

EFL Textbook Evaluation: The Analysis of Tasks Presented in English Textbook

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Abstract

The use of English textbook does not only become a guide to the teachers when delivering the materials, but also presents necessary input through various explanations and activities. On the side of the learners, it also influences their attitudes and performance to the materials. This phenomenon challenges the writer to conduct research-based article concerning textbook evaluation to analyze the tasks and the distribution (simple to complex) of tasks presented in English textbook used in senior high school. The findings show that the English textbook entitled Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1 has interesting tasks which meet the objectives in curriculum 2013 and a good distribution of tasks across chapters and the whole book.

Key Words: *English textbook, distribution of tasks, tasks, textbook evaluation*

Introduction

English has been considered as a foreign language in Indonesia. It has a special place in the school curriculum. In relation to that, Indonesia has been carrying out teaching English as a foreign language at schools which is taught in primary school, junior high school until senior high school. To aid teachers in conducting instructions and achieving the objectives of materials, they can use some instructional materials as the source of teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Instructional materials are divided into two forms: printed ones, such as textbook, module, handout, brochure, and pamphlet, etc.; and non-printed ones, such as video, cassette, CD, internet and computer based materials. One of the mostly used materials is a textbook.

The use of English textbook has a noteworthy eminence for both teachers and learners. It does not only become a guide to the teachers when delivering the materials, but also presents necessary input through various explanations and activities. On the side of the learners, it influences their attitudes and performance to the materials. It is a truth that when they like their textbook, they will engage actively in the classroom. Harmer (2007) states that the most important aspect of textbook use is for teachers to try to engage learners with the content they are going to be dealing with. Moreover, it also provides the learners with great opportunity to communicate English in the classroom. Cunningsworth (1995) identifies a textbook as a resource in presenting the material, a source for learners to practice and do activities such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, listening, reading, speaking and writing. In short, a textbook is useful to assist teachers in applying the curriculum because it is based on curriculum needed and as guidance in and providing the opportunity for learners to learn.

Nowadays there are several varieties of English textbooks published to accomplish the need of teaching and learning process. They are widely used in schools. *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* is an EFL textbook used by tenth graders for senior high schools and published by national education department. It is in line with the national curriculum or in Indonesia it is called *Kurikulum Nasional (K13)*. All activities in this textbook cover four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They encourage learners to improve their English literacy achievements, as well as their discourse and cultural levels. However, there is no perfect book that can to fulfill various kinds of students' needs. Sometimes some of them are not appropriate with the standard of curriculum. Grant (1987) claims the perfect book does not exist. It means that every textbook might also have weaknesses although it is published by a trusty publisher. As a result, textbook used in the classroom should go through an evaluation. The consideration is made based on clear answer whether the textbook meets curriculum's objective, matches to learners' context, and other aspects.

Since English teachers use textbook in their class, they should select the relevant textbook which is appropriate to the learners. Before they decide to use it, they have to evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of textbook in order to provide absolutely appropriate and ideal to accomplish students' needs. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 97), cited in Sheldon (1988: 237), textbook evaluation is basically a straightforward,

analytical 'matching process: matching needs to available solution'. Textbook evaluation is a process of selecting what textbook to use by considering the need and value of teaching and learning. It is essential for teachers since it provides useful information for planning and managing activities or tasks by learners in classroom practice. In sum, the aim of textbook evaluation is to find out the best material as resource of EFL teaching that will fit to the learners.

Cunningsworth (1995) argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective source for presentational material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who are yet to gain confidence. In addition to that, Hycroft (1998) states that one of the primary advantage of using textbooks is that they are psychologically essential for students since their progress and achievement can be measured concretely when we use them. Without textbooks, teaching and learning process will not have impact, thus, they provide the standards in instruction. Moreover, the use of a textbook in classroom can ensure that learners in different levels will obtain a similar content and therefore, they can be evaluated in the same way. Sheldon (1988) also states that textbooks do not only represent the visible heart of any ELT program, but also offer considerable advantages for both students and the teachers when they are being used in ESL/EFL classrooms.

There are many experts, as mentioned above, that propose some criteria that can be used for evaluating EFL textbooks, for examples, Grant (1987), Sheldon (1988), Cunningsworth (1995), and the last but not the least Mukundan (2011). Each expert has their own idea about the criteria of good EFL textbook. However, all agree that evaluation checklists should consist of some criteria related to the physical attribute of textbooks such as layout, design, size, and visuals. Other important criteria that should be included are those that evaluate textbooks' methodology, the availability of materials based on curriculum, language skills, topics, language appropriateness and cultural aspect.

According to Cunningsworth (1995), a textbook evaluator should identify her/his priorities and make own checklist by using some criteria mentioned and adding others based on personal priorities. Relating to the statement of Cunningsworth, the researcher prefers to use textbook evaluation checklist proposed by Mukundan (2011).

This mini research-based article is expected to give contribution for other researchers who have interest in evaluating English textbook based on the National Curriculum. Moreover, it also can give contribution to material design and development in teaching English as a foreign language. It gives information to the teachers about the appropriate textbook that can be used to support teaching and learning process. Consequently, they can be more selective in choosing textbooks to facilitate the students with the best materials that meet curriculum's objectives and other aspects.

In short, this mini research-based article discusses how the tasks and the distribution (simple to complex) of tasks are presented in *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* textbook.

Method

This mini research-based article applied qualitative study, that is, content analysis. Anderson (2007) defined a content analysis is applicable to various studies including language studies, which concern with analyzing content of certain matter through classification, tabulation, and evaluation. Dealing with analysis of textbook, this study was also classified as descriptive qualitative research design. As stated by Bodgan and Biklen (2003), descriptive is the characteristic of data in qualitative research as it is taken from documents, audio-video recordings, transcripts, words, pictures, etc. In this study, qualitative research design was used to analyze the tasks of textbook. In brief, the research design used in evaluating English textbook entitled *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* was categorized as descriptive qualitative content analysis.

The data was taken from the content of English textbook entitled *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* used by the tenth graders. This textbook is published by National Education and Culture Department and designed for senior high school learners in Indonesia. *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* has 116 pages. The focus of the study was tasks presented in this textbook. The data collection was analyzed qualitatively by using an instrument called the tentative checklist for textbook evaluation that had been previously developed by the researchers (Mukundan et al, 2011). Data was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, that is, "4= very good, 3= good, 2= average, 1= poor, 0= very poor".

Findings and Discussion

Based on curriculum 2013 there are eight main materials that must be acquired by tenth grade students, that is, introducing, complimenting, showing care, expressing intention, congratulating other, using past simple and present perfect tense, describing people, ecotourism destination, and historical places, and giving announcement. In fact, this textbook consists of nine chapters which are in line with curriculum 2013 and match to the specification of the syllabus. It covers seven materials out of eight materials, but it does not accommodate the material about past simple and present perfect tense.

According to Grant (1987), the textbook must encounter the need of official public teaching syllabus. In other words, textbooks used in the classroom should contain the materials proposed by Standard of 2013 Curriculum as the national teaching syllabus. In fact, there is one material proposed by Standard of 2013 Curriculum which are not found in *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1*. It can be concluded that this English textbook need revision in terms of material coverage based on 2013 Curriculum.

Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1 perfectly fulfilled the characteristics of students-centre approach in learning method. This English textbook focuses on students' need, ability, interest, style, and active participation. In this English textbook, also, there are lots of realistic group and pair work activities that define the characteristics of students-centre approach. According to Jones (2007), the role of the textbook in students-centre approach is guiding the students, managing students' activity, and directing students' learning. The method of *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* fits the role of textbook in students-centre approach.

As a result, the teacher can exploit the tasks fully to the students. For example, on page 3, 6, and 8 provide reading tasks in the form of jigsaw, it is so helpful and effective for students to comprehend the text and share about the main ideas of the paragraphs. Consequently, the tasks become more meaningful in the classroom

In addition, the tasks of this English textbook are not performed monotonously. The students are not only asked to do tasks independently but also collaboratively, for instance in the form of work in pairs to make them more interesting. Besides, they can develop their ideas freely in independent task, they also have a chance to create such as description with their friends so it will be more meaningful and they will not get bored. As an example, it can be seen in writing tasks which are not always presented in the form of independent writing. Collaborative and work in pairs writing are also used to make writing activities more interesting. They will have a chance to create such as description with their friends so it will be more meaningful and they will not get bored.

To put it briefly, the tasks are done with various methodologies in ELT. To warm up students' interest and prior knowledge, this textbook provides various kinds of tasks. For example, speaking activity on page 37, the students are required to make a short dialogue about certain situations and then they have to act it out in front of the class. Another example is on page 44 the teacher can be facilitator to demonstrate the task of describing and guessing to his/her teacher, and then he/she can divide the class into some group to continue the activity. It means the tasks presented in this textbook encourage students to be involved in learning process. Harmer (2007) states that the most important aspect of textbook use is for teachers to try to engage learners with the content they are going to be dealing with. It can be concluded that the tasks in this textbook can work well with methodologies in ELT since it has various kinds of tasks to aid the students in learning English.

This English textbook also provides meaningful tasks related to students' daily communication. It can be seen from tasks on page 13 and 37, the students are asked to make short dialogues based on certain situations that usually happen in real life. They are accordance with curriculum 2013 since the students are expected to arrange very simple spoken texts for stating, asking and responding the conversation by concerning the correct and appropriate social function, text structure, and grammar based on the context (Curriculum 2013). In fact, the tasks developed in this textbook are in line with their context to initiate meaningful communication.

Additionally, it also accommodates interesting topics for each task which motivate students to read, talk and write because they are in line with students' daily topics. For example on page 63, the students are given a picture related to school context which can trigger them to share their ideas about it. Litz (2005) states that, essentially, a product-oriented approach centers on the end-result of writing, whereas, a process-oriented approach centers on the process of writing itself. In addition, product-oriented approaches typically engage learners in imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language texts, while process-oriented approaches emphasize brainstorming, planning, drafting, revision and editing.

The other example is on page 79, there are questions used to help and motivate students to talk. Most of activities are intended to apply at home, school, nearby environment, as well as in society. According to Sheldon

(1988) and Harmer (2007), the variation of topics in the textbook should be organized in a systematic sequence chapter by chapter.

Moreover, this English textbook provides adequate task to check learners' understanding related to teaching materials previously. The total number of exercises in this textbook is 82. Each chapter has at least seven exercises. It is on chapter 3, 7, and 8. The maximum number of exercise is 13 on chapter 1. It covers exercises that must be done by the students individually, in pair, and group. The individual exercises are done to check their understanding related to teaching materials previously, in pair activities are usually conducted to implement their understanding orally, and group activities usually done in the forms of game and role play. In addition to that, Hycroft (1998) states that one of the primary advantage of using textbooks is that they are psychologically essential for students since their progress and achievement can be measured concretely when students use them.

In this textbook various tasks are used to develop students' English achievements in the form of listening, reading, speaking, and writing tasks. They are started from the easiest to the hardest task. It means the tasks are graded enough, they move from simple to complex. For instance, the distribution of vocabulary in this textbook from simple to complex occurs equally. It can be identified in reading texts used. There are eight texts used in this textbook and the distribution of vocabulary is good. It provides texts with simple and familiar words and then it becomes more complex in next chapters. However, it is contrast with listening tasks. This textbook provides limited tasks of listening skill. The tasks are overlapping with pronunciation practice. In the tasks, the students are asked to listen to the teacher and then repeat after him/her. It can be concluded the textbook does not provide tasks with well-defined goals as they can be listening and pronunciation activity.

Consequently, since the tasks are arranged systematically after teaching materials, they start from the easiest to the most difficult one. Automatically, they really help students who are under and over achievers. In other word, there is a good distribution (simple to complex) of tasks across chapters and the whole book.

Conclusion

Based on the findings above, the English textbook entitled *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* has interesting tasks which meet the objectives in curriculum 2013. Additionally, there is a good distribution (simple to complex) of tasks across chapters and the whole book. In sum, it can be concluded that *Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X Semester 1* is suitable for tenth graders of SMA in EFL learning as an English textbook.

Based on the finding, discussion, and conclusion of this textbook evaluation study, the writer would like to present some suggestions for those who relates with textbook evaluation and educational field.

The first suggestion is for teacher. Teachers' role nowadays is as facilitator, not instructor anymore. As facilitators, teachers should facilitate their students by providing good materials. This textbook also has weakness especially in listening tasks, teacher should bridge the gap by providing unavailable materials that should be taught based on Standard of Curriculum 2013 proposed by the government. Therefore, teachers need to be more critical and creative in overcoming the limitation of textbook used by making teacher-made hand-out contained additional materials and exercises. Besides fulfilling the materials needed by learners, teacher-made hand-out will develop teacher's skill also.

The last suggestion is for the future researcher. The future researchers of textbook evaluation are expected to do some betterment toward the previous study of textbook evaluation. Several criteria of good EFL textbook from many different experts are provided and easily accessed. Therefore, the betterment might be on the careful adaptation from several criteria of good EFL textbook that should be filtered depending on the Indonesian context.

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