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## An Evaluation on the Design and Content of a General English Textbook from the Students and Teachers' Perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

It cannot be denied that textbooks have a crucial role in ensuring the success of English language teaching and learning programs. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct evaluations to maintain the quality of the textbooks. This research aimed to find out the results of the evaluation on the design and content of the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto from both the students and teachers' perspectives. This is a quantitative research with a survey procedure. Questionnaires were employed to obtain the data, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics method. The results show that the students were generally satisfied with the design and the content aspects of the textbook. On the contrary, the teachers expressed some dissatisfactions on some of those aspects. From the teachers' perspective, the textbook needed some improvements in order to be categorized as a good textbook.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

It cannot be denied that teaching material has a crucial role in ensuring the success of teaching and learning activities. Teaching material can be defined as anything which can be used to assist students while learning the subjects. By utilizing the most appropriate teaching material, teachers can help students achieve the learning objectives more effectively. The teaching material can be in the form of written material or non-written material such as audio and video. Despite the wide variety of teaching material which can be used by both students and teachers, one of the most commonly used material is in the form of textbooks.

In English teaching and learning process, textbooks play an important role as one of the main sources to transfer knowledge to students. The importance of textbooks in English teaching and learning is emphasized because they provide the necessary input into classroom lessons through various activities, reading texts, and explanations. Moreover, one of the basic functions of textbooks is to provide knowledge systematically, so that it can be easily learned by students in an easy and orderly way. As stated by Richards (2001), textbooks provide structures and a syllabus, and therefore, any learning program will not be effective if it does not have a textbook. In addition, the structure and the syllabus provided in textbooks make it possible for students in different classes to receive similar content so that they all can be evaluated in the same way.

Furthermore, Cunningsworth (1995) summarized a number of roles that textbooks can play in a teaching and learning program, including providing (1) a syllabus based on predetermined learning objectives, (2) an effective resource for independent learning, (2) an effective medium for presenting new material, (3) a source of

ideas and activities, (4) a source of reference for students, and (6) support for less experienced teachers who need confidence in teaching.

Considering the aforementioned significant roles which textbooks have on the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities, it is important to conduct evaluations to maintain the quality of the textbooks. While evaluating a textbook, the design and the content of the textbook are two of the most important aspects to be evaluated. Textbooks are used by students to help them while learning, as well as by teachers to assist them in teaching. For that reason, an evaluation from both the students and the teachers' perspectives is necessary. Therefore, this research aimed to find out the results of the evaluation on the design and content of the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto from both the students and the teachers' perspectives.

Based on the aforementioned purpose, this research aimed to find the answer to the following research question:

*What are the results of the evaluation on the design and content of the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto from both the students and the teachers' perspectives?*

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a general sense, Mertens (2005) stated that the process of evaluation is the process of determining the worth, merit, or value of something. In terms of textbooks, Tomlinson et al. (2001) defined textbook evaluation as an applied linguistic activity through which judgments can be made about the effectiveness of the materials.

McDonough et al. (2013) suggested the implementation of both external evaluation and internal evaluation for textbooks. The external evaluation focuses on the overview and the organization of the textbook. On the other hand, the focus of the internal evaluation is on detailed information about the learning material. In line with what McDonough et al. (2013) suggested, Tomlinson (2011) asserted that both physical and functional aspects have substantial contributions to the quality of a textbook. Therefore, both aspects should be considered during the evaluation process.

Concerning the physical aspect, there are a number of attributes which should be considered while evaluating a textbook. These attributes include design, layout and illustration to contextualize the information in a textbook and organize the textbook items. Richards (1998) argued that a textbook should be interesting by showing attractive format. Textbooks have to be attractive in order to give good impression to the readers. Harrer et al. (2015) and Hanifa (2018) agreed with this idea stating that positive learning interest can be influenced by the attractiveness of the textbook.

Regarding the functional aspect, Cunningsworth (1995) proposed some criteria for textbook evaluation which include language content and skills. One of the most important criteria is whether the content meets the students' needs. Other criteria include whether the grammar is appropriate for the level and whether the vocabulary is adequate in terms of the quantity and range. Meanwhile, skills refer to the existence of the four main skills of language learning in the textbook, namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. This is supported by Litz (2005), who stated that a good textbook should contain specific language functions, grammar, and skills content. In addition, another important attribute to consider in textbook evaluation is the appropriateness. Richards (1998) and Anjayenu (2014) agreed that textbooks should be culturally appropriate for learners. Language and culture are closely related to each other (Colson, 2008; William, 2010), and therefore, teaching a language means teaching its culture as well.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

### 3.1 Design

This is a quantitative research which employed a survey procedure. Close-ended questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale were used as the instrument to collect the data in this research. The research data were in the form of numbers and they were analyzed using descriptive statistics method.

### 3.2 Design

The textbook which was being researched was the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto. The research was conducted towards the end of the even semester in the 2021/2022 academic year. When the data were collected for this research, the participants had used the textbook in the teaching and learning activities in a General English course for one semester.

Random sampling was employed in this research. The respondents of this research were 100 Intermediate level students of a General English course at a university in Purwokerto and 10 teachers who were assigned to teach the Intermediate level classes when the research was conducted.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Close-ended questionnaires were utilized as the instrument to collect the data in this research. In order to ensure the respondents' honesty in their responses, the respondents filled in the questionnaires anonymously. They were not required to input their identity into the questionnaires, so they were able to respond freely and honestly without fearing any possible unwanted consequences of their responses.

The questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms. To measure the students and teachers' evaluation on the design and the content of the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto, a five-point Likert scale was applied in the questionnaires. The scoring for the Likert scale can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Likert Scale

Response	Abbreviation	Score
Strongly Agree	SA	5
Agree	A	4
Neutral	N	3
Disagree	D	2
Strongly Disagree	SD	1

The questionnaires contained 18 items in total, as shown in Table 2 below. Items for number 1 to 7 were used to find out the evaluation regarding the design of the textbook, while the textbook content evaluation was measured in items for number 8 to 18.

Table 2. Questionnaire Items

Design	
No.	Statement
1	The book cover design looks interesting.
2	The book content design looks interesting.
3	The design makes the book easy to navigate.
4	The proportion of the book's illustrations is sufficient.
5	The layout of the texts and images is good.
6	All of the texts can be read clearly.
7	All of the images can be seen clearly.
Content	
No.	Statement
8	The content meets the students' needs.
9	The content is appropriate for the students' age group.
10	The content is up-to-date.
11	The content of the target language culture is sufficient.
12	The content is appropriate for Indonesian culture.
13	The content is affective for improving the students' listening skill.
14	The content is affective for improving the students' reading skill.
15	The content is affective for improving the students' writing skill.
16	The content is affective for improving the students' speaking skill.
17	The content is affective for improving the students' vocabulary.
18	The content is affective for improving the students' grammar.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

After the data collection process, the collected research data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics method. In other words, the data were interpreted descriptively after they were statistically analyzed. The mean was calculated to find out the results of the evaluation on the design and content of the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto from both the students and the teachers' perspectives. In addition, standard deviations were also calculated to determine the data distribution in a sample and to show an indication of how far the individual responses to the questionnaire items deviate from the mean. Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software were utilized to assist in the calculation process of both the mean and the standard deviation. Lastly, the data were interpreted and categorized based on the classification which is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Interpretation of the Mean

Mean	Category
4.21 - 5.00	Very Good
3.41 - 4.20	Good
2.61 - 3.40	Acceptable
1.81 - 2.60	Poor
1.00 - 1.80	Very Poor

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### RESULT

Before conducting research, it was necessary to arrange field permits, prepare research proposals and The frequency of the students' responses for each point in the Likert scale, the mean, the standard deviation, and the category based on the interpretation of the mean for each questionnaire item regarding the textbook design are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' Responses about the Textbook Design

DESIGN		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation of the Mean
No.	Statement								
1	The book cover design looks interesting.	2	0	31	37	30	3.93	0.891	Good
2	The book content design looks interesting.	2	1	31	44	22	3.83	0.853	Good
3	The design makes the book easy to navigate.	1	3	24	44	28	3.95	0.857	Good
4	The proportion of the book's illustrations is sufficient.	1	2	28	47	22	3.87	0.812	Good
5	The layout of the texts and images is good.	0	2	27	52	19	3.88	0.729	Good
6	All of the texts can be read clearly.	0	2	21	41	36	4.11	0.803	Good
7	All of the images can be seen clearly.	0	3	24	48	25	3.95	0.783	Good

Concerning the design of the textbook, the students' responses to the survey indicate that they regarded the textbook as a good textbook. As can be observed in Table 4, the interpretation of the mean for all of the questionnaire items regarding the textbook design belonged to the "good" category.

The statement "*All of the texts can be read clearly.*" has the highest mean of 4.11. It means that most of the students agree that the texts from the textbook had good clarity, so they did not encounter any trouble reading them. On the other hand, the lowest mean of 3.83 is for the statement "*The book content design looks interesting.*", which is about how interesting the design of the book content looked to them. Despite that, the consensus shows that this aspect still belonged to the "good" category.

Table 5 below shows the frequency of the students' responses for each point in the Likert scale, the mean, the standard deviation, and the category based on the interpretation of the mean for each questionnaire item regarding the textbook content.

Table 5. Students' Responses about the Textbook Content

CONTENT		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation of the Mean
No.	Statement								
8	The content meets the students' needs.	0	1	20	49	30	4.08	0.734	Good
9	The content is appropriate for the students' age group.	0	2	21	52	25	4.00	0.739	Good
10	The content is up-to-date.	0	2	25	47	26	3.97	0.771	Good
11	The content of the target language culture is sufficient.	0	1	23	49	27	4.02	0.738	Good
12	The content is appropriate for Indonesian culture.	0	1	27	47	25	3.96	0.751	Good
13	The content is affective for improving the students' listening skill.	0	3	23	52	22	3.93	0.756	Good
14	The content is affective for improving the students' reading skill.	0	2	24	51	23	3.95	0.744	Good
15	The content is affective for improving the students' writing skill.	0	2	26	49	23	3.93	0.756	Good
16	The content is affective for improving the students' speaking skill.	0	2	27	46	25	3.94	0.776	Good

CONTENT		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation of the Mean
No.	Statement								
17	The content is affective for improving the students' vocabulary.	0	2	25	44	29	4.00	0.791	Good
18	The content is affective for improving the students' grammar.	0	1	27	48	24	3.95	0.744	Good

Regarding the content of the textbook, the students' responses to the survey indicate that they viewed the textbook as a good textbook. As can be seen from Table 5, similar to the response about the design, the interpretation of the mean for all of the questionnaire items about the textbook content also belong to the "good" category.

The highest mean of 4.08 is for the "*The content meets the students' needs.*" statement. It shows how the students believed that the textbook had met their English learning needs. Meanwhile, there are two statements which shared the lowest mean of 3.93. The statements are from questionnaire item number 13 and 15, which were about the textbook's effectiveness to improve the students' listening and writing skills, respectively. Nevertheless, they still belonged to the "good" category based on the interpretation of the mean.

The frequency of the teachers' responses for each point in the Likert scale, the mean, the standard deviation, and the category based on the interpretation of the mean for each questionnaire item regarding the textbook design are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Teachers' Responses about the Textbook Design

DESIGN		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation of the Mean
No.	Statement								
1	The book cover design looks interesting.	0	0	6	3	1	3.50	0.707	Good
2	The book content design looks interesting.	0	2	7	1	0	2.90	0.568	Acceptable
3	The design makes the book easy to navigate.	0	3	2	5	0	3.20	0.919	Acceptable
4	The proportion of the book's illustrations is sufficient.	0	4	5	1	0	2.70	0.675	Acceptable
5	The layout of the texts and images is good.	0	3	5	2	0	2.90	0.738	Acceptable
6	All of the texts can be	0	1	3	6	0	3.50	0.707	Good

DESIGN		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation of the Mean
No.	Statement								
	read clearly.								
7	All of the images can be seen clearly.	0	3	3	4	0	3.10	0.876	Acceptable

As shown in Table 6, the teachers' responses were more varied among the indicators of the textbook design compared to the students' responses. Based on the interpretation of the mean, only two indicators belonged to the "good" category. The other five indicators were classified lower in the "acceptable" category.

Both the statements "*The book cover design looks interesting.*" and "*All of the texts can be read clearly.*" got the highest mean of 3.50 and were classified as "good". It indicates that the teachers generally deemed the textbook cover attractive. In addition, similar to the students' responses, the teachers also did not encounter any serious problem while reading the texts from the textbook due to their clarity. On the other hand, a significant number of teachers seemed to think that the proportion of the illustration in the textbook was not sufficient. It can be observed from how item number 4 has the lowest mean of 2.70 and was only classified as "acceptable".

Table 7 below shows the frequency of the teachers' responses for each point in the likert scale, the mean, the standard deviation, and the category based on the interpretation of the mean for each questionnaire item regarding the textbook content.

Table 7. Teachers' Responses about the Textbook Content

CONTENT		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation of the Mean
No.	Statement								
8	The content meets the students' needs.	0	3	4	2	1	3.10	0.994	Acceptable
9	The content is appropriate for the students' age group.	0	2	3	3	2	3.50	1.08	Good
10	The content is up-to-date.	0	6	2	2	0	2.60	0.843	Poor
11	The content of the target language culture is sufficient.	0	3	5	2	0	2.90	0.738	Acceptable
12	The content is appropriate for Indonesian culture.	0	2	6	2	0	3.00	0.667	Acceptable
13	The content is affective for improving the students' listening skill.	0	5	4	1	0	2.60	0.699	Poor
14	The content is affective for improving the	0	0	4	4	2	3.80	0.789	Good

CONTENT		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation of the Mean
No.	Statement								
	students' reading skill.								
15	The content is affective for improving the students' writing skill.	0	4	1	5	0	3.10	0.994	Acceptable
16	The content is affective for improving the students' speaking skill.	0	5	4	1	0	2.60	0.699	Poor
17	The content is affective for improving the students' vocabulary.	0	3	2	5	0	3.20	0.919	Acceptable
18	The content is affective for improving the students' grammar.	0	5	4	1	0	2.60	0.699	Poor

By studying the information in Table 7, it can be concluded that the teachers' responses among the indicators of the textbook content were even more varied than the ones about the textbook design. The interpretation of the mean ranged from "good", "acceptable", to "poor".

Item number 14 has the highest mean of 3.80, which indicates that the textbook had good reading materials to help improve the students' reading skill, according to the teachers. On the contrary, item number 10, 13, 16, and 18 were all classified as "poor". Those items shared the same lowest mean of 2,60. Based on those results, it can be concluded that the teachers believed that the textbook content was outdated, the listening and speaking materials were not effective, and the students' grammar did not get significantly improved upon using the textbook.

## DISCUSSION

The research results show that the students generally believed that the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto is a good textbook in terms of both the design and the content aspects. It is shown in how all indicators of both aspects belonged to the "good" category upon evaluation. On the other hand, the teachers' evaluation results were more diverse and critical regarding both aspects, especially the content.

According to the teachers' evaluation, among seven indicators of the design aspect, only two of them belonged to the "good" category. Those two indicators are about the attractiveness of the textbook cover and the readability of the texts in the textbook. The remaining indicators were merely classified as "acceptable". Therefore, from the teachers' perspective, most of the attributes in the design aspect needed some improvement before the textbook can be categorized as a good textbook. These attributes were the attractiveness of the textbook content design, the ease of navigation, the proportion of the illustration, the layout of the texts and images, and the clarity of the images.



The teachers were even more critical when it came to the content of the textbook. The results of the evaluation on this aspect ranged from “good”, “acceptable”, to “poor”. Among eleven indicators of the content aspect, two of them were considered “good”, five of them belonged to the “acceptable” category, while the remaining four indicators were classified as “poor”.

The attributes which the teachers considered good from the textbook were the content appropriateness to the students’ age group and the content effectiveness to improve the students’ reading skill. Regarding the content effectiveness to improve the other English language skills, the teachers believed that the textbook was “acceptable” to improve the students’ writing skill and vocabulary. However, the teachers expressed dissatisfactions towards the textbook’s content effectiveness to improve the students’ grammar, listening, and speaking skills. It is shown in how those three indicators belonged to the “poor” category based on their evaluation. Concerning the cultural content of the textbook, the teachers deemed both the target language cultural content and the appropriateness to Indonesian culture to be “acceptable”.

Another indicator which belonged to the “acceptable” category was about whether the textbook content met the students’ needs. This result shows that in order for the textbook to be considered as a good textbook from the teachers’ perspective, some improvement on this attribute was needed. This can be done by conducting a need analysis to assess the students’ needs before revising the textbook. Lastly, the teachers believed that the textbook content was outdated. It is shown in how this indicator was classified as “poor” upon evaluation. This suggests that the content of the textbook was in dire need of some update to stay relevant in the current era

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, while the students generally seemed to be satisfied with the design and the content aspects quality of the Intermediate level textbook for a General English course at a university in Purwokerto, the teachers expressed some dissatisfactions on some of the aspects of the textbook. From the teachers’ perspective, the textbook needed some improvements in both the design and the content aspects in order to be deemed as a good textbook.

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