



Lailatul Kodriyah¹
 Intan Safinas Mohd
 Ariff Albakri²
 Arif Rahman Hakim³

EFL TEACHERS' VIEWS TOWARDS THE NEED OF EVALUATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) TEXTBOOKS FOR CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Abstract

In EFL country, the use of the textbook in the classroom is essential. Teachers and students rely heavily on the textbook in order to learn English. Since the flourishing of the English language textbook in the country, the teachers should make careful decision when selecting a textbook. Therefore, a process to evaluate an English textbook should be carried on. The purpose of the current study is to understand deeply about English teachers' perceptions towards the needs of evaluating a textbook. Five English language teachers who have more than ten years of teaching experiences were involved in the study. Semi-structured interview which consisted of several questions was conducted in order to gather the data. The results indicated that most of English language teachers in Indonesia are currently not familiar with the textbook evaluation process. Even though most of them are not familiar with the textbook evaluation process, the findings from the interview showed that the teachers-respondents agreed evaluating a textbook is an important process during classroom instruction and it should be carried out before or after teaching session as it help the teachers to decide the materials selection.

Keywords: Textbook Evaluation, Textbook Selection, Teachers' Perception, ELT In Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the role of English is as a foreign language in which it is only used to communicate with people outside the country. However, English language is a compulsory subject in educational institutions under the regulation of the Ministry of Education which states that elementary school (Sekolah Dasar), junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama), senior high school (Sekolah Menengah Atas), and college or university level should include English as the compulsory subject in their curriculum. Therefore, teaching English language has been the main concern of the Indonesian government in every level of education. Realizing the minimum usage of English for real communication, both teachers and students mostly rely on the availability of textbooks as their guidance and source to learn English during classroom interaction. Consequently, English textbook seems to be the only source by which students receive input and the main material for both teachers and students to rely on as well (Park 2004, p.2).

In line with previous statement, Çakır (2010) said that textbooks are the only materials that most of the foreign language teachers use in the EFL classrooms, and they are automatically expected to include all aspects of language. Besides, Rahimpour & Hashemi (2011) explained that textbooks play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions – state schools, colleges, language schools – all over the world. Moreover, Sheldon (1988) argued that the textbooks as the visible heart of any ELT program and she puts forth a number of reasons to justify the widespread use of textbook in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language throughout the world. In Cunningsworth's (1995) words, "textbooks provide a resource, a source of activities, a reference, a syllabus, a great support for inexperienced teachers, and serve as a source for self-directed learning or self-access work" (p.7). Obviously,

¹ Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, FKIP Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB Banjarmasin/ Doctoral program, TESL, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris Malaysia

² Teaching English as Second Language, Fakultas Bahasa dan Komunikasi, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

³ Pendidikan Bahasa Arab, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, UIN Antasari Banjarmasin
 email: lailatulkodriyah@gmail.com, safinas@fbk.upsi.edu.my, arif@uin-antasari.ac.id

most teachers use textbooks especially those accompanied with workbooks, helpful teacher manual and non-print instructional supplement such as audiotapes, CDs and computer-based materials as their primary teaching resource in providing the context of the lessons and classroom practice (Nahrkhalaji, 2012). It can be highlighted that textbooks are the most needed and important material in teaching and learning English in every level of education especially in English as foreign language country.

As a lot of English language textbooks available in the market, teachers have to be able to evaluate a textbook before making a decision in selecting a textbook. Evaluating a textbook is an important attempt for matching materials to both teacher and students. Evaluation is accepted as an integral part of teaching and learning. It is indeed one of the basic components of any curriculum and plays a crucial role in defining what students learn (Dickins and Germaine, 1994). For Hutchinson and Waters (1993, p.96), evaluating materials should be conducted to define the suitability of the materials and particular purposes. Similarly, Hutchinson (1987) said that materials evaluation guides the teachers in the selection of the teaching materials and the development of their awareness regarding the nature of language and learning. Two reasons for textbook evaluation, as stated by Cunningsworth (1995), are to adopt new textbook and to find out particular strengths and weaknesses in the textbook. Likewise, Littlejohn (2011, p. 183) claims that materials evaluation enable practitioners to look inside the materials and to take more control over the design and use. According to McDonough and Shaw (2003, p.60), evaluation is a useful process in its own right because it gives teachers insight to the organizational principles of the materials and helps them to keep up with developments in the field. This will help teachers to adapt materials realistically.

In addition, Narkhalaji (2012) highlighted the importance of the evaluation of the ELT materials for the developing of the quality in EFL/ESL teachers namely; awareness of the weaknesses of the textbook; acquiring knowledge and skill to adopt the appropriate book which is based on the learners' needs, availability and practicality of the materials, purpose of the program and teachers' own ability; developing expertise in adapting the textbook to match the needs of the students, to individualize it to a group of learners and to suit it to the interests and abilities of the learners; obtaining professional qualification in thorough and rigorous evaluation of the effects and outcomes of the ELT materials; designing their own materials when they think they have something different and new to offer; getting better understanding of their own pedagogical practice in order to construct evaluation criteria; and utilizing the ELT materials in a better way.

The current study has objectives to examine EFL teachers' views toward textbook evaluation process and to identify EFL teachers' perception after evaluating the textbook they used to teach English language in the classroom.

METHOD

The purpose of the study was to understand English language teachers' opinion about textbook evaluation and to recognize their perceptions after evaluating a textbook which they usually use to teach in the classroom by using textbook evaluation checklist. In order to do so, five English language teachers from different schools who have more than ten years of teaching experience were participated during the study. Semi-structured interview which consisted of several questions were conducted in order to collect the data and was conducted by using Bahasa Indonesia. Each interview session was recorded and transcribed. Finally, thematic analysis was applied to analysis the results of the interview then the conclusions were drawn.

In order to answer to collect the data, the interview protocol was used to as tool to gather data from semi-structured interview. In addition, the researcher also used textbook evaluation checklist as an instrument for the teachers-respondents to evaluate their textbook.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In order to answer the previous research questions, semi-structured interview was conducted. The participants were asked five main questions. The following are the results of the interview analysis in English version.

Q1: "What do you know about textbook evaluation?"

The researcher began with the general question to measure the respondents' understanding about textbook evaluation. In a brief, five respondents answered that they have basic knowledge about textbook evaluation during their college time, from seminar and also workshop in teaching and learning English. The following is the extraction during the interview.

T1: hhm I am not really sure, I think it is a process to evaluate a book? Is that so? (Laughing)

It can be interpreted that the respondent was not really sure about her answer. When the researcher further asked about whether the respondent ever learned about textbook evaluation process, she then explained that she learned about teaching materials selection and evaluation 15 years ago when she was in university. Another respondent (T2) said that he is not familiar with the textbook evaluation process because he never heard about it before. Meanwhile, T3 had positive answer related to the answer, he said that he once attended workshop about textbook selection. The other respondents did not have idea about textbook evaluation.

Q2: "Do you think that evaluating a textbook is important? If it is yes, why do you think it is important?"

Before asking question no.2, the researcher explained about the idea of textbook evaluation process to the teachers-respondents briefly. Almost all respondent agreed that textbook evaluation process is important to conduct. One respondent also suggested that English teacher forum in their area should conduct textbook evaluation before new semester begins.

T1: Yes, I think it is important to evaluate the textbook that we used to teach ehm ehmm.. because it will help me to choose which material is good to be used for the next semester..... English teacher forum should do textbook evaluation to evaluate the textbook that has been developed and used in each school.

The other respondents also had similar opinion about the important of textbook evaluation. After they understand about the concept of textbook evaluation, they agreed that textbook evaluation is an important process for the success of teaching and learning English.

T2: Yes, I think it's important because I almost use the same textbook without evaluating it. I don't know whether the content is appropriate to my students or not.

T3: After listening to your explanation about the purpose of textbook evaluation, I think it is important to conduct in the teaching process. Well, at least, once in a year to suit the materials with the current condition.

T4: Yes, I think it is better if we also have tool to evaluate the textbook and how to do it.

T5: If we need to find supplementary textbook material, I think doing evaluation to each textbook is needed.

From the previous extractions, it can summarized that textbook evaluation process is important according to respondents' point of view.

Q3: "Have you ever evaluating a textbook before?"

When the researcher asked the participants question no 3, surprisingly all the participants answered that they never conducted textbook evaluation before. They said that it was the first time for them using instrument to evaluate a textbook. Usually they selected a textbook only based on feeling. Some of them said that they had no choice in using the textbook since it was already prepared by the local government due to time constraint.

T1: This was my first time. I never did it before. Usually I only used my personal feeling. After I used the textbook for a while, I realized that the textbook was not appropriate. So I can say that I did evaluation while using the textbook (laugh).

T2: never used it before. This is the first time.

T3: Never did evaluation on textbook. Even though I know about textbook evaluation and selection but I never applied it in my teaching process.

T4: Unfortunately no.

T5: hmmm... not sure. I once attended the seminar about how to select a textbook but I never did evaluation on my own textbook.

Based on the results of interview on the third question, it can be concluded that all respondents never conducted textbook evaluation before. The reasons were because they had limited time and did not know how to do it. It was also highlighted that most of teachers were not familiar with textbook evaluation process.

Q4: "How are your perceptions after evaluating a textbook?"

All participants agreed that the textbook evaluation helped them in selecting or even evaluating a textbook that they used to teach during classroom instruction. T3 stated that the textbook evaluation would help the future English language teachers or pre-service teachers to prepare materials for teaching. T3 said:

“This is my very first time doing such this kind of textbook evaluation and I think this checklist instrument is a suitable instrument for a teacher like me and new teachers who are still learning hmmm like pre-service English language teachers as a guideline to select instructional materials”

In line with previous statement, another respondent said that after evaluating the textbook, he thought it very helpful for him especially for selecting materials which is suitable for the students.

T2:” evaluating a textbook is very useful. It is very useful to help teachers to analyse whether the textbook is suitable for students, whether the textbook is already appropriate with the curriculum or not.

Other positive opinions were caught from three respondents who asked for the copy of the textbook evaluation checklist for them to keep.

T1: This is very helpful. I even want to copy it and I’d like to show the other teachers

T4: The instrument is helpful for me. Can I copy it for me to keep?

T5: this is my first time evaluating a textbook and I just found a tool to evaluate a textbook. If it is allowed I’d like to ask a set of the checklist for me and the other teachers

From the previous descriptions, it can be summarized that the teachers’ perceptions after evaluating the textbooks were positive. The teachers said that evaluation process was useful and helpful for English language teachers to select a textbook before new semester begins and also to help pre-service English language teachers to prepare teaching materials. Another reason was because the evaluation could help English language teachers to evaluate and select materials which are suitable with curriculum and students’ background. The positive responds were also indicated by the respondents’ statement when they would like to ask for the copy of the checklist for them as they want to share the checklist with other teachers.

Q5: “What do you think about the instrument to evaluate the textbook?”

After the respondents used the textbook evaluation checklist instrument to evaluate the textbook, the researcher asked their opinion about how it worked. Based on the results of the interview, it is found that the teachers-respondents’ views on the evaluation checklist were positive. One of respondents said that the checklist can be used to conduct evaluation because of the clarity of the language in the checklist. In addition, the content of the checklist covered all important criteria that a needed in the textbook so that we can identify whether the textbook was already effective or not by following guidelines in the checklist.

T1: Overall, the checklist is usable because the language used is easy to understand. Secondly, the checklist covered important aspects that needed in a textbook

T3: The checklist is very easy to understand and it is very clear so we can easily use and apply it in order to review... hmmm.. review the textbook

Moreover, the use of both Bahasa and English language made the checklist easy to understand and follow. As what the respondents said:

T2: The checklist is easy to understand and easy to use because it is already covered all aspects needed. In addition, the availability of Bahasa version ease me to use it.

T4: In my point of view, the use of both Bahasa and English language facilitate users to have the same perspective about what it is intended to measure.

T5: The checklist is easy to use. First, the number of the criteria is appropriate (not too little or too much). Second, it does not need much time to complete. You can finish it while seating for minutes.

It can be highlighted that, the teachers-respondents agreed that the checklist can be used for them to select or evaluate textbook because the item used in the checklist is already covered all aspects needed as guideline and the language used in the checklist support the users to understand each item in the checklist.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide convincing evidence that English language teachers in Indonesia are currently not familiar with the textbook evaluation process. The results show that the teachers-respondents agreed that evaluating a textbook is an important process during classroom instruction and it should be carried out before or after teaching session as it help the teachers to decide the materials selection.

REFERENCES

- Çakır, İ. (2006). The use of a video as an audio-visual material in foreign language teaching classroom. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(4), 67-72.
- Cunningsworths, A. 1995. *Choosing Your Coursebook*. In Richards, J. ((2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press. New York.
- Dickins, P. & Germain, K. P. (1992). *Evaluation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hutchinson, T. Waters, A. (1993). *English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Litteljohn, A. (2012). Language teaching materials and the (very) big picture. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 9 (1), 283-297.
- McDonough, J., and Shaw, C. (2003). *Materials and methods in ELT*. 2nd ed. Maine: Blackwell Publishing.
- Nahrkhalaji, S.S. (2012). An Evaluation of a Global ELT Textbook in Iran: A Two-Phase Approach. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2 (3).
- Park, K., Jeong, E., Yang, I. & Park, K.(2004). A comparative analysis of the Science Curriculums and textbooks of middle school in South and North Korea. *Journal of the Korean Association for Research in Science Education*, 24(3), 481-498.
- Rahimpour, M., & Hashemi, R. (2011). Textbook selection and evaluation in EFL context. *World Journal of Education*, 1(2), 62-68.
- Sheldon, L (1988) Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, 42(4), 237-246.