

AN EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC WRITING TEXTBOOK FROM LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Textbook plays important roles in the teaching and learning process because it can be the guidelines and sources for both students and lecturers. Lecturers have to evaluate the appropriateness of the textbook before using it. This study aimed to explore the appropriateness of textbooks for teaching writing for college. The descriptive qualitative research was used and eleven English lecturers in the English education study program, South Sumatera province, Indonesia was taken as the sample of the study. The book entitled "Writing Academic English" written by Oshima and Hogue was evaluated based on an evaluation scale refers to Litz (2005) that contains 19 items and relies upon four main criteria namely a) layout and design, b) subject and content, c) activities and d) skills. The result of this study showed that the "Writing Academic English" textbook could be used for teaching writing based on the recent curriculum that also represents the characteristics of each institution to meet the students' needs, and conditions. In conclusion, a good textbook contains an organized layout, useful and real-life subjects, and contents, covers relevant skills and activities, and corresponds to lecturers' and learners' emerging needs.

Keywords – *Evaluation, Textbook, Lecturers' Perspective*

Introduction

In the teaching and learning process, the lecturers used English textbooks. Textbooks are considered the crucial element in English language teaching. Textbooks are a major source of providing instructions to the teachers, lecturers, and students, that's why it is stated that textbooks are the backbone of every educational system. This is supported by Richard (2001) points out that textbooks are the key component of language teaching serving as the basis for much of the language input learners receive when learning a language. Furthermore, English teachers usually teach their students by using available textbooks (Harsono, 2007). However, such learning materials which are suitable for the needs of the students are not always available. This condition should not discourage the teachers as far as they have the objective(s) of the teaching or are familiar with the need(s) of the students. By having the objectives of the teaching, learning, or being familiar with the needs of the learners, using techniques or media that build their motivation to learn English, the teachers can develop their materials for the students to achieve the objectives or to fulfill the needs of the students. Textbooks play multiple roles in ELT as a resource for presentation material, activities for learner practice, and communicative interaction, as a reference source, like a syllabus, as a resource for self-directed learning or self-access work, and as a support for less experienced teachers (Cunningsworth, 1995). In some situations, textbooks may provide the basis for the content of the lessons and the kind of language practice the students take part in (Richards, 2001). The role of the textbook in the language classroom is a difficult one to be defined perfectly and exactly. Using textbooks, from cover to cover, without any supplemental material is

not the most satisfactory method for meeting students' needs. However, teachers, lecturers, and students need a framework on which to build and textbooks provide this. Instructors must strike a balance between being a slave to their texts and providing organized, objective-based instruction (Garinger, 2002). Therefore, since textbook has a great impact on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, selecting the most appropriate one is worth considering and examining for teachers, lecturers, and learners. In this regard, this study aimed to evaluate the appropriateness of "Writing Academic English" for teaching writing for college students from Lecturers' perspectives.

Methodology

The researcher used a descriptive qualitative research design. Eleven lecturers of the English study program, South Sumatera were selected randomly as the sample of the study. The questionnaires were used in collecting the data. Hence, a Likert scale questionnaire proposed by Litz (2005) in terms of layout and design, subject and content, activities, and skills were chosen to be distributed among the participants. The data of the research is an English textbook entitled "Writing Academic English" written by Oshima and Hogue (2006). It was used by the lecturers in teaching writing. The questionnaires were prepared in English based on 19 items. The procedure of analyzing the data was analyzing and interpreting the data, and reporting the result of the study descriptively.

Finding and Discussion

Lecturers' responses to the first section (layout and design) of the Litz's (2005) checklist which contained two items were considered and results were described (see Table 1).

Table 1: Frequencies, and Percentages of the Items on Layout and Design

Textbook Evaluation Scales	1		2		3		4		5	
Layout and Design	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%	N	%
Item 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	81.82	2	18.18
Item 2	0	0	0	0	1	9.09	10	90.91	0	0

Note: Completely Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Moderately Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Completely Agree = 5

Based on the result of the questionnaire (table 1), Item 1, almost all the lecturers do agree that the layout and design were appropriate and clear. It was supported by 81.82% of them who gave responses that they agree to use the textbook as a tool for teaching writing for the students and the other 18.18% of them stated completely agree. For item 2, a large number of the participant (90.91%) responded to agree with the category that the textbook is organized effectively and the other 9.09% of them stated moderately agree.

Table 2: Frequencies, and Percentages of the Items on Subject and Content

Textbook Evaluation Scales	1		2		3		4		5	
Subject and Content	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Item 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	100	0	0
Item 4	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	72.73	3	27.27
Item 5	0	0	0	0	2	18.18	8	72.73	1	9.09
Item 6	0	0	0	0	3	27.27	6	54.55	2	18.18
Item 7	0	0	0	0	5	45.45	6	54.55	0	0

Note: Completely Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Moderately Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Completely Agree = 5

As table 2 indicated, all of the lecturers (100%) responded in agree category to item 3 that the subject and content of the textbook is

relevant to my (students') needs as an English language learner(s). For item 4, when they were asked about the subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic 72.73% of the participants said that they agree to these statements and the other 27.27% completely agreed. Item 5 showed that the participants 18.18% stated moderately agree, 72.73% of lecturers agree, and the other, 9.09% responded in completely agree about of the statement of the subject and content of the textbook is interesting, challenging, and motivating. According to item 6, 27.27% of the lecturers moderately agree, 54.54% of them agree and the others (18.18) believed completely agree about there is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook. For item 7, 45.45% of the lecturers indicated in moderately agree and 54.55% of them agree that the materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.

Table 3: Frequencies, and Percentages of the Items on Activities

Textbook Evaluation Scales	1		2		3		4		5	
Activities	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	N	%
Item 8	0	0	1	9.09	5	45.45	4	36.37	1	0.09
Item 9	0	0	3	27.27	8	72.73	0	0	0	0
Item 10	0	0	0	0	11	100	0	0	0	0
Item 11	0	0	0	0	1	9.09	10	90.91	0	0
Item 12	0	0	4	36.36	6	54.55	1	9.09	0	0
Item 13	1	9.09	5	45.45	3	27.27	2	18.19	0	0
Item 14	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	100	0	0

Note: Completely Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Moderately Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Completely Agree = 5

Based on table 3, it was found that item 8 while 9.09% of the lecturers was in disagree, (45.45%) of them was in moderately agree, (36,37%) of them stated agree, and the other (9.09%) believed that the textbook provides a balance of activities (Ex. There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production). For item 9, the lecturers (72.73%)

stated moderately agree, and the other (27.27 was in agreement about the activities that encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice. Meanwhile, in item 10, all of the participants (100%) responded moderately agree about the activities incorporating individual, pair, and group work. For item 11, the participant (9.09%) stated in moderate agree and most of them did agree about the grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic for the students in studying English writing. As item 12, based on the result of lecturers' response, (36.36%) of the lecturers disagree because the textbook did not promote creative, original, and independent responses, (54.55%) of them moderately agree and the other (9.09%) agree about the activities promote creative, original and independent responses. Item 13, furthermore, considering the response related to the activities apply; the respondents (9.09%) stated completely disagree, (45.45%) of them disagree. They claimed that since the textbook activities were not conducive to internalization of newly introduced language and the tasks were not introduced in meaningful situations in the teaching and learning process but (27.27%) of participants moderately agree, and (18.19%) of them agree that the tasks are conducive to internalization of newly introduced language. Item 14, while all of the lecturers (100%) stated that the textbook's activities can be modified or supplemented easily to create a better atmosphere in the classroom.

Table 4: Frequencies, and Percentages of the Items on Skills

Textbook Evaluation Scales	1		2		3		4		5	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Item 15	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9.09	10	90.91
Item 16	0	0	7	63.64	4	36.36	0	0	0	0
Item 17	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	100	0	0
Item 18	4	36.36	7	63.64	0	0	0	0	0	0
Item 19	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	81.82	2	18.18

Note: Completely Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Moderately Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Completely Agree = 5

For item 15, most of the participants (90.91%) responded in agree to the category, and (9.00) of them completely agree. They stated that the materials include and focus on the skills that I/my students need to practice. The students' writing skills would be improved by using the textbook used in learning English. Item 16, most of the participants (63.63%) stated in disagree category and (36.36%) of them completely disagree with these items. They declared that the textbook did not provide an appropriate balance of the four skills. It was focused on the writing skill but the lecturers could use the four language skills in teaching English to the students. Item 17, all of the lecturers (100%) responded in agree category that the textbook pays attention to sub-skills - i.e. writing for gist, note-taking, skimming for information, etc. Item 18, most of the participants (36.36%) stated in the completely disagree category, and (63.64%) of them disagreed with item 18. They stated that the textbook did not have highlights and practices natural pronunciation (i.e. - stress and intonation) because it focused on the writing. Item 19, most of the lecturers agree if the practice of individual skills is integrated into the practice of other skills. It was supported by (81.82%) of them stating that they agree, (18.18%) of them completely agree that the practice of individual skills is integrated into the practice of other skills.

Based on the result of the questionnaire, almost all the lecturers do agree that the layout and design are appropriate and clear, the textbook is organized effectively. This is in line with 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. Grant (1987) states that attractiveness becomes one of the considerations in selecting a textbook. In terms of Subject and content, the subject and content of the textbook are relevant to the student's needs as an English

language learner(s), the textbook is generally realistic, interesting, challenging and there is sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook. On the other hand, in terms of activities, these textbook's activities can be modified or supplemented easily to create a better atmosphere in the classroom. The findings indicated that the textbook provides balance activities that could help language learners to fluent and accurate in improving writing skills. They stated that the activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice. Regarding the skills, the participants stated that the materials include and focus on the skills that I/my students need to practice. The students' writing skills would be increased by using the textbook used in learning English. They declared that the textbook did not provide an appropriate balance of the four skills. It was focused on the writing skill but the lecturers could use the four language skills in teaching English to the students. All of the lecturers respond agree that the textbook pays attention to sub-skills - i.e. writing for gist, note-taking, skimming for information, etc. Choosing a suitable interesting textbook could improve students' motivation in studying (Episiasi, et.al., 2021).

Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussion of the study above, it can be concluded that in general the textbook for teaching writing entitled "Writing Academic English" was considered a good and appropriate English textbook for teaching writing to college students. Additionally, textbooks are considered the main source for both teaching and learning processes. The textbook evaluation scheme contained 19 items that relied upon four main criteria namely a) layout and design, b) subject and content, c) activities, and d) skills. The lecturers' perspectives stated that every textbook has the strength and weaknesses of a particular textbook that is already in and the result of

this study could be used as the basis for the lecturers to choose the appropriateness of English textbook for teaching writing to college students based on the recent, the characteristics of the institution to meet the students' needs, and students' condition. In conclusion, a good textbook contains an organized layout, useful and real-life subjects, and contents, covers relevant skills and activities, and corresponds to lecturers' and learners' emerging needs.

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