

THE EVALUATION OF ENGLISH ELECTRONIC BOOKS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: This article reports the results of a study evaluating English Electronic Books for Junior High school in Indonesia. The study used Textbook Evaluation Checklist (Skierso 1991; Cunningsworth 1984), Focuses on physical Appearance, Content, and Supporting Aids of the textbook (Skierso 1991; Scott and Ytreberg, 1990; Grant, 1987; McGrath, 2002; Cunningsworth, 1984; Harmer, 2001; Woodward, 2001; Pinter, 2006) as a framework of text analysis. The study revealed that from several aspects both English Electronic Books (BSE) “Textbook 1 (T1)” and “Textbook 2 (T2)” fit the criteria of English textbooks in terms of physical appearance and content of the textbooks. However both textbooks need some improvement on how to design the activities and to add some proper supporting aids for the teacher. Both the textbooks are attractive in layout, and use some fun explanation on grammar and language function. They also emphasize listening and speaking skills. However the textbooks do not provide complete supporting aids for the teacher such as audio recording for listening activities and teachers’ book.

Keywords: *Textbook Evaluation, Checklist, Buku Sekolah Elektronik (BSE), Document Analysis*

Introduction

Textbooks play a very important role for the success of teaching and learning. Textbooks provide educational text, which can be used as source of the material (Cunningsworth, 1995). They provide objectives for the teaching process, so the teacher can choose which objective that will lead the learning process (Richards, 2001). Textbooks also provide dialogues and worksheet. So the time would not be consumed too much by the teacher to make or design some exercises for the students. In learning activity, textbooks contain many

materials which are used to develop students’ cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills (Littlejohn and Windeatt, 1989). To develop students’ cognitive skills, textbooks provide lots of materials and exercises. To develop students’ affective skills, textbooks provide dialogues. And to develop students’ psychomotor skills, textbooks provide some movement activities in the exercises.

Regarding the role of textbooks in EFL Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest that textbooks have vital and positive roles to play such as helping teacher in designing

and conducting their materials in English Language Teaching (ELT). The positive roles present that the function of textbooks are very important in teaching and learning process. As Cho (2007) states that textbook is a primary material in teaching and learning process and act as the teaching aids. In line with Oliveira (1995 cited in Rahmani, 2009) who claims that textbooks are the simple way in getting various instructional resources to support teacher and student in learning process. Even though textbook is the simple way to get various instructional in teaching and learning process, teacher needs to be careful in selecting textbook as their source of materials in the class.

For teachers who use the textbooks as their main source of materials, they should be careful in selecting the textbooks. Since, it may mislead the students who learn English as foreign language (EFL) if the textbooks are not appropriate with the learners. Inappropriate textbook can be found if the textbook does not match with the learners' needs and characteristics, such as age of the learners, level of the learners and also the learning style of the learners. If the textbook are not appropriate with age, level and learning style of the learners it could mislead the learners. Previous studies claim that there are some textbooks which are not appropriate with the students.

Gustin and Sundayana, (2008) found that there are some inappropriate textbooks for learners characteristics. They found that there are some textbooks for senior high school which do not consider the level and learning style of the learners in senior high school. Yusuf (2008) also found some weaknesses in senior high school textbook, in terms of the instruction of the book and the content of the book. For that reason, textbook evaluation is necessary to be conducted.

In evaluating textbook, there are some approaches which can be used. Regarding this, Cunningsworth (1995 p.1) differentiates two approaches between impressionistic overview and in-depth evaluation. Impressionistic overview is an evaluation approach which evaluates the book from general impression of the textbook just by looking through it and getting an overview of strengths and weaknesses and no significant features which stand out. Cunningsworth suggests that an in-depth evaluation is necessitated, because in-depth evaluation can give detailed information in evaluating textbooks and can lead the teacher to choose the proper textbook for their teaching and learning. So this research uses in-depth evaluation approach.

Recently, the Indonesian government has published

Buku Sekolah Elektronik (BSE) or English Electronic Books. It is a kind of textbook which can be used by the teachers in their teaching and learning process. Even though BSE or English electronic books are published by the government, the teachers should be able to conduct an evaluation for BSE before using it as source of materials which are adjusted to the characteristics of their class.

To contribute in the development of educational quality in Indonesia, this research is aimed to conduct an evaluation of two electronic books (BSE) for junior high school students and to analyze the appropriateness of two BSE for junior high school students, in terms of cover, content, and supporting aids of the textbook. The present study is a kind of post-use or reflective evaluation with more emphasis on vocabulary teaching and learning as an aspect of language which is usually taken for granted. Surely, the results will be a great help for the policy makers, staff and those who have a hand in writing materials according to school syllabus. In analyzing the appropriateness of BSE, this study also involves one English teacher at one junior high school in Bandung as the second evaluator to make the study more reliable since the teacher is the user of the two electronic books (BSE) which are evaluated in this study.

- **Textbooks and Criteria of Good Textbook**

Textbooks are different from the ordinary books or most of books because textbooks are used as guidance for the teachers and students in teaching and learning process. Textbooks are used in an educational curriculum. It contains educational texts which can be used for teaching and learning process in classroom. It is a guide for a teacher, a memory aid for the pupils and a permanent record or measure of what has been learnt. (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994)

Textbook contains many materials used to develop students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Textbooks are description of standard curriculum used in a country. (Brown, 2001; Littlejohn and Windeatt, 1989). Textbook is the coursebook which the teacher and, usually, each student has a copy, and which is in principle to be followed systematically as the basis for a language course. (Al-Sowat, 2012)

As defined by Rahmani (2009), textbooks are tools where curriculum is transferred and interpreted into teaching materials. Textbooks can translate the curriculum into material which will be learned in the classroom. In a textbook, there are many of materials, exercises, and

evaluations, and teachers will insert them into their teaching learning process.

There are several aspects in textbook which can be categorized in three major aspects that is cover, layout and design and supporting aids of the textbook. Cover of the textbook should be colorful and have attractive design to attract the students to read the textbook. Then, layout and design of the textbook covers the size of font, the arrangement of chapters and subchapters, those should be clear and organized well. Next aspect is the content of the textbook which covers objectives, activities, and assessing of the textbook. The objectives mean that a good textbook should provide the objectives of each unit to give the direction of the lesson in classroom. Then the textbook should provide contextual and meaningful activities. The activities in textbook should be based on four skills and emphasize on listening and speaking skill. In addition, the sequence of each skill should be based on receptive and productive skill. Individual, pair and group activities should be in the same proportion. Then the textbook should provide the review and the exercise based on the four skill of language. Moreover, supporting aids of the textbook are also important for teaching and learning, such as teachers' note, web-link, audio or video recording, CD-ROM and cassette should be

included in the textbook. The whole criteria that have been mentioned have to be obeyed by the textbooks authors, publishers, and important one is for English teachers in Indonesia.

- **Textbook Evaluation**

Since English teacher uses textbook in their classroom and to check whether the textbook is appropriate or not, it is necessary to do textbook evaluation. Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1994, p.4) states that "evaluation is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning". Evaluation plays a key role in education and it is important for the teacher since it can provide valuable information for the future going of classroom practice, the planning of courses and management of learning tasks by students. Finally, evaluation is essential for the use of instructional materials such as textbooks. Cunningsworth (1995) suggests that we should ensure that "careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect the needs of the learners, the aims, methods and values of the teaching program". Another reason for textbook evaluation is that it can be very useful for the teachers.

Regarding this, Ellis (1997) suggests that textbook evaluation helps teachers go beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire

useful, accurate, systematic and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. One aspect should be the value of a textbook in ELT, It must surely be with the qualification that they are of an acceptable level of quality, usefulness, and appropriateness for the context and the people with whom they are being used. In the literature, the subject of textbook evaluation is not particularly extensive. Finest theorists in the field of ELT textbook design and analysis such as Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) agree that evaluation checklist should have some criteria pertaining to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics. Another important criteria should be incorporated is the needs of the teacher's approach individually and the organization of the curriculum.

Moreover, criteria should cover the specific language functions, grammar, and skill contents that are covered by a particular textbook as well as the relevance of linguistic items to the prevailing socio-cultural environment. (Alwasilah, 2006; Grant 1987; Brown, 2001; Cunningsworth, 1995; and Harmer, 2002). Finally, textbook evaluations should cover criteria that pertain to representation of cultural and gender components. In addition, to the

extent of which linguistic items, subjects, content, and topics match up with students' personalities, backgrounds, needs, and interests as well as those of the teacher and institution.

From the description above, it can be concluded that textbook evaluation is very important for the teacher who uses textbook as their learning source. There are some considerable aspects that should be considered in evaluating a textbook such as the advantages and disadvantages of using textbook and the good criteria of textbook or how a good textbook should be. It is necessary because textbook is one of the crucial elements in teaching and learning process. Additionally, to find appropriate textbooks for the students is not an easy job for the teachers.

The criteria used in the evaluation checklist in this research are developed by the researcher based on well known textbook evaluator such as Skierso (1991) Scott and Ytreberg (1990) Grant, (1987) McGrath, (2006) Cunningsworth (1984), Harmer (2001), Woodward (2001), and Pinter (2006). The criteria are categorized into six main criteria. They are cover, layout and design, objectives, activities, assessment, and supporting aids of the textbooks.

Methodology

This research uses qualitative research design that applies a descriptive study as its framework (Cresswel, 2012). To find out the aspects of textbook which fulfill the criteria of good textbook in terms of cover, layout and design, objectives, activities, assessing and supports for the teacher, this study employs a document analysis (Cresswel, 2012). The data of the research are two English Electronic Textbooks or Buku Sekolah Elektronik (BSE) of Seventh grade in junior high school which are administered by Indonesian government. Those textbooks are entitled "T1" and "T2". Those textbooks are mostly used in most of national Junior High School in Indonesia. To make the research more reliable, English teacher at one of Junior High Schools in Bandung is involved as a respondent and also as the second evaluator for the checklist of the research.

This research employs two data collection methods, which are: document analysis and using a checklist of the criteria of good textbook covering physical appearance, content and supporting aids of the textbook.

There are some procedures in analyzing the data. First, categorize the data into three aspects of textbook, which are: physical appearance, content, and supporting aids for

the teacher. Second, analyzing and interpreting the data to answer the first research question "To what extent does the BSE for seventh grade of junior high school fulfill the criteria of a good English textbook based on related theories?" Third, analyzing and interpreting the data to find out the supporting features such as Teachers' note, CD-ROM or audio cassette and Web-link that provided in BSE for seventh grade of senior high school based on related theories. Finally, reporting the result of the research descriptively.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The checklists of textbook evaluation were divided into three parts; the physical appearance, contents, and supporting aids of textbook. Physical appearances consist of general appearance of textbooks such as, cover, layout, and color. The contents are divided into objectives, activities and assessment. And, supporting aids consist of teacher' note, audio cassette/video tapes/CD-ROMs, extra resource materials and the web-links.

The first criteria of textbook used are physical appearance. The physical appearance in the research consists of cover, color, layout which would be elaborated bellow. The results of the checklist from the physical appearance are presented in the table below.

Table 1. The Result of The Checklist from The Physical Appearance

No	Main criteria	Aspect (s) assessed	T1		T2	
			√ or X		√ or X	
			E1	E2	E1	E2
1	Cover	Providing interest pictures or photograph	√	X	√	X
		Including author name	√	√	√	√
		Including publisher name	√	√	√	√
		Providing clear print title	√	√	√	√
		Including grade for the book user	√	√	√	√
		Including curriculum that is used	X	X	X	X
		Colorful	X	X	√	√
2	Layout and Design	The layout and design is appropriate and clear	√	X	√	√
		The textbook includes detailed overview of the genres, function, structure and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.	√	√	√	√
		The textbook is organized effectively	√	√	√	√
		The print is easy to read	√	√	√	√

Cover is the first aspect that will invite someone to read and select the textbook. From the checklist it was found that Evaluator 1 (E1) and Evaluator 2 (E2) agreed that “Textbook I (T1)” and “Textbook II (T2)” provided interesting pictures. In the T1 and T2 the research found that the covers of those textbooks were colorful with big illustration. The titles of T1 and T2 which were written in big font were easy to read. Moreover, both evaluators also agreed that the covers provided 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.

Regarding the covers of the textbooks most of the experts emphasize on this aspect. Physical format is the first impressions which often determine our opinion about the books. Especially for the students of seventh grade of junior high school, physical format would attract them to select their own books. Most of the theories proposed that the first aspect to be considered in developing good textbook is designing attractive cover which means that the cover of the textbook is full color and contain appropriate pictures or photograph which can attract the reader (Byrd, 2001 and Tomlinson, 1998). The use of illustration and photograph are very useful to make the cover more convincing and fascinating to learners. In addition, good cover of the textbook should be informative. It includes title of the book, the author of the book, and the name of the publisher, curriculum which is used by the book and level of the user (Mendez and Lopez, 2005).

Besides the color and the cover, layout of textbook is also important. Layout and organization of textbooks has a great influence on learning of the basic information in the texts. Teaching materials with clear layout and structure have a noticeable effect on leaning. Learners’

curiosity and attention are attracted when the material is visually attractive and well organized. Sheldon (1988), points that textbooks are physical artifacts, and the author needs to recognize that layout, format, typography and graphics are also essential for a successful coursebook. In addition Nunan (1991), points out that, The way materials are organized and presented, as well as the types of content and activities, will help to shape the learner's view of language. The evaluators agreed that both textbooks provided the clear and attractive layout. The sheets of printed papers were easy to read. In general, the arrangement of chapters, heading, and subchapters seemed to be uncluttered in "T1" and "T2".

Clear and attractive layout also becomes an important aspect that should be assessed (Varela, 2003). This is in line with Grant (1987) who states that attractiveness becomes one of consideration in selecting a textbook. Attractive layout means that the layouts are arranged tidily. It does not make the reader confused in reading the textbook. They should have enough space, if the textbooks used graphic and pictures. They should know where the heading, chapters, subchapters, index, and appendices are placed. This research found that the layouts of the textbooks were good. The letter of the textbooks used big fonts. Big fonts

indicate readability. Good textbooks also give space to the learners to write the answer or answer-sheet in evaluation part. Giving space for the learners to do the tasks in every activity is more effective. (Grant, 1987)

The next category which is analyzed is contents of the textbooks. Generally the content of the textbooks covers whole activities provided by textbooks. It consists of the objectives of the lesson, four language skills activities, including grammar explanation, grouping activities, and assessment.

In evaluating textbooks, the most important feature to be treated is to check the presence of objectives in the textbooks and to examine their quality and appropriate to the students' level. Objectives of the lesson are important to give direction of the activities. Moreover, Hyland, (2007) states that objectives are important to ensure that appropriate learning is achieved. Just as syllabus, objectives specify the knowledge and skills students will acquire at the end of a course, lesson and unit objectives describe the observable behaviors learners will display at the end of the unit.

Teaching materials need to address clearly stated objectives. When students know why and what they are learning, it makes the activities and tasks more authentic and

meaningful. According to Cunningsworth, (1995) who state that the aims and objectives of a learning/teaching process should determine which course materials are used, and should reflecting the principle that coursebooks are better servants than masters. Good textbooks should help learners in attaining the determined objectives. The results of the checklist from the objectives of the textbooks are also presented in the table below.

Table 2. The Results of the Checklist from the Objectives of the Textbooks

No	Main Criteria	Aspect (s) assessed	T1		T2	
			√ or X		√ or X	
			E1	E2	E1	E2
3	Objectives	The material objectives are apparently stated	√	√	X	X
		Implementing the materials	√	√	√	√
		The approach recommended in the textbook is appropriate to current teaching and learning context.	X	X	√	√

Both Evaluators agreed that “T1” provided objectives in every unit. The objectives were placed at the first page in every chapter. The objectives were appropriate to the activities and they were achievable to the learners. Since a good textbook should provide syllabus for the course to give aims and objectives of the course (Richards, 2001, Graves, 2000). It is important for the textbook to provide and

state the objectives of each unit in the textbooks.

Different from “T1”, both Evaluators agreed that “T2” did not present objectives in each chapter. It means that the teacher should conduct their own objectives in every teaching and learning process. Meanwhile a good textbook should provide the objectives of each learning process or each unit, to give direction and limitation for teacher on how the material to be taught in EFL classroom. (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2001; Richards, 2001)

The next category is assessment is the essential element in language learning. It should not be left out. It is important to assess the students’ progress in their learning. The results of the checklist from the assessment of the textbook are also presented in the table below:

Table 3. The Result of the Checklist from the Assessment of the Textbooks

No	Main Criteria	Aspect (s) assessed	T1		T2	
			√ or X		√ or X	
			E1	E2	E1	E2
6	Assessment	Providing periodic review exercise	√	√	√	√
		Including four language skills	√	√	√	√

Both Evaluators agreed that “T1” and “T2” provided periodic review exercise and those assessments also provided four language skills. Assessment in textbooks

should be able to test the students' progress after learning materials.

The last part is supporting aids of the textbook. Good textbook provided supporting aids that are useful to help the teacher in using the textbook. It supports the teachers to prepare their teaching in a limited time. The supporting aids cover teachers' note, audio cassettes/CD-ROMs, extra sources of materials and web links. It is in line with Richard (2001) and Graves (2001) who state that the textbooks should include supporting materials such as teachers' guide, cassettes, worksheet and video which helps the teacher and makes the learning environment more interesting and enjoyable. The results of the checklist from the supporting aids of the textbooks are presented in the table below:

Table 4. The Result of the Checklist from the Supporting aids of the Textbooks

No	Main Criteria	Aspect (s) assessed	T1		T2	
			√ or X		√ or X	
			E1	E2	E1	E2
6	Supports for teacher (teaching-aids)	Presenting teachers' book	X	X	X	X
		Including CD-ROMs/audio recording/video recording	X	X	X	X
		Including teachers note	X	X	√	√
		Including web-links	√	√	√	√
		Including extra source of materials	√	√	X	X

Generally, the textbooks are good when it seen from several aspects covering physical appearance, content and supporting aids of the textbooks. In terms of physical appearance, the textbooks used an attractive cover which can attract the readers. In addition, both of the textbooks were well-organized since the chapters and sub-chapters of the textbooks arranged systematically. In terms of content, the textbooks can motivate the learners to study. Since, it provided the contextual topic and the sequence of activities. Moreover, both textbooks emphasized the listening and speaking skills. The textbooks designed activities by providing many pictures. The textbooks also accommodated the learners to be communicative and to work together with their friends. In this case, the visuals aids were clear enough and the instruction of the books are understandable for the students. Moreover, one of textbook that analyzed in this study (T2) was using bilingual instructions to avoid misunderstanding for the students.

However, in terms of supporting aids of the textbooks, "T1" and "T2" did not provide audio, visual aids and teachers' book. Fortunately, both textbooks mentioned the publisher web-links and the other resources which help the teachers in using the textbooks. The web-link included sources of visual aids and the stories of the

books. Thus, it can be concluded that both textbooks do not provide four kinds of supporting aids included in the checklist.

Conclusions

This article has presented the result of qualitative study textbook evaluation for junior high school level. Generally, the textbooks are good when it seen from several aspects covering physical appearance, content and supporting aids of the textbooks. In terms of physical appearance, the textbooks used an attractive cover which can attract the readers. In addition, both of the textbooks were well-organized since the chapters and sub-chapters of the textbooks arranged systematically. In terms of content, the textbooks can motivate the learners to study. Since, it provided the contextual topic and the sequence of activities. Moreover, both textbooks emphasized the listening and speaking skills. The textbooks designed activities by providing many pictures. The textbooks also accommodated the learners to be communicative and to work together with their friends. In this case, the visuals aids were clear enough and the instruction of the books are understandable for the students. Moreover, one of textbook that analyzed in this study (T2) was using bilingual instructions to avoid misunderstanding for the students.

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From this research, there are some suggestions recommended for English teacher in junior high school, for the publisher and for the further research.

For English teachers in junior high school, a good English teacher should be selective in choosing their textbooks for their teaching and learning process. Teachers should be more creative and flexible in order to accommodate the needs of the students. They could add or omit some activities based on the students’ need. Teachers should know the criteria of good textbooks before deciding which textbook is appropriate to use in their classroom. It aimed to keep the activities in the context of meaningful learning.

Afterward, for the publishers of BSE, they should consider not only the physical appearances of the textbooks but the contents and the component which support the teachers in using the textbooks in EFL

classroom also need to be considered. Since, if the textbooks are incomplete, it makes difficult for the teachers to use the textbook efficiently. In addition, for the textbooks authors, they should give much attention to design appropriate textbook for the students of particular grade especially for seventh grade of junior high school. They should make some survey in using textbook in low-learners abilities rather than high abilities.

Finally for the further research, the researcher who wants to conduct a research of textbooks evaluation should be based on the students and teachers point of view. In addition, the research should be in-depth illustrations to give more comprehension about the criteria of good textbooks.

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