

CRITERIA IN SELECTING ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR SMK STUDENTS

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Abstract

The teachers have to decide what textbooks to use for teaching learning process. The students spend much time using textbooks in classroom, so selecting an appropriate one is important. The teachers' creativity is also needed to strengthen the materials. The selecting of textbook is very important, the textbook has improved gradually for years, the process of selecting an appropriate textbook is not easy for the teachers. The textbook plays an important role for the teachers and the students. There are considerations for teachers to decide the textbook.

Keywords: textbook, consideration, materials

Kriteria Dalam Memilih Buku Teks Bahasa Inggris untuk Siswa SMK

Abstrak

Para guru harus memutuskan buku teks apa yang digunakan untuk proses belajar mengajar. Para siswa menghabiskan banyak waktu menggunakan buku teks di kelas, sehingga memilih yang tepat adalah penting. Kreativitas guru juga diperlukan untuk memperkuat bahan ajar. Pemilihan buku teks sangat penting, buku teks telah meningkat secara bertahap selama bertahun-tahun, proses memilih buku teks yang tepat tidak mudah bagi para guru. Buku teks memainkan peran penting bagi para guru dan siswa. Ada pertimbangan bagi guru untuk memutuskan buku teks.

Kata Kunci: buku teks, pertimbangan, bahan ajar

A. INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of aspects related to one another in the teaching learning process such as students' motivation, teachers' qualifications, facilities, and teaching material. Teaching material is one of the key components in most language teaching program. Any kind of textbooks used by the teacher in the classroom is a basis input for the students to learn and practice the language. The Teachers have responsibility to select what kind of materials to be used in

the classroom and what kind of textbook used which the need of language teaching.

The government institution, which deals with education, which is known as Department Education and Culture have recommended all high schools to implement new curriculum which tends to view language acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge. In other word, it is seen as a process of acquiring the totally of the language in gaining the communicative and linguistic skills the students need to carry out real world-tasks.

There are many English textbooks for SMK students are available in the market. At the same time, the publishers will try to satisfy teachers' expectations to get a textbook at the certain level. Teachers have to decide whether the language of textbook is at the right level, the topic is suitable for the students, or they have the right kind of activities which are dealing with students' competence.

The study will try to investigate what teachers' considerations in selecting English textbooks for SMK students. This study, therefore, will attempt to answer the following problems: the purposes of selecting English textbooks for SMK students, teachers' considerations when they select English textbooks and the teacher's expectation for the students by using this kind of textbook.

B. DISCUSSION

1. Materials

At various stages of professional lives teachers will be involved in the selection of material for the students. The materials are required for an 'informal' approach aimed at promoting primary processes in unplanned

discourse will be very different from those used to promote a 'formal' approach based on a structural or functional syllabus (Rod Ellis, 1988 p. 206). The appropriate materials for the teachers and the students will improve the result of learning English. The result of learning English, especially listening, speaking, reading and speaking will increase.

According to Rod Ellis (1988: 206) in his *Classroom Second Language Development*, there are several criteria as guidelines for determining suitable materials for 'fluency' work as the following:

- a. There must be communicative purpose (i.e not merely a pedagogic one). The test of whether there is or is not a communicative purpose is how successful completion of a task is judged; if the task is evaluated in terms of the behavioral outcome rather than its manner of performance, it is communicative.
- b. There must be a focus on the message rather than on the channel; i.e. the interactions must be concerned with what they have to say rather than how they are going to say it.
- c. There must be an information gap i.e. one speaker must not know what the other speaker is going to say, although he may often be able to predict it.
- d. The communication stimulated by the task must be negotiated rather than predetermined. This means that the task must not exert rigid control over the language to be used but must allow the speakers to make adaptations in content and expression in the light of feedback they receive. There is likely, therefore, to be considerable variety of forms used.
- e. The speakers must be allowed to use whatever resources-verbal and non-verbal-they possess, irrespective of whether these conform to normal native speaker behavior or not. There must be no pedagogic intervention from the teacher, but this does not preclude, of course, the

use of various communication such as that occurring between mother and child.

In the case of inexperienced teachers, materials may also serve as a form of teacher training—they provide ideas on how to plan and teach lessons as well as formats that teachers can use (Richards, 2001: 251). Much of the language teaching that occurs throughout the world today take place with the form of printed materials, non print materials, materials that comprise both print and non print sources such as self-access materials and materials on the internet.

Cunningworth in Richards (2001: 251) summarizes the role of materials in language teaching as.

- A resource for presentation materials (spoken and written).
- A source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction.
- A reference source for learners of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on.
- A source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities.
- A syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives that they have already determined).
- A support for less experienced teachers who gave yet to gain in confidence.
- The roles of materials are very useful for the teachers and the students in teaching learning process in the classroom. They can be used to improve presentation skills, communication interaction, references for the teachers and the students and activities in the classroom.

2. Textbooks

One important reason for using textbooks for instruction is simply that the students like books. In fact, the students seem to prefer having their own textbook. Some students of lower level may have never owned or even opened a book while others may have studied countless textbooks in preparation for higher level degrees. Whatever the case, teachers can usually agree that students consider essential books for learning to speak English.

The teachers have the same kinds of varied experiences as their students. Some teachers prefer using a textbook following its contexts in strict sequence. Other teachers prefer to use numerous textbooks without attention to sequential skill development. Still other teachers prefer to create their own instructional materials.

All of the overall decisions about content are not taken by teachers, but some higher authority. The teachers are often provided with a list of supplementary material and activities that are available (Harmer, 1991 p. 257). When a textbook is involved there are obvious advantages for both teachers and students. Good textbook often contain lively and interesting material; they provide a sensible progression of language items, clearly showing what has to be learnt and in some cases summarizing what has been studied so the students can revise grammatical and functional points that they have been concentrating on. Harmer (199:257) also suggest that textbooks can be systematic about the amount of vocabulary presented to the student and allow students to study on their own outside the class. Good textbooks are reliable the teacher from the pressure of having to think of original material for every class.

Betsy Parrish (2004, p. 227) describes benefits of using textbook:

- It assures a measure of structure consistency, and logical progression in a class.
- It minimizes preparation time for teachers
- It allows learners to review material or preview other lesson.
- It meets a learner's needs or expectations of having something concrete to work from and take home for further study.
- It provides novice teachers with guidance in course and activity design.
- □It may provide multiple resources: tapes, CDs, videos, self-study workbook etc.

There are many benefits in using the textbook, they can save time, arrange the materials based on the logical progression, guide the students well. The students can also review and preview the materials that they want.

a. Evaluating Textbooks

There may be various reasons for looking closely at materials to see if they are appropriate for a group of students; the teacher may have been excited by material at a teachers' meeting and they may want to compare a number of different alternatives (Harmer, 1991:277). Whatever the reasons for considering whether or not materials are appropriate for a group for a group of students, the decision that a teacher planner takes is vital it is vital because teachers will take at least some of their ideas from the textbook, may even use it as the basic syllabus.

Based on source: Los Angeles Unified School District Textbook Evaluation (2002), we can select textbook with considerations. The following model standards, current teaching strategies and methods are used to rate textbook effectiveness:

- Integrates four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing

- Incorporates life skills included in course outline
- Receptive skills before productive (listen/read before speak/write)
- Integrates different learning styles: aural, oral, visual, kinesthetic
- Incorporates and varies different methodologies and techniques: Natural Approach, Communicative Competence, TPR, meaningful interchanges, conversations, drill, role play, information gap, problem solving, interview etc.
- Grouping strategies: individual, pair, group, and team work
- Incorporates higher level thinking skills and problem solving
- Sufficient student practice
- Grammar: taught in context; spiralling activities
- Interactive/communicative approaches
- Vocabulary: target vocabulary in lesson, recycled in lesson
- Reading: pre-read, read, post-read activities; theme recycled
- Writing activities integrated in text
- Assessment and self evaluations at the end of unit, final tests
- Design and format: illustrations, type size, color/black white, layout
- Pace appropriate to level
- Promotes cross-cultural awareness

The considerations in selecting the textbooks should be careful, there are model standards which can be followed for us. These models are suitable for approaches, strategies, methods and techniques that can be applied in teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Harmer (1991: 277), in *The Principle of English Language Teaching*, also suggests that before attempting to evaluate materials, however, the teacher must have come to some conclusions about the students and what their needs are. This knowledge is necessary for us to be able to

judge the materials in the light of our knowledge of the students who may eventually use them. Evaluation, however, can only be done by considering something in relation to its purpose (Richards, 2001:256). A book may be ideal in one situation because it matches the needs of that situation perfectly. It has just the right amount of material for the program, it is easy to teach, it can be used with little preparation by inexperienced teachers, and it has an equal coverage of grammar and the four skills. The same book in a different situation, however, may turn out to be quite unsuitable. It contains too little material, it is not sufficiently challenging for teacher and students, and has elements in it that are not needed in the program.

There are two steps, then, in the evaluation of materials suggested by Harmer (1991: 277), the first is to have a profile of the students and their needs which leads you to conclusions about the type of material which would be appropriate for them, and the second, is to apply this knowledge to the completion of the materials evaluation, which aims to measure how far the materials under consideration match up to the students needs and the general methodological principles which the teachers holds. The profile of the student needs has three major components. The first, the teacher describes the students, saying who they are and what bring to class; the second is to describe student needs in terms of when the students are likely to use English and what skills they should acquire in the language, and the third part of the student profile describes in general terms of type of material the teacher would like to see for these students.

According to Harmer (199: 280), the materials evaluation asks the teachers to consider:

- Whether the language in the materials is realistic.
- Whether the language is appropriate for the students.

- Whether the progression of ‘new’ language is logical and appropriate for the students.
- Whether the content is relevant to the students’ needs.
- Whether the material is clear, easy to follow (in terms of instructions, etc.) and to have clearly stated objectives that both students and the teacher can understand.

The teachers evaluate the materials from the textbook, they look for the appropriate materials for learners. Language is realistic, appropriate for the students and relevant for the students need. The materials must be clear and easy to follow for the teachers and the students.

b. Teacher consideration in Choosing Textbook

In *How to Teach English* by Harmer (1998; 118), there are nine main areas which teachers will want to consider in the books which they are looking at, but before that, teachers should try to follow the 4- stages procedure:

1) Analysis

The teacher can look through the various books on offer, analyzing each for answers to questions on the next page. The textbooks will be used in the classroom, we select them carefully. There are two effects in using the textbook, both advantages and disadvantages. We select the positive effects that there are a lot of advantages for the teachers and the students in the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

2) Piloting

By far the best way to find a book’s strengths and weaknesses is to try it out with a class, seeing which lessons work and which don’t. By using the textbooks in teaching and learning process in the classroom the teachers understand how well the advantages these textbooks are.

3) Conclusion

Before choosing a book, teachers should try and find out if any of their colleagues have used the book before and how well they got on with it. Through discussion, they can get an idea about whether or not the book is likely to be right for them.

4) Gathering opinions

Anyone who might have an opinion on the book is worth speaking to, from the publisher and bookshop owners, to colleagues and friends. It is also a good idea to let students look through the book and see how they react to at first sight of it. If they express a preference which you agree with, they are likely to be more committed to the textbook. Some questions should be considered in selecting the textbook as follows:

a) Price

How expensive is the book? Can the students afford it? Will they have to buy an accompanying workbook? Can they afford both? What about the teacher; can he or she pay for the teacher's book and tapes?

b) Availability

Is the course available? Are all its components (students' book, teacher's book, workbook etc) in the shops now? What about the next level (for the next term/semester)? Has it been published? Is it available? What about the tapes, videos etc.?

c) Lay out and design

Is the book attractive? Does the teacher feel comfortable with it? Do the students like it? How user-friendly is the design? Does it get in the way of what the book is trying to do or does it enhance it?

d) Methodology

What kind of teaching and learning does the book promote? Can the teachers and students build appropriate sequences from it? Is there a good balance between study and activation?

e) Skills

Does the book cover the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) adequately? Is there a decent balance between the skills? Are there opportunities for both Study and Activation in the skills work? Is the language of the reading and listening texts appropriate? Are the speaking and writing tasks likely to Engage the students' interest?

f) Syllabus

Is the syllabus of the book appropriate for your students? Does it cover the language point you would expect? Are they in the right order? Do the reading and listening texts increase in difficulty as the book progresses?

g) Topic

Does the book contain a variety of topics? Are they likely to engage the students' interest? Does the teacher respond to them all? Are they culturally appropriate for the students? Are they too adult or too childish?

h) Stereotyping

Does the book represent people and situations in a fair and equal way? Are various categories of people treated equally? Is there stereotyping of certain nationalities? Does the book display conscious or unconscious racism or sexism?

i) Teacher's guide

Is there a good teacher's guide? Is it easy to use? Does it have the answers the teacher might need? Does it offer alternatives to lesson procedures? Does it contain a statement of intention which the teacher and students feel happy with? Is there a good

teacher's guide? Is it easy to use? Does it have the answers the teacher might need? Does it offer alternatives to lesson procedures? Does it contain a statement of intention which the teacher and students feel happy with?

There are several considerations that the teacher needs to pay attention in selecting what kind of textbook to be used in the classroom. The teachers may have different criteria in selecting the textbooks, their considerations will not be same because they have different emphasis which is adjusted to the school and of course the students condition.

The reason of the researcher to put these criteria randomly is to make the teacher are able to choose which point that they think is the most important. However, each criteria or point which is put in the questionnaire is based on the theory of choosing textbook by Harmer (1998:118), which mention that a good textbook should consider price, availability, lay out and design, methodology skill, syllabus, stereotyping, topic and also teachers guide to support the process of teaching and learning in the classroom.

The good textbook does not contain those aspects but also some materials which improve the students' ability especially in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and also syllabus. Cunningsworth in Richards (2001: 251) summarizes the role of materials in language teaching as:

1) A resource for presentation materials

The teacher needs to explain something in front of the class before giving their students some activities to do. A good textbook will be able to help the teacher in doing his task especially when the teacher is going to explain certain topic to their students. In this

case the availability of teacher's tools like syllabus, lesson plan, etc will be very useful.

- 2) A source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction

Some activities that available in the book sometimes is not sufficient enough to be applied in the classroom activities. The students are asked to write and to read some text. Sometimes they need other activities that refresh them. The activities may be various. A good textbook may have the active activity which includes the physical activities which also contain communicative practice to avoid the boredom.

- 3) A reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on

Sometimes using one textbook is not sufficient. It means that another book is needed to accompany the textbook. It is quite fine to refer some other books as the companion of the textbook so that the students can study more from different source. It will be very useful if the textbook mention the reference source.

- 4) A source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities

The activities should have different activities which aimed to avoid student's boredom. Sometimes, the book only mentions some ideas for activities which is usually put in the teacher guidance. So that teacher can use them when they run out of ideas dealing with activities conducted in the classroom.

- 5) Syllabus

It is very important for textbook to have a syllabus. It will be very helpful for the teacher to decide which topic should be taught first and then what is the emphasis in each unit. Besides that the availability of syllabus will help the teacher to keep their lesson or the subject in their track. They will not jump from one topic to another topic.

The inexperienced teachers sometimes get difficulties in improving their teaching. They need much help both from their seniors and also from the textbook. If the textbook is good enough, then, it will give him some ideas or guidance of what to do in the classroom.

According to Rod Ellis (1988:206) in his *Classroom Second Language Development*, there must be a communicative purpose (i.e. not merely a pedagogic one). The test of whether there is or is not a communicative purpose is how successful completion of a task is judged; if the task is evaluated in terms of the behavioral outcome rather than its manner of performance, it is communicative.

By having textbook which follows their criteria of a good textbook, the SMK teachers expect that the students will be able to understand the lessons. The textbooks are adjusted to their recent need. The textbook also has good materials inside which means good activities which are hoped to support their teaching learning process in the classroom.

The use of textbook influence their way of teaching especially the teachers don't have experience yet in doing the teaching process in the classroom. The good textbooks will help them in improving their quality of teaching and also inspire them in creating a good activity for their classroom.

C. CONCLUSION

Before selecting the textbooks, the teachers should try and find out their colleagues have used the textbook before and how well they got on with it. Through discussion, they can get an idea about whether or not the textbook is likely to be right for them. The teacher's considerations in selecting textbook

are important. Those considerations are a curriculum, the four language skills, a lot of activities, the authentic materials, the interesting topics, the teacher's guide, the teacher's tools, the vocabularies, the famous author, the answer key, the colourful illustration, the design textbook, the price, the book thickness, the popular publisher, availability at the market, the culture and the multimedia.

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