ANALYSIS OF TEXTBOOK USED AT AN ENGLISH COURSE
(A Case Study at an English Course in Pare Kediri)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at analyzing the two English textbooks used at an English Course in Pare Kediri. It was a qualitative study in the form of descriptive case study. The data were collected through interviewing the respondents (teachers and students); observing the class; from the questionnaire result of the textbooks using criteria developed from Cunningsworth’s (1995) and Litz’s (2005) in terms of the objectives, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, methodology, and practical consideration and from notes of the evaluation form given by the textbook evaluators. Moreover, for analyzing the survey data collected by means of the questionnaire, each option of the items was ranked (poor: 1, fair: 2, good: 3, excellent: 4). The results of the analysis found that the quality of the two English textbooks used at an English Course in Pare Kediri tend to be simple. However, the students felt comfortable with the way of the teachers teach using the textbooks and they contributed a lot towards the students’ learning. In accordance with the pedagogical implication of this study, the findings of this study encourage the textbook authors and teachers of an English Course in Pare Kediri to modify some sections of the textbooks in order to improve their quality and to provide textbooks other than the textbooks written by the teachers in order to improve the quality of language input and learning tasks for the students.

Keywords: textbook, English Course

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks play a truly significant role in English language classroom activities. Kitao and Kitao, (1997: 1) viewed textbook as one of five important components in language instruction along with students, a teacher, teaching methods, and evaluation. It is chosen as a written major teaching aid with a lot of pedagogical value for the language practices in the classroom.
According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994: 315), textbook is seen as agent of change. They stated that the textbook is an almost universal element of ELT teaching. No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook. Other theorists such as Richards (2001: 251) stated that textbooks are a key component in most language programs. They serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. For teachers, textbooks or course books either required or supplementary provide content and teaching-learning activities, which shape much of what happens in the classroom (Celce-Murcia, 2001 cited in Widodo, 2007: 110). Furthermore, Garinger (2002: 1) views a textbook can serve different purposes for teachers: as a core resource, as a source of supplemental material, as an inspiration for classroom activities, even as the curriculum itself.

The abundant of published textbook in market makes selecting and evaluating textbooks in EFL classroom becomes a challenging task. Some textbooks may be suitable for language teaching, but not are specifically designed for teaching purposes. They do not cover the materials which meet the requirements of good EFL textbook criteria.

The term evaluation has been used to define a variety of processes in the field of applied linguistics. Lynch (1996: 2) defined evaluation as “the systematic attempt to gather information in order to make judgements or decisions”. Harmer (2001: 301) sees a distinction between evaluation and assessment. He stated that the assessment of a coursebook is an out-of-class judgement as to how well a new book will perform in class. Coursebook evaluation, on the other hand, is a judgment on how well a book has performed in fact.

Meanwhile, selection is a process of choosing something between two or more possibilities. Cunningsworth (1995: 9) defines selection is the process of matching the features identified during the previous stages against the requirements of a particular learning / teaching situation. It is idealistic to expect a perfect fit as textbooks are produced for wide markets and cannot completely meet the demands of every individual class, but selecting within the material, adapting, and supplementing it where necessary will overcome minor deficiencies.
Furthermore, he says that selecting textbooks involves matching the material against the context in which it is going to be used. Therefore, it is important for every teacher to select the suitable materials to be used in the classroom.

As teachers, many of us have had the responsibility of evaluating textbooks (Ansary, 2002: 2). McGrath (2001: 22) stated that the basic explanation of textbook evaluation concerns the discovery of whether what you were looking for was there. When found, you then need to put a value on your findings. Evaluation implies judgment making which therefore also means that evaluation is subjective. Although when evaluating, McGrath claims, that you might miss the unusual and the innovative.

Hutchinson (1987: 96) defines evaluation as a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose. He stated that evaluation is basically a matching process, matching needs to available solutions. Evaluation is then, concerned with relative merit. There is no absolute good or bad – only degrees of fitness for the required purpose.

Based on the definitions above, it can be stated that textbook evaluation is a systematic process of judging and choosing textbook that matches to the learning objectives of the teaching program. This means its aim is to find the best possible fit, together with potential for adapting or supplementing parts of the textbook where it is inadequate or unsuitable.

According to Sheldon (1988) cited in Mukundan et al (2011: 21), there are two reasons why textbooks evaluation is needed. First, the evaluation will help the teacher or program developer in making decisions on selecting the appropriate textbook. Furthermore, evaluation of the merits and demerits of a textbook will familiarize the teacher with its probable weaknesses and strengths. This will enable teachers to make appropriate adaptations to the material in their future instruction. AbdelWahab (2013: 56) stated that evaluation is widely acknowledged as a powerful means of improving the quality of education. One of the major reasons is the need to adopt new course books. On the other hand, evaluation is universally accepted as an integral part of teaching and learning. It is
one of the basic components of any curriculum and plays a pivotal role in determining what learners learn.

There are many researches doing textbooks analysis in formal education such as in primary schools and universities, however, only few studies doing textbook analysis in informal education such as English courses. Thus, this study tried to analyze the quality of two English textbooks, *Describing Picture Handbook* and *English in Use*, used at an English Course in Pare Kediri and also to investigate the extent to which the textbooks contribute the students’ learning. These textbooks were then evaluated using criteria developed from Cunningsworth’s (1995) and Litz’s (2005) in terms of the objectives, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, methodology, and practical consideration.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was conducted at an English Course in Pare, Kediri, East Java. It used qualitative approach in form of descriptive case study. In collecting data, interview and document analysis were used as the instruments. The respondents consisted of the founder of the English Course, the teachers including the writers of the textbooks and the students of the course.

In evaluating the textbooks the researcher collaborated with Muchlas Yusak, as the second evaluator. Data analysis techniques used in this research was an interactive analysis technique. In this model, the components of data analysis were data presentation and drew the conclusion or verification.

For analyzing the survey data collected by means of the questionnaire, first the answers were quantified. Each option of the items was ranked (poor: 1, fair: 2, good: 3, excellent: 4). In order to provide a clear picture of the responses given to the 32 items of the questionnaire, the items were grouped together and analyzed in terms of objectives, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, methodology, and practical consideration. The mean score of the two evaluators was selected as the best representative of central tendency among the three
measures of central tendency because of the fact that it was less affected by the extreme data at either end of the scale (1 and 4).

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The findings of this research are divided into two parts. The first part is the quality of textbook used at an English Course in Pare Kediri; the second is the extent to which textbook used at an English Course in Pare Kediri contributes the students’ learning.

1. The quality of textbook used at an English Course in Pare Kediri East Java

   a. Objectives

      The aspect of objectives in this context means (1) whether the textbook fulfils the general objectives of the teaching program; (2) the suitability of the aim of the textbook to the learners’ needs and interests; (3) the comprehensiveness of the textbook; and (4) whether the textbook allows the teacher to choose the best method of teaching.

      The two textbooks – Describing Picture Handbook and English in Use did not meet specific criteria in terms of the objective. The findings showed that the two variables of objectives were scored 2 and classified into fair. They were about (1) whether the aim of the textbook fulfills the general objectives of the teaching program; (2) the suitability of the aim of the textbook to the learners’ needs and interests. Meanwhile, the other two variables of objectives were scored 1 and categorized into poor. They were about (1) the comprehensiveness of the textbook; and (2) whether the teachers are free to choose the best method of teaching.

      From the analysis results, it can be inferred that both textbooks- Describing Picture Handbook and English in Use got final score 1 for its objectives and were categorized into poor. As written in the preface of each textbook, the goal of Describing Picture Handbook is to enable the students to speak and write English
well. Meanwhile, *English in Use* is written to fulfill the need of TC students especially, and all other English learners to have good English in speaking. These goals are in line with the main purpose of having course at that English Course.

**b. Design and Organization**

Design and Organization aspect here concerns with (1) whether the textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions, structures, and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit; (2) the layout of the textbook; (3) whether the textbook indicates the efficient use of text and visuals; (4) whether the textbook is completed with workbooks, cassettes, or other teaching aids; (5) whether the content of the textbook is organized according to the structures, functions, topics, skills, etc; and (6) whether there are reference sections for grammar.

With regard to design and organization, the data of the textbooks analysis showed that the final score for design and organization of the two textbooks – *Describing Picture Handbook* and *English in Use* was 1. They were categorized poor. These two textbooks did not meet the specific criteria for their design and organization.

**c. Language content**

Language content concerns with the language that is contained in the textbook, with what is being taught (as opposed to how it is taught). This aspect covers six variables: (1) the authenticity of the language used in the textbook; (2) whether the language used at the right level for the students; (3) the appropriateness of the progression of grammar points and vocabulary items; (4) whether the grammar points are presented with brief and easy examples and explanations; (5) whether the language functions exemplify English that students will be likely to use; and (6) whether the language represents a diverse range of registers. From the analysis results, it can be stated that both *Describing Picture Handbook* and *English in Use* got final score 1 for its language content and were categorized into poor.
d. Skills

The aspect of skills in this context means (1) whether the four skills are adequately covered or not, (2) there is material for integrated work, (3) the suitability of reading passages to students’ level and interests (4) the authenticity of listening material, accompanied by background information, questions, and activities which help comprehension, (5) well-designed material for spoken English, and (6) the appropriateness of writing activities in terms of guidance, degree of accuracy, organization of longer pieces writing and use of appropriate styles.

The findings showed that *Describing Picture Handbook* was considered *poor* for its skills. There were five variables of skills aspect that got score 1 and categorized into *poor*. It failed to put the focus on the development of speaking and writing skills. Even though there were sentence patterns formula presented to equip the students ways to construct longer pieces of writing in the form of paragraph.

Similarly, *English in Use* was also classified *poor* for its skills aspect. There were five variables of skills aspect that got score 1 and categorized into *poor*. They were about whether the four skills are adequately covered or not, whether there is material for integrated work or not, the suitability of reading passages to students’ level and interests, the authenticity of listening material, whether there is well-designed material for spoken English and the appropriateness of writing activities.

e. Topic

Topic covers some indicators, as follow: (1) whether the subject and content of the textbook are relevant to students’ needs and interest as English language learners’, (2) whether the topics are sophisticated enough in content, yet within the learners’ language level, (3) the subject and content of the textbook are interesting, challenging and motivating, and (4) there is enough variety and range of topic.
In terms of topic, it seems that *Describing Picture Handbook* did not fulfill specific criteria. The findings showed that three variables of topic aspect got score 2 and categorized into *fair*. Meanwhile, *English in Use* was considered *poor* for its topic. The findings showed that there were three topic variables that got score 1 and categorized into *poor*. They were (1) sophistication of the topic, (2) whether the subject and content of the textbook are interesting, challenging, and motivating and (3) variety of the content.

**f. Methodology**

Methodology in this context refers to (1) whether the book uses communicative approach, (2) the activities used allow various class activities, (3) whether the textbook presents inductive approach to learning, (4) degree of responsibility of the students for their own learning.

*Describing Picture Handbook* did not really meet suggested criteria. The findings showed that three variables of methodology got score 1 and categorized into *poor*. Likewise, *English in Use* did not fulfill the criteria. The findings showed that all the methodology variables got score 1 and categorized into *poor*. The author of this book did not clearly specify the ultimate goal of this textbook.

**g. Practical Consideration**

The final criterion of analyzing textbook used at an English Course in Pare Kediri is practical consideration. It deals with (1) the whole package cost, and (2) whether it is easy to obtain. Both textbooks, *Describing Picture Handbook* and *English in Use*, met specific criteria. These textbooks were considered *good* for their practical consideration. The findings showed that the two variables of practical consideration were scored 3 and categorized into *good*. 
2. Contribution of textbook used at an English Course in Pare Kediri towards the students’ learning

Based on the classroom observations, document analysis, and the result of the students’ interview in the previous sections, the textbooks contribute towards the successful of students’ learning as they:

a. become the source of the materials,
b. give valuable information to the students about what they should do in the classroom,
c. provide language practice that occurs in the classroom,
d. encourage students to be more independent (take more responsibility for their learning in which they can learn, review and monitor their own progress).

Discussions

Based on the description of the results in the previous section, it can be stated that even though the quality of the textbooks used at an English Course in Pare Kediri tend to be simple, they contribute a lot towards the students’ learning. It means that there are a number of factors influencing the success and failure of students’ learning. It is not only the values and advantages that can be derived from using appropriate textbooks as learning materials but also any other factors, such as students’ motivation, teachers’ competence, and learning environment. Thus, the whole business of the management of language learning is far too complex to be adequately served by textbooks as learning materials.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The detailed findings of the study drew two points of conclusion. First, the two textbooks used at an English Course in Pare Kediri East Java have their strengths and weaknesses. However, the students felt comfortable with the way of the teachers teach using the textbooks and they contribute a lot towards the students’ learning.
Second, the quality of a textbook does not become the only one factor that influences the success and failure of students’ learning. The success of students’ learning involves not only the values and advantages that can be derived from using appropriate textbooks as learning materials but also any other factors, such as students’ motivation, teachers’ competence, learning environment, and so on. Thus, the whole business of the management of language learning is far too complex to be adequately served by textbooks as learning materials.

From the study, it can be suggested that the textbook authors and teachers of that English Course modify some sections of the textbooks in order to improve their quality and to provide textbooks other than the textbooks written by that English Course teachers in order to improve the quality of language input and learning tasks for the students.

REFERENCES


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