

## TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD EFL TEXTBOOK

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### Abstract

Teachers have an important role in determining a good textbook for students. However, it seems difficult because the teachers should have academic and non-academic considerations. This qualitative research aims to investigate 10 teachers' perceptions toward the use of EFL textbook and the strength and weakness of the 'English Ok' textbook used in 5 schools in Bandung. Through the questionnaire, interview and document analysis, 80% of teachers said that the use of the textbook was helpful and important for them. They used the textbook as the source of learning and made an effective time in transferring the knowledge. Meanwhile, 20% of teachers perceived that they preferred to use adapting materials from other resources as the materials than the book. In terms of practical consideration (accessibility, attractiveness, accessibility, and publication), layout and design, content (materials, practice, and activities), learners' need and language accuracy, the 'English ok' book was considered as a good textbook. The weaknesses of the textbook were the unavailability of the audiocassette, answer sheet and exercise preparation for the national examination. Involving more participants are recommended to find out the perceptions of anti-textbook teachers.

**Keywords:** *Teachers perception, EFL Textbook.*

## INTRODUCTION

The use of textbook is debatable for teachers. Some teachers consider that it is important to use textbook in the classroom since it is the source for carrying out many activities in the lesson. On the contrary, other teachers claim that the use of textbook would only spend much time in explaining materials on the textbook. The condition gets teachers to pursue their best perceptions in dealing the way to choose.

Regarding the textbook selection process, teachers' perceptions play an important role in deciding materials for students. Educators have underlined a position which teachers' perceptions hold in education and agreed that teachers' perceptions influence teachers' practice, judgment and decision making (Romanov, 2007). Furthermore, Romanov (2007) also states that unlike our physical abilities, our perception is "limitless," and it is the one thing we can change and develop. Therefore, the perception that is well developed by teachers toward the textbook selection process would impact on their teaching practice and other decisions making related to students' learning development.

For many years, textbook is important for teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. Brown (2001) states that the most obvious and common form of materials support for language instruction come through textbook. In line with Brow (2001), Supriadi (1999) finds that textbook is dominant medium in the classroom. Besides, students also consider that the use of textbook can help them to achieve their learning goals. In line with Supriyadi (1999), Paul (2003) states that textbook can help students organize ideas and know what they have achieved and where they are going. In addition to this, O' Neil (1990) has pointed out that textbook is generally sensitive to the students' need, even if they are not

designed specifically for them because they feel efficient in terms of time and money.

Due to the important use of textbook above, many researchers have also found out teachers perceptions toward the use of textbook in the classroom. Yusransah (2008) finds that teachers perceived the use of the textbook is very useful for them in carrying out the lesson. The textbook used in this school seems to fulfil the criteria of good textbook. Yuyun (2002) also confirms that the role of the textbook in SBC is supportive in developing materials for students. In terms of practice, language and methodology, the textbook is categorized as the good textbook.

In Thailand, Srakang and Jansem (2005) exhibit their research on teachers' perception toward English textbook. They found that the pro-textbook teachers believed that without textbooks teaching cannot be conducted effectively. Some of them revealed that textbooks should go hand in hand with supplementary teaching materials to serve learners' needs.

In contrast with the advantages of using textbook, a research in Thailand was also conducted by Cheng and Wong (2002). They found the anti-textbook teachers who believed that the use of English textbooks was wasting time. In line with this research, there are shortcomings raised by the use of textbook. Richards (2001) argues that a textbook may content ineffective language as it presents inauthentic language such as texts, genres, and dialogues which are incorporate to the teaching points and it presents unrealistic language use. Moreover, issues and problems that may include finding ways to motivate students and teaching students academic skills are not found in the course books. In this sense, the teacher's job is not as easy as it seems. Many hours of planning and developing

other activities are still required (Chou, 2010).

Thus, the above phenomena interest the researcher to know the teachers' perceptions toward the use of EFL textbook and the strength and weakness of the EFL textbook used in school. By having the appropriate perceptions toward the use of EFL textbook, teachers would be directed to have appropriate decision making for their teaching development. It is also expected to choose a good textbook for EFL classroom in this school. For the authors and publishers, it is expected to develop their product in accordance with the recent curriculum and standard criteria of a good textbook.

According to Oxford Learners dictionary, textbook is a book that a teacher, a particular subject and that is used especially in school and college. It is obvious that school with regular classes need textbook as a guiding resource to study. Actually, the existence of textbook is as a demand from institutions and schools. They consider that the textbook provides an outline and syllabus for students and teachers in the process of 3 teaching and learning. Ansary and Babai (2002) argue that in many situations, a textbook can serve as a syllabus and it is ready-made teaching texts and learning tasks.

In other contexts, not only general subjects' teachers, but English teachers also depend on the textbook. Rodriguez (2010) also supports the idea that textbooks seems to be the main teaching resources in EFL classrooms. EFL classroom tends to make the textbook itself as one of the major components in teaching. As Yuyun (2002) clarifies that English language instruction has many important components, but the essential constituent for many EFL/ESL classroom and program are the textbook and instruction materials that are often used by many language instructors. Other

advantages of the textbook usage, for teacher, Richards (2001) says that a textbook may serve inexperienced teachers of how to plan a lesson and formats. A textbook has guiding formats for inexperienced teachers to do the lesson planning. Furthermore, students can keep contact to what they have done and what is going to learn. The same statement is claimed by Paul (2003) who states that textbook is useful for students to know what they have achieved and what they are going to do next.

More specifically, here are the following advantages and disadvantages of using textbooks for classroom context based on Richards (2001):

- a. A textbook provides structure and a syllabus for a program.
- b. A textbook helps standardize instruction.
- c. A textbook maintains quality.
- d. A textbook provides a variety of learning resources.
- e. A textbook makes efficient and saves teachers' time, enables teachers to devote time to teaching rather than material's production.

From the explanation above, we see that a good textbook has a high standard design and production and hence are appealing learners and teachers. These positive advantages are very beneficial in the teaching and learning process as they are guidelines for us to use the textbook properly. Nevertheless, the textbook may become a big problem faced by teachers and students. The following lists are shortcomings of textbook that Richards (2001) offers:

- a. A textbook may contain ineffective language as it presents inauthentic language such as texts, genres, and dialogues which are incorporated to the teaching points and it presents an

unrealistic language use. It means that the materials on the textbook are too far from the students' life context.

- b. A textbook sometimes does not reflect students' need. When the textbook is made for global context; it does not reflect students' need hence it is apart from learners' need.
- c. A textbook may deskill teachers. A teacher's role in the classroom may be reduced because it is changed by the assumption of having a textbook which become a major source in teaching.
- d. A textbook is expensive. A commercial textbook may be expensive since it is considered as a good textbook. Thus, there are many students who cannot achieve the price. Moreover, Permana (2012) in his article states that in Indonesian EFL classroom, most of 70% teachers of school use textbook as their source for teaching. He also attaches that the reason why the teachers use the textbook is because the textbook can give the students more knowledge about other fields in the world, therefore, the students are enriched through the information given on the textbook. Other perceptions are also revealed that teachers make the textbook as the interpretation of substantive curriculum that would be delivered to students (Jajajng, 2010). Thus, it is clear that the use of textbook play an integral part in the teaching and learning process of EFL classroom.

### **Criteria of a good textbook**

Regarding textbook selection process, there should be criteria of a good textbook which are commonly used in textbook evaluation. Conningsworth (1995) says that one of the considerations in choosing a textbook is that it must be easily obtained by the users as well as corresponds to the students' need. The textbook must be able to facilitate and equip the students to use the language effectively. All activities on the textbook serve students a creative learning. Other theory from Brown (2001) says that textbook should be accompanied by an audio cassette which is generally used for students' listening practice. The audio cassette trains students to reach what so called the creative learning as it is used independently whenever they are. Kitao ((1997) cited by Yusransah (2008) states that good course book seems to have the following considerations:

- a. Language: since students have limited knowledge about vocabulary, the textbook should provide correct, natural and standard language in order the students understand the vocabulary and materials that they are not familiar with.
- b. Cultural sensitiveness: A textbook must reflect cultural information where the students can directly know the culture of English since culture and language has a vital relationship.
- c. Learners' interest: The materials on the textbook must consider learners' interest because it helps the students to learn language in communicative ways. a. Level of difficulty: The materials should be referred to the students' level and proficiency in English.
- d. Instructional issue: clear instructions and methods must be presented on the textbook so that teachers and students can be able

to understand what is expected on each lesson. a. Textbook should have support for learning: Vocabulary list, exercises, and visual aids must be included on a good textbook.

Alwasilah (2006) states that learning objectives must be clearly stated in a good textbook and refer to the acquisition of the communicative competence. In Indonesian context, government has also set up the criteria of a good textbook which is recommended by BNSP (2008):

- a. Content deals with materials, basic competens and standard competence, current curriculum, cultural values, enrichment, students' need and materials accuracy.
- b. Language accuracy deals with language construction in structure, phrases and sentence. Communicativeness and interactive dialogues,
- c. Materials presentation deals with presentation and supporting techniques.
- d. Layout and design deals with font size, letter, and paper quality (long lasting cover is better for junior and senior high school students).

Furthermore, Grant (1987) states that a teacher must be selective in choosing a textbook for students since attractiveness are considered to be the factors. Moreover, in line with BNSP criteria, Alwasilah (2006) also says that a good textbook should cover all the materials recommended by the current curriculum both in terms of competence standard and basic competence. Another theory also claimed by Conningsworth (1995) who states that it is absolutely essential in evaluating any textbook to determine whether or not it is inherent

methodology will reinforce the institutional aims as well as conform to the classroom context. The materials should contain genre types for students' reading activities. Genre based approach build the knowledge, modeling, constructing the text and independent construction of text (Yusransah, 2008). Good materials also involve authentic aerials in it. Coningsworth (1994) also confirms that authentic task as responses to written or spoken materials would be naturals to real participants and real situation.

A good textbook should provide all language skill and present them as integrated activities (Yusransah, 2008). It would be better if these activities and practice would lead the students to prepare for examination. As Grant (1987) states that a good textbook should have relevant materials for examination. However, if the book does not provide such expectations, the teacher is better to supplement the materials from other sources. Harmer (2007) says that a solution for choosing materials for students aside from the textbook is by omitting, adding replacing, adapting the teaching materials from the textbook. All experts agree to such kind of evaluation criteria.

## **METHOD**

In this study, descriptive qualitative design was used to reveal the issue about teachers' perceptions toward the use of EFL textbook and strength and weakness of the book 'English ok' (pseudonym) used in schools. According to Sugiyono (2008), qualitative design is a research method which based on post positivism; it is used to identify the real condition of object (experimental study is the opposite). The explanations show the role of the researcher in attempting the research. Creswell (1994) says that the qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes or products. Data collection

consists of the explanation towards population and sample of this research, research instruments, and procedures of collecting data. The population of this study is all English teachers who teach English in 5 schools in Bandung. Meanwhile, the sample of this study is 10 English teachers who teach English at the 7th grade of this junior high school in Bandung. The teachers use the same textbook. Two types of questionnaires were used in this study. They were open-ended questionnaire and close-ended questionnaire. The Open-ended Questionnaire consists of 5 questions regarding to the research question number 1, teachers perceptions toward the use of EFL textbook. The questionnaires were developed through the preliminary study. The second type is close-ended questionnaires (yes, partly and No answer). The questionnaires were developed by the researcher. The first draft of questionnaire that consisted of 40 questions 6 was also examined by the researcher through preliminary study. In this study, interview was conducted to have a member check; it was to verify the teachers' perceptions as well as the strength and the weakness of the textbook used in this school.

Data analysis is the step to analyze data. In this step, the researcher conducted several steps. According to Alwasilah (2012), qualitative research involves the data analyses like reducing the data, making data display, triangulating the data, and concluding the result.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The use of textbook is considered as one of the important things in the teaching and learning process. 80% teachers who used 'English ok' textbook in the classroom stated that the textbook helped them in carrying out the lesson, especially in terms of source of materials and time constraints. "Ya, sangat membantu sekali dalam proses belajar

mengajar. buku paket itu membantu dalam mengajar terutama sebagai acuan sumber belajar yang di standarkan pemerintah ya. Kan buku dibuat untuk membantu guru dan siswa belajar tentang materi yang sesuai dengan apa yang ada pada SK dan KD". It is in line with the theory from Yuyun (2002), Yusransah (2008), Srakang and Jansem (2005), Chou (2010) who talk that the use of the textbook is important and useful for them. They make the textbook as the teaching source in the classroom. However 20 % of respondents agreed that the use of textbook was not too helpful. They preferred to use other materials than textbook as it would be more challenging.

Furthermore, several factors are considered in choosing textbook for students by teachers at schools. They have to think more about many kinds of strength and weakness. A teacher has to be aware of textbook practical consideration, layout and design, content, learners' need and language use. From the findings, the textbook was generally accessible; the students could get the book from the school library. Teachers' perceptions toward practical consideration are showed by items number 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 in the questionnaire; 80% teachers gave positive response toward textbook's attractiveness, accessibility and publication. The teachers considered that the textbook used was attractive (item 1). "secara umum lengkap. Buku yang digunakan juga menarik" (App.2:1). Teacher perceived that the textbook was affordable (item 2, 3, 4) "...Terus Buku itu dikasih pemerinah. Ada di perpustakaan sekolah..." (App.2.3:4).

The study also presented that the book was relatively new publication because it was published in 2008. However, all teachers gave negative responses toward the textbook' audio cassette (item 6) "...nggak ada audio nya, nggak tau sih kalo dari sananya" (app.51).

Coningsworth (1995) says that one of the considerations in choosing a textbook is an easiness obtained for the users. This textbook met the requirements because it was given by the National educational committee.

Teacher did not have any variety practice for listening session. Furthermore, the teachers tried to make other listening practices for students in the classroom. They have to make their own practices dubbed by their own voice even they knew that the materials were not authentic enough in pronunciation. The textbook does not fulfill the criteria of a good textbook which is offered by Brown (2001), textbook should be accompanied by an audio cassette which is generally used for students' listening practice.

The vocabularies were also familiar enough for students. Genres materials were 7 also included to enrich students' knowledge of text types. In terms of learning objectives, they were clearly stated on the textbook. Thus, the materials were designed well from easier to the highest one. This was in line with the criteria of Alwasilah (2006) who states that learning objectives are clearly stated in a good textbook and it refers to the acquisition to the of communicative competence. In case of physical characteristic, the textbook used in 4 schools were appropriate in font size, as it was recommended by BNSP (2008). This book size was B5 size, so it was appropriate with the students in their ages. The book pictures were clear. However, 20% teachers said that some pictures were printed grey scale so it was less attractive for some students who like colorful design. Nevertheless, they are not big deal as long as the instructions already to be grasped. It is In line with the theory from Grant (1987) who states that a teacher must be selective in choosing a textbook for students because one of the considerations is attractiveness.

The textbook should be appropriate with the students' need and expectation. It is strengthened by Kitao (1997) that a good textbook must reflect to the students' need. The textbook seems fulfill the criteria of a good textbook as it was revealed by 80% teachers of these schools who stated that the textbook instructions were easy to be understood by the students and some students were motivated to use their language independently. "konteksnya hanya sebagai pembelajaran siswa, jelas tidak bertentangan dengan kebudayaan kita" (App/2:2). The textbook is appropriate in method and applicable to the students (item 13 and 14). The textbook provides a balance of activities between controlled and free activities and task (item 16). "...Tergantung materi yang disampaikan ya, misalakan materinya dia lebih sulit menurut siswa kaya msialkan teks untuk pertemuan pertemuan awal ya teacher center dulu, selanjutnya baru mereka diskusi" (App.2:19).

The good textbook has a good approach and methodology to be applied in the classroom and it must be in accordance with the current curriculum used and institution aims. Alwasilah (2006) says that a good textbook should cover all the materials recommended by the current curriculum both in terms of competence standard and basic competence. Another theory also claimed by Conningsworth (1995) who states that it is absolutely essential in evaluating any textbook to determine whether or not it is inherent methodology will reinforce the institutional aims as well as confirm to the classroom context. This English book contained genre based approach. Genre based approach build the knowledge, modeling, constructing the text and independent construction of text (Yusransah, (2008). 80% teachers said that the textbook met the requirements of KTSP curriculum. "buku ini masih sangat mewakili mungkin kalo digunakan untuk

kurikulum 2013 ini ya sangat diluar jalur..." (App. 2:45).

The textbook language content is authentic materials. Authentic materials are the materials from newspaper, magazines, television, website and other realistic materials. Both teachers stated that some of materials are from magazines and newspaper. However, 100% teachers agreed that some of listening practices are not equipped by audio cassette. Coningsworth (1995) states that authentic task as responses to written or spoken materials would be natural to real participants and real situation. Besides, the language level of the textbook is easily understood by students on its level, the textbook fulfill the criteria of a good textbook which consider the language level of students (Awasilah, 2008).

In terms of activities, 'English ok' has individual, pair work and group work in each unit. 80% teachers perceived that individual work is dominant in students' practice. However, activities such as controlled and free activities are stated. Thus, the students chanced to do the work alone, pairs and group by teachers' guidance. "iya sudah sesuai namun latihan tambahan sudah pasti diperlukan walopun mereka ya istilahnya sudah paham..." (App.2:17). A good textbook should provide all language skill and present them as integrated activities (Yusransah, 2008). Regarding to the statements above, the teachers said that writing activates were dominant than other skills. However, Grant (1987) states that a good textbook should have a relevant materials for examination. In this case, English ok did not explicitly give the students practice for national examination.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated teachers' perceptions toward the use of EFL textbook and the strength and weakness

of the 'English Ok' textbook used in the schools in Bandung. 80% of teachers of seventh grade in 5 schools in Bandung said that the use of textbook was helpful and important for them. The textbook was used as the source of learning as well as made the effective time in transferring the knowledge. Meanwhile, 20% of teachers perceived that they preferred to use adapting materials from other resources as the materials were more challenging than the book. Furthermore, based on the criteria of the textbook offered by the professionals, positive responses are showed toward one textbook used in their schools. In terms of practical consideration (accessibility, attractiveness, accessibility and publication), layout and design, content (materials, practice and activities), learners' need and language accuracy, the 'English ok' textbook was considered as the good textbook. Meanwhile, the weaknesses of the textbook were the unavailability of audio cassette, answer sheet at the end of the book and exercise preparation for national examination. In line with the conclusion, involving more participants are recommended to investigate perceptions of anti-textbook teachers.

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