

A STUDY ON EFL TEACHERS' OWN CRITERIA IN SELECTING ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TERNATE CONTEXT

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Abstract

Selecting an ideal textbook is challenging and thoughtful task for most teachers especially at the time when many textbooks are available in bookstores. Selecting a suitable textbook becomes a critical issue since it can have enormous impact on students' engagement, motivation to learn, and ultimately their language performance. Many criteria should be considered by the teachers in order to reach students' positive learning outcome. This study aimed to investigate teachers' own criteria in selecting English textbook for secondary schools students in Ternate, North Maluku context. The participants of this study were 30 English teachers (20 females, 10 males) at state senior secondary schools in Ternate context. The chosen participants were those who have more than three years teaching experiences. The data were collected by using a set of questionnaire and semi-constructed interview. The findings show that most of English teachers' criteria are matching to latest curriculum, covering four skills, and containing a lot of activities.

Keywords: *textbook, teacher, criteria*

INTRODUCTION

Textbook is a teaching material considered as key component in most language teaching program which is essential for both teachers and learners. It is commonly used by most English teacher for several reasons. Firstly, textbook is easy to find and is commercially provided. A countless number of English textbooks are available on the market today (Fredriksson & Olsson: 2006). Secondly, textbook is relatively inexpensive and need little preparation time for lesson planning, whereas when teachers create their own materials it can be defective in terms of time, cost and quality. They also reduce the danger of teacher occupational overload (Sheldon, 1988, cited in Tsiplakides: 2011). Next, textbook provides objectives for the teaching process, so the teacher can choose which objective that will lead the learning process (Richards: 2001). For most teachers, textbooks provide the foundation for the content of lessons, the balance of the skills taught, as well as the kinds of language practice the students engage in during class activities (Cheng: 2011). In line with this, Yulianti (2011) says textbook is an instructional material which consists of content and material of the subject that is well organized in written form. It can be seen that textbook is importantly beneficial to help the teachers during their teaching activity.

Even though textbook has a great contribution in the teaching and learning process teacher needs to be careful in selecting textbook as their main source of materials in the class. Selecting an ideal textbook is challenging and thoughtful task for most teachers especially at the time when many textbooks are available in bookstores (Fatima: 2014). Also, Also, Cunningsworth and Green in Lawrence (2011) clarify that it is hard for the teachers to choose ideal textbook because of the high number of textbook availability in the bookstores. Therefore, the teachers should be careful on selecting the ideal textbook because the teachers' decision on textbook selection has great impact on students' learning achievement. Ratnasari and Pusparini (2014) point out not all textbook are suitable to the need of teachers and students and match to the applied curriculum as well. They assume that the teachers are not able to select the right textbook that is suitable to their students. It

is supported by McGrath (2002) who reported textbook purchased in market are not carefully analyzed. It is often chosen without considering pedagogical principle and it only benefits the publisher. Sometimes, the textbook is printed with interesting covers without taking into account its significance for the process of teaching and learning.

The selection of textbook becomes important issue since it can effect the quality of teaching and learning.

(Huang: 2011). Many criteria should be considered by the teachers in order to reach students' positive learning outcome. Theoretically, textbook selection involves matching materials to the curriculum and the context it is going to be used. It provides educational objectives but also the best practices and quality materials for meeting them. It should be suitable to the students' background, learning experience, interest, and learning style. It is not just the students' backgrounds and learning experiences, but also students' interest and learning styles; not just of educational objectives but also the best practices and quality materials for meeting them (Cunningsworth, Harmer, McGrath in Lawrence, 2011). One wrong step in choosing an appropriate textbook can lead into the failure in teaching and learning process. It is supported by Mukundan (2010) that the quality of a textbook might be so important that it can determine the success or failure on ELT courses.

Since the government regulations regarding the establishment of textbooks that meet the eligibility requirements for use in learning have been issued, more and more textbooks are available for English language lessons which are served as a mandatory reference by teachers and students in the process teaching and learning. Each school must specify a textbook that will be used for a period of time based on selections made through teacher meetings. In line with this, to choose a textbook to be used in an educational unit, the selection procedure is needed and one procedure that can be chosen is through consideration thought by the teachers. Suherly (2008) states that referring to the Ministry of Education Regulation number 2 of year 2008, the educational unit must determine the lifetime of the textbook to be used at the school for a minimum period of five years. In addition, schools are required to provide textbooks in libraries selected from textbooks that meet national standards. This determination is carried out through a selection process conducted by a meeting of teachers To determine textbooks to be used in school the ability of teachers is required to carefully choose textbooks used as national standard books.

In practice, the use of textbook in Ternate context may be varied. The teachers can use more than one textbook in their teaching and it is used teachers' selection during the book that is allowed to circulate by the Ministry of National Education. Therefore, criteria of textbook selection depend on the teachers. Many textbooks are available in bookstores from various publishers like Erlangga, Yudhistira, Balai Pustaka, Grafindo, Tiga Serangkai, Intan Pariwara. Many choices that the teachers have to select the ideal textbook become interesting issue to be analyzed. Each teacher has their own criteria in choosing and using textbooks. This is what is raised in this study. It aims to investigate teachers' own criteria in selecting English textbook for secondary schools students in Ternate, North Maluku context. The present study is hoped to enrich standardized English textbooks and give contribution to the betterment of using textbooks in teaching English, especially in Indonesia

METHOD

The method used in this study was a qualitative approach and employed descriptive method. The participants of this study were 30 English teachers (20 females, 10 males) at state senior secondary schools in Ternate context. The chosen participants were those who have more than

three years teaching experiences with a variation of age. The data were collected by using a set of questionnaire and semi-constructed interview. The questionnaire had two sections. The first part is about the subjects' personal information; the second part is the Teacher Textbook Evaluation Scale, which elicits the criteria of a textbook for English course. This study is limited to English teachers chosen only from six state secondary school in Ternate. Another limitation of this study is that the study does not contain students' perspectives because they may not be as expressive in the language of ELT as their teachers. We assume that teachers' evaluations will be more accurate. Also, the students are not involved in the selection of textbook used in their learning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In selecting textbooks, the teachers have their own textbook selection criteria that are different from other teachers who use textbooks as well. The criteria for textbook selection considered by teachers at secondary schools in Ternate are (1) national and school curriculum suitability, (2) the presentation of the materials (3) layout and design, (4) the availability of exercises and lots of activities, (5) textbooks accessibility.

1. National and school curriculum suitability

Based on the data, a high number of the teachers confirm that the important criterion that should be considered is the suitability of the material contained in the textbook with the latest curriculum applied in the school. The teachers then clarify that the materials provided in the textbook also should be in line with the standard and basic of competence outlined in the syllabus. It indicates that the teachers realize that textbook they use should be suitable with the curriculum in order to support the success of teaching learning process.

In fact, textbook plays a major contribution in supporting the existing curriculum being implemented. It is in line with Tarigan and Tarigan, (1986) that good textbook should be reflected the curriculum which is applied. It is because there is a strong relationship between both of them. The relationship of textbook and curriculum can be described as water and fish, or as the two sides of coin, two but one, one but two. It should be matched with the goal of the curriculum and be able to support curriculum and facilitate the process of teaching and learning. However, Dharma and Aristo (2018) report that it is often found out that the materials are not always representative and comprehensive enough to support the demand of the curriculum itself in this case the 2013 curriculum that has become the newest curriculum applied in Indonesia. In other words, the textbook is not relevant with the demand of the curriculum as the basis for teaching and learning. Meanwhile, Fauzi (2012) found that all reading topic provided in textbook are not relevant to standard competence in 2006 curriculum. Thus, it is proven that not all the textbook used are relevant to the curriculum.

2. The Aspects of the presentation of material

The material contained in the textbook should contain a map of the concepts and learning objectives in each chapter. Some of the teachers admit that the systematic presentation of material in textbook is also crucial in which the material concept map is available. They argue the existence of material concept map will make the teachers easier to convey a material and look for relationships of the materials in textbook. It should contain much information so that the book can be used to fulfill the purpose of making the textbook. They also assume school textbooks certainly have a good organization and systematic. In a sense, the textbooks contain at least the main points of learning sequentially and are in accordance with the competency standards and basic competencies set out in the syllabus. Furthermore, they consider the textbook should present the topics based the level of difficulty. It is matched to Setywan's statement (2015) that textbooks very

important role that is determining the merits of learning outcomes. Therefore the presentation of material in textbooks must be interesting, challenging, stimulating, varied so that students are truly motivated to learn it.

3. Layout and Design

The next criterion explained by the teachers is layout and design. The teachers assume layout and design are needed to make the book look interesting. They say when the textbook is in good layout and design the students will be more motivated to learn. Some of them mention the good design of cover is also needed. They believe that cover should provide interesting pictures. Also it provides complete information about the books. The covers included the author name and information of the level of the textbooks for users and also included name of the publisher. It is assumed that the teachers are aware of the physical appearance of textbook.

Regarding the layout and design of the textbooks most of the experts emphasize on this aspect. Physical format is the first impressions which often determine opinion about the book. It will invite someone to read and select the textbook (Anshar at al: 2014). This is also said by Reid (2017) that most writers know that a great cover is a necessity when self-publishing a book. It grabs a potential reader's attention and tells them what to expect from the content. Unfortunately, she argues sometimes the inside pages (referred to as the textbook's "interior") are sometimes not given as much thought or attention. Textbook layouts are particular and definitely not one-size-fits-all. The design also must be adjusted for the style and genre of the book. For example: an art book should never crowd the graphic elements with too much text—the point is the reader wants to see the art.

4. The Availability of exercises and lots of activities

The data shows that a majority of the teachers consider textbook should provide many exercises and lots of activities that cover four English skills. They explain textbooks not only contain a collection of material that must be learnt but also present material that can stimulate students to think more broadly, creatively, and reflectively. Therefore textbooks contain exercises that present problems that must be solved. Suherly (2008) clarifies that one feature that distinguishes textbooks from other types of books is the availability of exercises and questions. Therefore, in choosing a textbook it is necessary to consider this aspect. The things that need to be considered are: the quality of the exercises and questions, the match between exercises and the basic competencies learned, and enough questions to measure students' abilities comprehensively.

5. Textbook Accessibility

The data indicates some of the teachers partly agree another aspect that is also very important in choosing a textbook is the accessibility of the textbook. They believe even though other aspects have been considered, if this aspect is neglected, of course, it is still very difficult to have the selected textbook. Therefore, in choosing textbooks they need to consider two things: the textbook is easy to obtain and the price of the textbook is affordable by the students. Considering these two aspects avoids student discrimination. Good books do not have to be expensive books. All students can have books with affordable price and they are easy to have. The teachers' criterion is in line with Tok (2010) who claims a textbook should not be expensive, easy to obtain, and available anywhere.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, textbook has a role as source and media of teaching that the teachers use in their classroom. They have the right to specify textbook selection criteria in accordance with the standard competence and basic competence in applied curriculum. The selection criteria are very

influential towards textbook selection, because one wrong step in choosing an appropriate textbook can lead into the failure in teaching and learning process. The finding of this study indicates that most of the teachers realize textbook should fulfill criteria in order to have good quality of textbook. The criteria for textbook selection considered by teachers at secondary schools in Ternate are (1) national and school curriculum suitability, (2) the presentation of the materials (3) layout and design, (4) the availability of exercises and lots of activities, (5) textbooks accessibility.

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