Strengths:**

- Enhances descriptive writing abilities,
- Promotes observational skills and attention to detail.

**Weaknesses:**

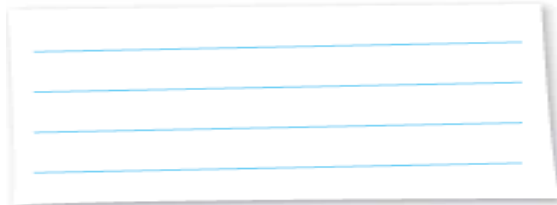
- Tasks may be overly structured, constraining imaginative responses,
- Limited scope for open-ended creativity or

interpretation of visuals,

- Potential for repetitive or predictable descriptions based on given prompts or images.


**Picture 7. A 'Describe a picture' exercise from English Plus Grade 7 Student's book.**

**1** Think of adjectives to describe the six people in the pictures. Write the adjectives on the note paper.



**Picture 8. A 'Describe a picture' exercise from Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student's book.**

**2** **7.UE19** The picture was taken at 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon just before an earthquake happened. What was each person doing? Use these verbs/phrases *eat a sandwich, sleep, talk on the phone, rain, play video games, read a magazine, cook* to complete the sentences.



1	Jenny .....	5	Steve .....
2	Sue and Tony .....	6	Max .....
3	Mrs Smith .....	7	Outside, it .....
4	Mr Smith .....		

In the discussion of how these tasks contribute to students' writing skills and language proficiency, we can analyze the findings based on the table of common patterns, strengths, and weaknesses identified in the 7th-grade textbooks.

The tasks presented in the 7th-grade textbooks play a crucial role in developing students' writing skills and enhancing language proficiency through a combination of common patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement.

1. Complete Sentences: The emphasis on practicing complete sentences using phrases and vocabulary from the texts or above the tasks, or from memory helps reinforce grammatical structures and language accuracy. However, there may be limitations in creativity and varied sentence structures, potentially impacting the development of nuanced language use.

2. Write / Rewrite Sentences: By incorporating specific phrases, words and focusing on correct grammar and tense usage, these tasks promote accuracy and fluency in sentence

construction. However, there's a risk of formulaic responses and limited exploration of diverse writing styles or techniques.

3. Write a Text: Tasks involving text composition (essays, reports, stories and etc.) provide opportunities for students to apply vocabulary and grammar in extended writing. This fosters critical thinking and organization of ideas but may constrain creativity and individual voice due to prescriptive prompts.

4. Describe a Picture: Descriptive tasks enhance observational and descriptive writing skills, reinforcing vocabulary acquisition and language expression. Yet, the structured nature of these tasks could limit open-ended creativity and personal interpretation of visual stimuli.

Overall, these tasks contribute to students' writing skills and language proficiency by providing focused practice in language use, grammar, and vocabulary application. They encourage cognitive engagement and critical thinking, supporting the development of language

competencies essential for effective communication. However, to optimize their effectiveness, it's essential to address the identified weaknesses such as promoting creativity, encouraging diverse sentence structures, and allowing more room for individual expression within task design and implementation. Also, the textbooks contain a lot of other tasks as 'fill in', 'answer the questions', 'complete the table' which can be done in written form; however, they are more situational tasks or they may involve filling in only one word in the gap and this is one of the reasons why a variety of others tasks were not included in this study.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the examination of written task diversity in English textbooks for 7th-grade students in Semey secondary schools has provided significant insights into pedagogical methodologies and language learning outcomes. Through a comparative analysis of the "English Plus Grade 7 Student's book" and "Excel of Kazakhstan Grade 7 Student's book," this research has illuminated the types of written tasks utilized and their impact on students' writing abilities and language proficiency within the specific educational context of Semey.

The study highlights the crucial role of well-designed written tasks in cultivating language competencies, encompassing vocabulary enrichment, grammatical precision, and discourse structuring. By identifying common trends, strengths, and weaknesses in task composition, educators and curriculum developers are equipped with actionable knowledge to enhance English language instruction tailored to 7th-grade

students in Semey.

The systematic categorization and analysis of written tasks have unveiled subtle variations in pedagogical approaches and instructional methods across different textbooks. The selection of Semey Lyceum of Education and Innovation and Secondary School No. 26 as focal points for research has facilitated a focused exploration of diverse pedagogical strategies within these educational environments.

Employing a methodology that integrates comparative content analysis and mixed-methods data evaluation has enabled a comprehensive assessment of task efficacy and implementation. By combining qualitative insights with quantitative measures, this study has contributed to a nuanced comprehension of task diversity and its implications for language learning outcomes.

Looking ahead, future curriculum development endeavors should leverage the identified strengths while addressing areas requiring enhancement in task design and execution. Embracing effective pedagogical strategies such as scaffolding, peer collaboration, and formative feedback can enhance task engagement and foster improved language proficiency outcomes among 7th-grade students in Semey secondary schools.

In summary, this study stands as a valuable resource for educators and stakeholders seeking evidence-based approaches to enrich English language instruction and facilitate meaningful language learning experiences in Semey's secondary school settings.

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