

AN EVALUATION OF READING MATERIALS IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

EVALUASI MATERI BACAAN DI DALAM TEKSBUK UNTUK SISWA KELAS VIII SEKOLAH MENENGAH PERTAMA (SMP)

By: Rita Puspitasari, Ella Wulandari, S.Pd., M.A., English Language Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Yogyakarta State University, puspitasaririta13@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to find out whether the reading materials in two different English textbooks have fulfilled the criteria of good reading materials adapted from three ELT scholars: Byrd in Celce-Murcia (2001: 146), Cunningsworth (1995: 15), and Skierso (1991) and in what way they have fulfilled these criteria. This study is content analysis. It applied research procedures of texts evaluation adapted from Harmer (2001) and Ur (1991). The procedures were choosing population, selecting sample, selecting areas for evaluation, deciding on criteria, finding indicators of criteria, and applying criteria. The data sources were two English textbooks, namely *English in Focus for Grade VIII for Junior High School (SMP/MTs)* and *The Bridge English Competence 2*. The data were 34 texts 20 of which are from Textbook 1 and 14 are from Textbook 2. The data collection techniques were reading and applying the criteria to the characteristics in the texts with coding '1' for the fulfilled criteria and '0' for the unfulfilled criteria. The data analysis processes were reading texts, matching up the texts with the theories, coding the texts, and presenting the results. This research applied credibility (theory triangulation) and dependability (inter-rater reliability) to check the trustworthiness of the data. The findings showed that descriptives in Textbook 1 were 'poor' by achieving 49% fulfilment, recounts were 'fair' by attaining 54% fulfilment, and narratives were 'fair' by gaining 54% fulfilment. On the other hand, descriptives in Textbook 2 were 'good' by getting 61% fulfilment, recounts were 'fair' by reaching 56% fulfilment, and narratives were 'good' by obtaining 66% fulfilment. In conclusion, the texts in the textbooks were good at the aspect of content, pre and post reading activities, co-text and context but bad at the aspect of content and pre and post reading activities. This implies that not all reading materials in the two textbooks have good quality.

Keywords: content analysis, texts evaluation, descriptives, recounts, narratives, textbooks

Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah materi bacaan di dalam dua teksbuk Bahasa Inggris yang berbeda telah memenuhi kriteria materi bacaan yang baik yang diadaptasi dari tiga ahli: Byrd dalam Celce Murcia (2001: 146), Cunningsworth (1995: 15), dan Skierso (1991) dan dalam hal apa materi bacaan tersebut telah memenuhi kriteria yang dimaksud. Penelitian ini adalah analisis isi dan menerapkan langkah-langkah penelitian evaluasi teks yang diadaptasi dari Harmer (2001) dan Ur (1991). Langkah-langkah penelitian yang dimaksud meliputi memilih populasi, memilih sampel, memilih bidang evaluasi, menentukan kriteria, menemukan indikator-indikator kriteria, dan menerapkan kriteria. Sumber data untuk penelitian ini adalah dua teksbuk Bahasa Inggris, yaitu *English in Focus for Grade VIII for Junior High School (SMP/MTs)* dan *The Bridge English Competence 2*. Data untuk penelitian ini adalah 34 teks 20 diantaranya berasal dari Teksbuk 1 dan 14 teks berasal dari Teksbuk 2. Teknik pengumpulan data adalah membaca dan menerapkan kriteria ke dalam sejumlah karakteristik di dalam teks dengan menggunakan kode '1' untuk kriteria yang terpenuhi dan kode '0' untuk kriteria yang tidak terpenuhi. Proses analisis data meliputi membaca teks, mencocokkan teks dengan sejumlah teori, memberikan kode pada teks (coding), dan menyajikan hasil. Penelitian ini menggunakan kriteria derajat kepercayaan (triangulasi teori) dan kebergantungan (reliabilitas antar penguji) untuk mengukur keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teks deskriptif di Teksbuk 1 'buruk' dengan pemenuhan kriteria 49%, teks rekon 'cukup' dengan pemenuhan kriteria 54%, dan teks naratif 'cukup' dengan pemenuhan kriteria 54%. Sementara itu, teks deskriptif di Teksbuk 2 'baik' dengan pemenuhan kriteria 61%, teks rekon 'cukup' dengan pemenuhan kriteria 56%, dan teks naratif 'baik' dengan pemenuhan kriteria 66%. Selanjutnya, dapat disimpulkan bahwa teks di dalam kedua teksbuk memiliki kualitas yang baik dalam segi konten, aktivitas pra dan pasca*

membaca, ko-teks dan konteks namun buruk dalam segi konten dan aktivitas pra dan pasca membaca. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa tidak semua materi bacaan di kedua teksbuk memiliki kualitas yang baik.

Kata kunci: *analisis isi, evaluasi teks, deskriptif, rekon, naratif, teksbuk*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of ELT in Indonesia, the use of textbooks is not a new phenomenon since teachers have used textbooks since a long time ago. Indeed, the use of textbooks has been officially regulated by Regulation Minister of National Education Republic of Indonesia No. 11 Year 2005

Article 1 and 2. These regulations emphasize the role of textbooks as the main reference and thus they are compulsory for students and teachers to have in the classrooms.

The position of textbooks as the primary reference in ELT can provide teachers and students with many advantages, for instance, providing a variety of learning resources (Richards, 2001). On the other hand, textbooks can give some disadvantages too, for example, making teachers dependent on textbooks and forget about some weaknesses of textbooks. As a matter of fact, textbooks are not always perfect. Bambang Sudibyo, the Minister of National Education, as cited in *Kompas*, 24 July 2008 indeed said that not all school textbooks had met the requirements of good textbooks. Moreover, Porter and Robert (1981) and Nunan (1989) in Richards and Renandya (2002: 81) contend that some materials, for example, fail to present appropriate and realistic language models. In addition, Kramsch (1987) in Richards and Renandya (2002: 81) argues that published materials might also foster inadequate cultural understanding. In this way, teachers do not realize that they have been using textbooks that might contain materials, including reading materials, which are inaccurate and inappropriate.

To overcome the defects in textbooks, the government has released the official regulation concerning textbooks evaluation and standardization. They are Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 2 Year 2008 Chapter 3 Article 4 Clause 1 and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 11 Year 2005 Article 3 Clause 1. In these regulations, it is stated that Education National Standard Board (BSNP) is responsible for

textbook evaluation. Even though textbooks evaluation becomes the duty of BSNP,

it is conducted by teachers is still needed. This is as teachers are the immediate users of textbooks (Wright, 1990). In addition, they are responsible for providing materials for the classrooms. As a consequence, they should select the best materials, especially the ones which are available in textbooks. In regard to reading materials, teachers should learn how to select texts which are accurate and appropriate. Actually, there are two rationales behind the selection of texts in textbooks. First, texts are mostly available in textbooks and thus allow teachers to select. Second, texts serve as exposure teachers can use to familiarize students with particular texts, e.g. descriptives, recounts, and narratives as an attempt to help students accomplish the educational compulsory, namely National Examination (UN). As Djemari Mardapi, the Chief of Education National Standard Board (BSNP), as cited in *Suara Merdeka*, 13 July 2006 said that the attainment of competence examined on National Examination (UN) was altogether available in the official textbooks.

The status of textbooks as the compulsory reference. That they are used by most teachers in Indonesia reflects that textbooks should have been provided with most learning materials, including reading materials, that can be used by teachers immediately. However, it is necessary for teachers to consider two criteria when selecting texts they are going to use in ELT. These criteria include language form and language use in the texts (accuracy) and the relevance of text types to the curriculum and the required competence (appropriacy). In short, teachers must have the ability to evaluate the texts they are going to use in the classrooms.

Unfortunately, many teachers do not have enough knowledge, skill, and time at conducting texts evaluation and therefore are reluctant to conduct this kind of activity. For that reason, they simply take and use texts that are presented in textbooks. Moreover, textbooks are freely available in the bookstores. This situation allows teachers to choose and use textbooks in ELT. Among available textbooks, there are two examples of school-based curriculum textbooks

designed for the eighth graders of junior high school and still used by teachers in Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta. The first textbook is *English in Focus for Grade VIII Junior High School (SMP/MTs)* written by Artono Wardiman, et al and published in 2008 by *Pusat Perbukuan Departemen Pendidikan Nasional*. The second one is *The Bridge English Competence 2* written by Kistono, et al and published in 2012 by *Yudhistira*.

Considering the issues mentioned above, the researcher conducted an evaluation of reading materials in those textbooks. The reading materials evaluated in this study are texts, including descriptives, recounts, and narratives. The the problems formulated in this research are: “Have the reading materials in two different English textbooks fulfilled the criteria of good reading materials adapted from three ELT scholars and in what way have they fulfilled these criteria?”

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a content analysis. The purpose is to evaluate whether or not the reading materials in two different English textbooks have fulfilled the criteria of good reading materials adapted from Byrd in Celce-Murcia (2001: 146), Cunningsworth (1995: 15), and Skierso (1991).

The research procedures employed in this study are adapted from theories of textbooks evaluation proposed by Harmer (2001) and Ur (1991). The procedures involve six stages, namely choosing population, selecting sample, selecting areas for evaluation, deciding on criteria, finding indicators of the criteria, and applying the criteria.

The data of this study are texts in two English textbooks: *English in Focus for Grade VIII Junior High School (SMP/MTs)* and *The Bridge English Competence 2*. The techniques used to collect the data are reading and applying the criteria to the characteristics (e.g. words, illustrations, task instructions, etc.) in the texts with coding ‘1’ for the fulfilled criteria and ‘0’ for the unfulfilled criteria.

The sample selected in this study consists of 34 texts that are available in two English textbooks. Twenty texts are from the first textbook,

including seven descriptives, seven recounts, and six narratives. Fourteen texts are from the second textbook, including four descriptives, seven recounts, and three narratives. The unit of analysis of this study is varied and determined according to nineteen criteria of evaluation. The following is the list of the unit of analysis of this study.

Table 1: **Unit of Analysis**

Criteria	Unit of Analysis
1	text
2, 18, 19	knowledge of the world/content schemata
3	task instructions, notes
4	hint/schema, explanation
5	grammatical structures
6	grammar
7	vocabularies
8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17	task instructions
13	task instructions, question forms
15	image/picture
16	generic structure/linguistic features

The research instruments are the researcher and checklist of reading materials evaluation. The checklist is in the form of a table which consists of six columns, namely areas of evaluation, number, criteria of evaluation, fulfilment, reason, and sample (see Appendix about checklist of reading materials evaluation adapted from Byrd in Celce-Murcia (2001: 416), Cunningsworth (1995: 15), and Skierso (1991).

The data analysis involves four stages. They are reading texts, matching up the texts with the theories, coding the texts, and presenting the results.

Trustworthiness of the data of this study is checked by using two criteria: credibility and dependability. Credibility is confirmed using theory triangulation. Dependability is achieved by inter rater reliability.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In Textbook 1, there are seven descriptive texts evaluated. They are generally ‘poor’ as reading materials proven by 49% fulfilment out of the evaluation criteria. The first and the third texts

get 47% fulfilment. The second and seventh gain 57% fulfilment. The fourth and fifth obtain 52% fulfilment. The sixth achieves 36% fulfilment. The highest match is 11 out of 19 criteria attained by the seventh text. There are seven recount texts evaluated. They are generally 'fair' as reading materials supported by 54% fulfilment out of the evaluation criteria. The percentages of the fulfilment of the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh texts are 52%, 73%, 47%, 36%, 57%, 68%, and 47% respectively. The highest match is 14 out of 19 criteria attained by the second text. There are six narrative texts evaluated. They are 'fair' as reading materials verified by 54% fulfilment out of the evaluation criteria. The percentages of the fulfilment of the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth texts are 63%, 52%, 52%, 52%, 52%, 57% respectively. The highest match is 12 out of 19 criteria gained by the first text.

In Textbook 2, there are four descriptive texts evaluated. They are 'good' as reading materials proven by 61% fulfilment out of the evaluation criteria. The first text accomplishes 68% fulfilment. The second and third get 57% fulfilment. The fourth achieves 63% fulfilment. The highest match is 13 out of 19 criteria gained by the first text. Moreover, there are seven recount texts evaluated. They are 'fair' as reading materials supported by 56% fulfilment out of the evaluation criteria. The first, second, sixth, and seventh reach 68% fulfilment. The third, fourth, and fifth obtain 42% fulfilment. The highest match is 13 out of 19 criteria attained by the first, second, sixth, and seventh text. Lastly, there are three narrative texts evaluated. They are generally 'good' as reading materials verified by 66% fulfilment out of the evaluation criteria. The first text attains 78% fulfilment. The second gets 57% fulfilment. The third achieves 63% fulfilment. The highest match is 15 out of 19 criteria gained by the first text.

In regard to the evaluation criteria in four aspects of evaluation that are completely, mostly, rarely, and not fulfilled by texts in Textbook 1 and

2 and why they are so, it is found that, in terms of the aspect of content, the criterion of cohesion is completely fulfilled as 20 texts in Textbook 1 match this criterion. This is due to some cohesive ties such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical found in these texts. On the other hand, the criteria of knowledge of CCU and authenticity are not fulfilled since none of the texts in Textbook 1 achieves these criteria. None of the texts presents information about customs, habits, traditions, or beliefs of a society. In relation to authenticity, all texts are meant for teaching purposes (e.g. reading aloud, taking notes, teaching pronunciation) and emphasizing specific structures (e.g. simple present tense, degrees of adjectives, the use of indefinite and definite article, and the generic structure of descriptive, recount, and narrative).

With respect to the aspect of vocabulary and grammar, the criterion of vocabulary presentation is mainly fulfilled since 15 texts in Textbook 1 correspond to this criterion. The new words in those texts are introduced using context, collocation, superordinate, hyponym, synonym, antonym, concise definition, and translation. On the contrary, the criterion of vocabulary reinforcement is hardly fulfilled for only two texts in Textbook 1 meet this criterion. The meaning and use of the new words are reinforced in translation task, sentence completion task, matching task/word-meaning matching task, and sentence completion task.

In regard to the aspect of pre and post reading activities, the criterion of lower reading skills is completely fulfilled because 20 texts in Textbook 1 fit this criterion. These texts are accompanied by activities that can only stimulate students' lower reading skills, including remembering, understanding, and applying. Conversely, the criteria of higher reading skills and extensive and intensive reading activities are not fulfilled since none of the texts in Textbook 1 satisfies these criteria. The provided activities cannot encourage the development of students' higher reading skills, i.e. analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In fact, the tasks can promote only the development of students' lower reading skills,

namely remembering, understanding, and applying. Furthermore, is accompanied by both extensive and intensive reading activities. As a matter of fact, the texts are only supplemented by intensive reading activities. The activities include schema activation, discussion questions, reading comprehension questions, vocabulary review, sentence strip activity, reading-writing connections, considering text structure, schema development, introducing key vocabulary, scanning activity, application activity, and responding.

In connection with the aspect of co-text and context, the criterion of texts appropriateness for the curriculum is largely fulfilled since 19 texts in Textbook 1 match this criterion. The texts are appropriate for school-based curriculum since these types of text belong to descriptive, recount, and narrative. On the other hand, the criterion of simplicity and relevance of illustration is rarely fulfilled as only 10 texts in Textbook 1 meet this criterion. It was found that the illustrations of the texts serve function/can support understanding and are clear for its intended purpose.

In relation to the aspect of content, the criterion of cohesion is totally fulfilled as 14 texts in Textbook 2 fit this criterion. This is due to some cohesive ties such as reference, lexical, and conjunction discovered in the texts. On the other hand, the criterion of authenticity is not fulfilled as none of the texts in Textbook 2 meets this criterion. All texts are meant for teaching purposes and highlighting specific structures, such as communicative function, generic structure, and linguistic features of descriptive, recount, and narrative, adjective clause, adjectives, and adverbs of manner.

Regarding the aspect of vocabulary and grammar, the criterion of vocabulary presentation is mainly fulfilled for 11 texts in Textbook 2 satisfy this criterion. The new vocabulary items in those texts are presented using context, synonym, collocation, antonym, glosses/glossary, superordinate, and hyponym. On the contrary, the criterion of vocabulary reinforcement is hardly fulfilled because only one text in Textbook 2 achieves this criterion. The meaning and use of the

new words in the text are reinforced in translation task, word part analysis exercise, sentence creation task, and multiple choice task.

Concerning the aspect of pre and post reading activities, the criterion of lower reading skills is mostly fulfilled because 13 texts in Textbook 2 correspond to this criterion. The texts are accompanied by activities that can only stimulate students' lower reading skills, including remembering, understanding, and applying. Conversely, the criterion of extensive and intensive reading activities is not fulfilled since none of the texts in Textbook 2 matches this criterion. None of the texts is supplemented with both extensive and intensive reading activities. Indeed, they are simply accompanied by intensive reading activities. The activities are reading comprehension exercise, considering text structure, grammar activity, vocabulary activity, sentence strip activity, and reading strategy activity.

Relating to the aspect of co-text and context, the criterion of text appropriateness for school-based curriculum is predominantly fulfilled because 14 texts in Textbook 2 correspond to this criterion. The texts are relevant to the school-based curriculum since these types of text are descriptive, recount, and narrative. On the other hand, the criterion of simplicity and relevance of the illustration is barely fulfilled as only two texts in Textbook 2 satisfy this criterion. It was found that the illustration of the texts serve to support understanding.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussions in the preceding chapter, it can be concluded that descriptives in Textbook 1 have 'poor' quality by achieving 49% fulfilment, recounts have 'fair' quality by attaining 54% fulfilment, and narratives have 'fair' quality by obtaining 54% fulfilment. Moreover, the texts in Textbook 1 are good at three aspects: content, pre and post reading activities, and co-text and context, but poor at three aspects: content, vocabulary and grammar, and pre and post reading activities.

Next, descriptives in Textbook 2 have 'good' quality by achieving 61% fulfilment,

recounts have ‘fair’ quality by obtaining 56% fulfilment, and narratives have ‘fair’ quality by obtaining 66% fulfilment. In addition, the texts in Textbook 2 are good and poor at four aspects: content, vocabulary and grammar, pre and post reading activities, and co-text and context.

Finally, the results of this study give some implications for several parties, namely English teachers, English textbook writers, and other researchers.

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Appendix.

Table 2: Checklist of Reading Materials Evaluation adapted from Byrd in Celce-Murcia (2001: 416), Cunningsworth (1995: 15), and Skierso (1991)

Areas of Evaluation	No	Criteria of Evaluation	Ful.	Reason	Sample
Content	1	Is the reading material cohesive?			
	2	Does the reading material present knowledge of cross cultural understanding (CCU)?			
	3	Is the reading material an authentic pieces of language?			
	4	Does the reading material provide information about generic structure and linguistic features of descriptive/recount/narrative text?			
Vocabulary and Grammar	1	Are the grammatical rules included in the reading material presented in a logical manner and increasing order of difficulty?			
	2	Is the reading material grammatically correct?			
	3	Are the new vocabulary items presented in a variety of ways?			
	4	Are the new vocabulary items repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?			
Pre and Post Reading Activities	1	Is there a focus on the development of reading skills?			
	2	Are students given sufficient activities to develop reading skills?			
	3	Do the activities available stimulate students' lower reading skills?			
	4	Do the activities available stimulate students' higher reading skills?			
	5	Do the activities promote students to strengthen their understanding of text they have already learned?			
	6	Do the activities promote reading for pleasure and for intellectual satisfaction?			
Co-text and Context	1	Is the illustration simple enough and relevant to the reading material?			
	2	Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?			
	3	Does the reading material coincide with the required competence?			
	4	Is the topic appropriate for students using the reading material?			

	5	Is the reading material free of offensive material?			
	$\Sigma=19$				